

## Engaging with the Senses

Age Group: high school, undergraduate, graduate, community audience

Materials: *Miracle Fruit*, Aimee Nezhukumatathil, writing materials, one “passable object”\*\*see “activity #1”

Time: 60 - 90 mins

Medium: in person

Lesson Overview: through reading, discussion and self examination, this lesson offers an opportunity for students to engage with poetry and the world with an eye towards attention and focus can be transferred into the craft of poetry.

### **The Lesson**

#### Full Group Discussion

- Of the five senses which one(s) do we traditionally associate being implemented in poetry?
  - How have you seen these senses being engaged with?
    - Think things beyond visual description, smell landscapes, etc.
- What senses do we *not* often see being engaged with in poetry?
  - Why do we not see these senses engaged with in poetry?

#### Reading and Discussion

Read “Confusion” 27 pg. and “The Alligator” 32 pg.

As a group discuss the following questions

- What are the moments of these poems that engage with the senses (ie. sight, touch etc.)
- Select 2-3 moments directly after said moments of sense engagement:
  - What is happening in these moments?
    - Are they narrative? Lyric? If the lyric “I” is used, is it an action or emotional statement?
    - How would you describe the emotional resonance of the moment?
  - How are the moments of sense engagement and the moments that follow moments follow working together?

## Activity #1

\*\*instructor note: if possible bring in a small object to the class to pass around. This can be anything... a pencil, a fruit, etc. if an object is unavailable, consider displaying a photo of a would-be-object on your computer etc.

As a group pass around your “passable object” and complete the following sense check list individually, focus here on objective description:

- Touch
- See
- Hear
- Smell
- Taste

Go around the room and share your answers. Where are their similarities? Where are there differences? What senses tended to get the most differing answers? Why might this be? How could we use this exploration of objectivity in poetry?

## Reading and Discussion

Read: “Peacocks” 8pg.

- What moments in the poem are directly engaging with the senses of the speaker in the world of the poem?
- What moments are subjunctive (in the speaker’s memory/head)
- What is the effect of the last lyric I moment in the poem? *I wanted to steal...*
  - How is it different from other moments of the lyric I?

## Activity #2 Writing

Using your list from activity 1 select one of the senses (sight, smell, etc.) and the objective description and begin to draft stanza(s) of a poem. Just like the poems that we have read today feel free to make new connections for the speaker, jump into memory and the subjective world, explore the possibilities of the (potential) surrounding landscape of the object.

If time permits continue to add new stanzas of said poem by additionally adding the new senses and objective statement listed into the work.

Wrap up Discussion

From the reading, and writing as a group discuss the following questions:

- How can we use the senses to explore new landscapes and worlds in poems?
- Describe the process of drafting a poem that engages both with the “objective” senses and possibilities of poetry?
- How did you bring the writing from activity #1 an activity #2 into conversation within the stanzas?