

On Confidence and Wonder

Age Group: undergraduate, graduate, community audience

Materials: “The Lantern Room” Chloe Honum, writing materials, two poem drafts.

Time: 45 - 60 minutes

Medium: in person or virtual

Lesson Objective: Through discussion, reading, and writing students will have the opportunity to learn how questions, declarative statements, and commands can be used to bring new possibilities into their own poetry.

The Lesson

Read + Discuss: The Question

“April in New England” 6pg

Track the call and response for each question. What are the 3 questions presented in the poem, and what are the responses?

How are each of the questions functioning in the poems from a narrative standpoint and from a craft standpoint?

Explain the narrative of the poem. How are the questions propelling said narrative?

Describe the lyric and central concerns of the poem. How are the questions functioning to present said concerns?

“Phoebe” 32 pg & “Late Afternoon with Geese” 20pg.

How are the questions in these poems functioning differently?

Who is the speaker of the questions?

Track the call and response of the poems.

How do the placement within the poems shape their function?

Writing and Reimagining

Take one of your two poem drafts and complete the following activity

1. Track the narrative of the poem. Write down a short list of “what’s happening” from a literal sense
2. In 1-2 sentences: what is the central concern of the poem
3. Add a question in the opening of the poem that presents the central concern, aim for clarity.
4. Add 2 additional moments of question throughout the poem that propel, add exposition, or detail for the narrative of the poem.

Consider and discuss:

How did this change the work?

Are there moments where additional complications or clarity were added?

How did you go about presenting the central concern of the poem via question?

How is the speaker of the question(s)?

Read and Discuss

“At Scull Creek in Fayetteville, Arkansas” 43 pg

What types of sentences are the following:

I miss you, / and worse, I want to say it the way another poet would.

My shame is that I didn't believe you, not fully.

What are their functions within the poem?

Are these statements also working in a similar call and response format as the previous?

How so?

What is revealed about the speaker and the central concerns within this poem?

“Read More About Our History” 10 pg

Note that this poem is filled with declarative statements and works under the framework of a retelling of history.

Discuss the following questions on the excerpt below

Look at the rain tonight / in Auckland, how insistently it searches, in hard spirals, / down Queen Street toward the sea.

What type of sentence is this?

Who is the speaker? Who are they addressing?
How is it functioning in the poem?

Writing and Reimagining

Using your 2nd poem draft. Add a command (imperative sentence) to the poem. Consider the following

Who is the speaker?
Are they speaking to a specific person? The reader etc.
At what moment of the poem is a central regrouping or redirecting needed? How might this moment of command work in concert with said moment.

Discussion/End Thinking

In small groups discuss the following:

What were the original concerns/points of interest of the poem(s) prior to re-drafting the work?

How did the revision process help uncover/make more clear these intentions?

Did this re-imagining uncover any new wonders or complications in the work? If so, how may you go about working with/towards them in future drafts?