

Tension: Rupture

Age Range: Undergraduates

Materials: Tension: Rupture, writing materials, etc.

Time: 45-60 minutes

Medium: in-person or virtual

Lesson Overview: After reading *Tension: Rupture* and examining the accompanying paintings, students will discuss the work and its themes and style.

Before Lecture: Students should read the book in its entirety. These materials focus on *Ela*, *Detail: Garnet*, *Concerning the Fox*, *Detail: Liber Monstrorum*, *Sand Castles*, and *One*, along with *Alcoholic Crepuscule #6* and *#8*.

Lecture: The main theme of *Tension: Rupture* centers around communication. The original concept that inspired the work (painting in response to a poem and poems in response to a painting) is a major reason for that, but there is also an abundance of miscommunications and language gaps in Streetby's poems.

- In *Ela*, like many other poems, features Spanish phrases amidst the English texts. It features several moments of transformation from one medium to another (“how the streetlight reflecting on the water : once painted : becomes the picture of a couple”, “how water wheat yeast and salt become sacred...: eucharistic : this theater is poetry itself that rises from the earth and becomes human...”). The important factor is what information is retained and what is lost; the reflection in the puddle may look like two people, but is nowhere near a perfect replica, and translation between two languages cannot be entirely literal.
- In *Detail: Garnet*, the theme is based around a word “that means change or transform”, but the particular word is not mentioned. The word is then “transform[ed into]/A halo of rain around the cathedral’s crown” and is then viewed as divine. The poem begins with images of food and pregnancy. This reads as an ode to the power and murky imprecise nature of language – that it is beautiful, and the exact word does not fully matter.
- *Concerning the Fox* plays with language in significant ways. It is written as a long paragraph but also is a dialogue between two speakers, there are two languages used (English and Spanish), and the speakers are having a conversation about touch that they cannot say simply or at all. The poem falls down a wild path of metaphors, and it’s unclear if the two come to an understanding (the final line is “just come lay down here and show me those eyes”).
- *Detail: Liber Monstorum* is a long line of connections about what people most fear. The speaker, who “records” them, tells us that “projected fear” leads to “what you don’t know” about a man, which leads to “the alcoholic breath of women” and so on. While this is most obviously about trauma, it also seems to be about the many layers of meaning to anything one might want to record.
- *Sand Castles* and *One* are both poems that focus on the body and word associations. In *Sand Castles*, the body and nature are connected again and again – scars and mountains, children, and earth. In *One*, the speaker calls a thing – the One – different things, and

then tells us to watch, and so on, guiding us through a relationship. This seems to suggest that emotions are a powerful way to warp words.

Discussion Questions:

1. This collection suggests that communication can all too easily fall apart or be inadequate for words. Is pure communication possible?
2. The poems and painting of *Tension : Rupture* are designed to be 'hard to read'. What does this communicate?
3. Can an idea be fully transposed from one medium to another?

Writing Prompts:

1. Take an image and write a few lines. Attempt to capture the emotion and emphasis the image has.
2. Take three words – all simple verbs – and write a poem using word association.
3. Write a short piece (a few lines) and try to translate it, taking note of imperfections. Students well versed in languages can also do the reverse.

Critical Writing Assignment

Summary: This assignment is meant to help students develop their critical examination of poetry and language in general.

Materials: *Tension : Rupture*, writing materials, etc.

Suggested Timeline: 2-3 weeks

Assignment: Taking one or two of the longer poems or a poem and its associated painting, examine what is being communicated line by line and the tools used to do so. What do these methods add or subtract from the message? What do they have in common? If using the second option, what words convey that the image cannot and vice-versa?

Requirements:

1. Papers should be in standard MLA format
2. A source page should be included separately
3. Papers should range from 8-12 pages
4. All papers should be well-organized and edited

Creative Assignment

Summary: This assignment can be a piece for a creative writing portfolio and/or serve as a final project. This is meant to show understanding of the concepts that students have learned through this work and to stretch their creativity.

Materials: *Tension: Rupture*, writing materials, etc.

Suggested Timeline: 2-3 weeks

Assignment: Write two or three poems based on something you find hard to put into words – an old grief, a sense of awe, love. Using the simple verbs like you used in writing exercise #2, write the poems using word association. Write an accompanying explanation addressing your methods and intent, and how using word association affected the poems and how you framed the topic.

Requirements:

1. The poems should be not more than 5 pages, and the explanation no more than three
2. The explanation should be separate
3. All work should be in MLA format