

May I ask you a Question

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

Materials: *Bed*, Elizabeth Metzger

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 the power of the rhetorical question within poems.

**The Lesson**

Full Group Discussion

What is the purpose of questions in the real world?

What prompts a question in your life?

How have you seen questions used in all genres of writing?

What are some poems that implement questions?

Reading and Discussion

Read “Sex Dream” 8 pg., and “Marriage” 29 pg.

As a group discuss the following questions

- Where are the questions in these poems located?
- How do they function within the world of the poem?
- How would these poems change if the opening sentence was a statement, not a question.

Read “Desire” 41 pg.

- Where is the question located in this poem?

- How is it functioning? What emotional tone does the poem leave us with?
- Compare and contrast the use and function of all three of the poems.

### Small Group Activity

In small groups come up with a list of questions. These should be both large scale questions (ie. what happens after death, why is the sky blue etc.) and smaller scale questions (ie. will the store have my cereal today., how much gas do I have left, etc.).

As a group come together, share responses, and create a long list of questions. \*\*As a bonus instructors may add additional questions from <https://www.quora.com> . Do keep in mind not all the material on said website may be school appropriate.

### Writing and Discussion

\*\*Instructor note: depending on timing you may opt to change the length of the poem for these activities.

#### *Writing*

1. Write a poem that begins with one of the questions from the previous activity. Make sure this is the only question (“?”) present in the poem.
2. Start a new poem using the same opening question, but this time make it a statement.
3. Select a few students to share both versions of their poems.

#### *Discussion*

What was the experience like writing with the starting point of a question? Where did this prompt and exploration take you?

What was the experience like writing from the starting point of a statement? What did this confident opening allow for?

How might you implement the use of questions in your future work?