

The Age of Discovery

A lesson on form and self using *The Age of Discovery*

One of the things every poet must come to terms with, is themselves. How do they fit in this world, and how does this world fit into their life? In a world where people can spend so much time alone, it can be easy to get lost in work, and social media, and become engulfed by that which is the digital age.

The Age of Discovery not only interrogates the ways in which the world works in this day in age, but our place in this evolving world. There is a loneliness and longing that presents itself through these pages. Alan Michael Parker shows both a mastery of craft and an understanding his place in the world with this collection.

This lesson fulfills the following objectives:

1. Students will be able to identify and distinguish multiple styles used in poetry.
2. Students will be able to identify meaning and personal narrative weaved throughout the collection.
3. Students will be able to interpret how the poetic style coincides with the narrative the speaker is presenting.
4. Student will learn how to use different poetic techniques to craft their own poems.

Homework assigned in preparation of this class: N/A

Lesson Structure:

1. **Opening Journal:** Think of a time where you felt most alone. What did you turn to during this time? What did this time in your life teach you about yourself, and how did you change as a result of it? (~10 minutes)
2. **Reading & Discussion Warm-Up:** Individually read “For Now,” the opening poem in “Age of Discovery.” (~3 minutes) *In groups, students discuss the poem*— how does this poem make them feel? Does this poem give them any insight on what the rest of the poems will be about? What is the significance of breaking the third wall in the first poem? (~7 minutes)
3. **Follow-Up Discussion and Analysis:** In the same groups, Read the next poem “When Everyone Wrote a Poem.” Have them discuss what they believe is the meaning of this poem. What is the significance of all the different people and the poems they create? (~10 minutes) Then, open up the discussion to the class. (~7 minutes)

RUNNING TIME UP TO THIS POINT: 35 Minutes

4. **Individual Readings & Analysis:** Have students read the poem “The Microeconomics of Love” (~5 minutes) Have students individually outline the narrative that takes place in this poem. **Questions for students’ consideration while they are doing this:** What role do the poems and the pieces of art play between the two characters? What is the relationship between the two characters, and how does their relationship end? What is the point of transition in this poem? What does the repetition of the word “and” add to the poem?
5. **Read “Birth of the Cool”** and have student individually think about these questions
 - a. Who is Miles Davis?
 - b. What role does he play in this poem?
 - c. What is your favorite line from this poem and why?
 - d. What does this poem tell you about the mental state of the speaker?
6. **Class Discussion (~15 minutes):**
 - a. What is the tone of the poem?
 - b. Which is your favorite image in this poem? Why?

- c. If you didn't like this poem, what didn't you like about it?

RUNNING TIME UP TO THIS POINT: 65 minutes

7. **Preparation for Projects / Personal Reflection Journal:** Go back to your opening journal. Think about inanimate objects that may represent a special time in your life?(**5 minutes**) What kind of memories does this object invoke? Think of how you might craft a poem where this object fully encapsulates that memory. (**5 minutes**)

LESSON TOTAL: 75 minutes

Critical Essay: *Ordinary Misfortunes*

Alan Michael Parker's *Age of Discovery* uses dynamic voice in his poems, many of his poems utilize repetitions, and line breaks that reveal more meaning than what is initially said. His lines carry ambiguity, and both uncertainty and longing within them. Have the student continue to read the collection, making sure to note any patterns in the form/language. Then have them write about how these pattern affects the reading of the poems, examples may include:

1. Consistency in line breaks
2. Consistency of repetitions
3. Instances of ambiguity
4. How is rhyme utilized

To guide yourself through the planning and writing processes, follow the steps below:

1. **Read through the series, keeping in mind the topic you've chosen.** How much do you think you'll be able to write about your topic? Are there subtopics that could be investigated alongside your topic? Jot notes about your ideas. Once you're done reading, look at your notes. Are they substantial enough to form the backbone for a paper? If not, what other topics could work as centers for investigation?
2. **Perform a close reading of the first and last poems / stanzas in the chapbook.** Thinking about the focus of your paper, How has your area of focus changed or remained the same throughout the collection? Are the differences and similarities worth commenting on, and if not, where in the chapbook would you turn to for investigation instead?

3. **Read back through the series and look for places where your topic seems the most relevant.** How does the treatment of your focus element differ from poem to poem? Are there any clear patterns? Which poems and passages provide specific textual examples relevant to your focus area?
4. **Settle on a thesis for your paper.** Now that you've investigated the text in regards to one area of focus, you should have an idea about the sort of claim you can make regarding that focus. Your thesis should answer the following question: **How does Parker use (insert area of focus here) to add meaning to the collection as a whole?** Make sure to craft a thesis that can be clearly defended using the textual evidence you've begun to collect.
1. **Structure and outline your essay by collecting then organizing textual evidence.** Once you have your thesis, comb the collection for evidence that supports it. Organize that evidence into subpoints that back up your main point. Make sure to adjust your points to be as convincing and unified as they can be. If a piece of evidence doesn't relate that well to your overall point, discard it. If this happens continuously with your evidence, it may be time to slightly alter your thesis. Remember: you're aiming to collect enough evidence to provide backup for your thesis; you don't need to prove why all other interpretations are wrong (or even inferior) in order to defend your own. Just aim to provide at least one piece of evidence for every point you make over the course of your essay.
5. **Write the essay.** Using your outline as a roadmap, draft the essay. Give yourself the flexibility to go back and look for more evidence when you come up with new ideas, but try to stick with your outline to make your draft as clear and focused as possible. Try not to worry too much about phrasing and editing while writing; that's what the next step is for.
6. **Revise the essay.** In addition to using a spell check and reading back through the essay for errors, use read-aloud and peer editing to get a more thorough, distanced perspective on your work.
7. **Turn in the essay** and pat yourself on the back. Good luck!

Assignment Rubric:

Presence of a strong, clear thesis: _____ / 15

Provision of relevant evidence: _____ / 25

Analysis & defense of evidence: _____ / 35

Structure: _____ / 15

Grammar & Mechanics: _____ / 10

Total: _____ / 100

Creative Project: *Age of Discovery*

Many poets begin reading or writing poetry for the purpose of self-discovery. There is something intimate about language and how we relate to it. In *Age of Discovery*, Alan Michael Parker makes use of voice and imagery, while also paying close attention to formal poetic structure. The techniques used in this collection provide a great avenue for self-discovery.

For this assignment, you will **write 5-10 poems** based on memories and experiences from your own life. Be sure to **let the poems reflect, in form and content, the meaning you are trying to convey**. Choose poems directly from *Age of Discovery* and take note of the techniques you see. Use a technique from this collection to craft your poems. Your goal is to come up with 7-10 pages of poetry that shows how form and meaning can align. Be sure to include:

1. A statement of purpose that reviews your overall goals in writing the collection and cites two specific examples of where and how that purpose is achieved.
2. Your seven to twelve-page, complete with a title page (not included in page count).
3. Add an acknowledgments page that references the poems from the collection which inspired your poems.

Make sure to proofread and, if at all possible, have a peer read over your work for their input. You want as few mistakes cluttering up the reading experience as possible. Attention to visual presentation is highly encouraged to make for a cohesive, powerful collection. Best of luck!

Collection Content: _____ / 60

Meets Length and Form Requirements: _____ / 30

Poetry Effort & Polish: _____ / 30

Other Material Content: _____ / 35

Acknowledgements Page _____ / 20

Explanation of Process _____ / 15

Overall Grammar & Mechanics: _____ / 5

Total: _____ / 100