

Content Warning

This text contains poems that address sexual violence, emotional violence, and brutality. These poems do not come with a warning in the text. It is advised that educators closely preview the text and have support in place for students who may need resources to deal with the emotions and memories these texts may elicit. Please proceed with extreme caution.

Overview

“Maya Angelou used to always say that every poem is a love poem. And Sonia Sanchez always says every poem is a political poem. And I believe everything Maya Angelou and Sonia Sanchez say because I’ve got good sense. So both of these things have to be true: every poem is a love poem and a political poem.”

Jericho Brown

Essential Question: How does poetry comment on what it is to be human?

In this unit, we will look at the book *The Tradition* by Jericho Brown. This book uses a variety of poetry formats to address reflections on grief, loss, Blackness, family, and white supremacy.

Culminating Performance Task(s)

Poetry

Students will create their own chapbook of poetry.

- Your poetry will be printed and placed in a physical book (if Possible). We will look at a few ways to do this.
- You will have a minimum of five original, well-edited poems which you drafted during the reading of *The Tradition*.
- At least one poem should be written in the form of a duplex, Brown’s own format.

Prose

Students will conduct a research project on one of the options below:

- The tragedy and lasting effects of HIV and AIDS
- The development of racial identity
- Collective grief and the processing of tragedy

Key Unit Vocabulary

- Metaphor
- Simile
- Personification
- Tone
- Mood
- Onomatopoeia
- Rhythm
- Hyperbole
- Alliteration
- Assonance
- Rhyme (internal, eye rhyme, end rhyme)
- Diction
- Consonance
- Meter
- Duplex

Themes & Big Ideas

- Faith
- Loss of Faith
- Bodies
- Freedom
- Racial identity
- Sexuality
- Consent
- Grief
- Loss
- Death

Competencies Reading

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6

Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

Competencies Writing

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.D

Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.5

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grades 11-12 [here](#).)

Resources

- [Interview with the poet](#) in The Bennington Review
- [Free Library Reading Guide](#)
- [Unit as a folder](#)

STUDENT ACTIVITIES[What is Poetry?](#)[Understanding Poetry Terms](#)[Reading Guide Part I](#)[Reading Guide Part II](#)[Reading Guide Part III](#)

Culminating Performance Task

What is poetry?

Background

Directions:

1. Give your own definition of poetry.
2. Watch [this clip](#) about poetry and create a list of three to five aspects that define poetry.
3. Answer the remaining questions.

Getting to know poetry

1. What is poetry to you? **DO NOT GIVE A DICTIONARY DEFINITION!** Your own ideas and thoughts.
2. [This video](#) discusses some aspects of poetry. As you watch list 3 - 5 things that poetry different from other forms of writing or art.
3. Do you like poetry? Why or why not?
4. Do you pay attention to the lyrics in the music you listen to?
5. What is one song or poem you like currently? Why do you like it?

Understanding Poetic Terms - Song Analysis

Background & Vocabulary

Information

You will analyze the lyrics of a song as poetry. You will look for the use of the poetic and literary devices that you have learned in class.

- Choose a song that means something to you.
- Choose a song that contains poetic devices like the ones we have been discussing in class.
- You will need to be able to identify at least 3 types of figurative language and 3 types of sound devices in your song. If you look at a song and can't find any poetic devices that's not a good choice.
- Provide a copy of the lyrics. If you would like printed lyrics you need to copy and paste them into a doc with your name and song title at the top. Share with your Humanities educator.
- **Be sure to highlight and label the figurative language and sound devices in the song.**
- You will complete a song analysis worksheet for the song

Instructions:

Step 1 – Find song print or write down lyrics

Step 2 – Read song lyrics

Step 3 – Annotate lyrics (highlight and label figurative language)

Step 4 – Complete song analysis worksheet

Step 5 – Review, edit, and revise work

Song Title:

Artist:

Figurative Language

Simile - compares two things using "like or as" **Ex: "Still we live meanly like ants."**

Symbol - a person place or thing that has significance or meaning beyond its surface. **Ex: doves represent peace; the World Trade Center represented American capitalism and financial strength.**

Metaphor -when two things are compared without using "like" or "as" **Ex: "All the world's a stage and the men and women mainly players."**

Personification - giving human characteristics to non-human objects (i.e. spoons, chairs, moon) **Ex: "When flowers gaze at you, they're not the only ones who cry"**

Repetition -the repeating of a word or phrase to add emphasis **Ex: You're pretty like a flower; you're pretty like the sky.**

Allusion - a reference to a person, place, or thing, that is historical or real **Ex: It's like Ali in the Jungle, It's like Nelson in Jail; It's like Keller in the darkness.**

Imagery- the use of images which use the five senses of sight, smell, touch, taste, and hear. **Ex: "I've seen sparks fly out, whenever you smile."**

Hyperbole- extreme exaggeration **Ex: I'm so hot you'll probably catch a tan."**

Pick 3 and explain why the songwriter used it.

Example

Type of Figurative Language	Line from Song	Reason
1. <u>Imagery</u>	"Can you remind me of my gravity?/Ground me when I'm tumblin', spiralin', plummetin' down to Earth/You keep me down to Earth" SZA - "Garden (Say It Like Dat)"	This image shows that the speaker wants to feel connected instead of feeling lost and untethered.

Type of Figurative Language	Line from Song	Reason
1.		
2.		
3.		

<p>Sound Devices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● End rhyme: an exact rhyme at the end of two lines of poetry ● Internal Rhyme: rhyme within a line of poetry ● Slant Rhyme: an almost rhyme; also called half rhyme. ● Consonance: repetition of consonant sounds at the end of two words ● Assonance: repetition of vowel sounds in two words ● Alliteration: repetition of constants at the beginning of two words. ● Onomatopoeia – a word that is a sound 	<p>Sound Devices: Pick three examples; be sure to write the line and explain.</p>	
	<p>Device</p>	<p>Example From Song and Explanation</p>
	<p>Example: End Rhyme</p>	<p>“Went from making tuna sandwiches to making the <u>news</u> I started speaking my mind and tripled my <u>views</u>” Cardi B News and Views end these lines, and they end with the same sounds.</p>
	<p>1.</p>	
	<p>2.</p>	
<p>3.</p>		

Central Idea

- What is the central/main idea of your song? How is this developed in the song?
- Write 3 – 5 sentences. Be sure to support your idea with evidence from the song.

Sentence Frames:

The central idea of the song is _____.

The author develops this idea by _____. One example is the line, “_____.”

Another example is the line. “_____.” These elements all work together to show that _____ is the central/main idea.

Part 1 THE TRADITION

Reading Guide

Ganymede pg 5

1. What lines or phrases stand out to you? Why?
2. The book begins with a poem about Ganymede. Do some quick research on the two versions of this Greek myth.

As A Human Being pg 6

1. What lines or phrases stand out to you? Why?
2. What does this poem say about family, humanity, and happiness?
3. What do we do because we should not because of love? Are compulsory actions worth less? Does motivation matter?

Flower pg 7

1. What lines or phrases stand out to you? Why?
2. In this poem, several yellow bodily elements are present. What thoughts do these cause for you?
3. In general is yellow a happy color? What about in this poem? Provide examples.
4. Who, in your opinion, is the flower?

The Microscopes pg 8

1. What lines or phrases stand out to you? Why?
2. What might the speaker be hiding?
3. How do you camouflage yourself?

The Tradition pg 10

1. What lines or phrases stand out to you? Why?
2. When you think of a tradition, what comes to mind?
3. Are traditions usually positive or negative? Explain.
4. How are John Crawford, Eric Garner, and Mike Brown part of an unholy tradition?
5. How do the flowers in the poem create a funeral wreath?

Foreaday in the Morning pg 15

1. What lines or phrases stand out to you? Why?
2. How does this poem wrestle with the myriad meanings of the American dream?
3. When you think about the group of people you belong to, what are the misconceptions, incorrect thoughts or stereotypes?

Bullet Points pg 16

1. What lines or phrases stand out to you? Why?
2. This poem dives into the loss of Black life at the hands of police officers. Take a few moments to explore this video that differentiates between reforming the police, defunding the police, and abolishing the police. After watching the video, which method do you think would be most effective against the death presented in this poem?

Duplex pg 18

*This is a first in a series of poems in this book called Duplex. This poem and the others of the same title are written in a form of poetry created by the poet.

I would first say it's a form of repeating lines, where the poem's first line is going to also be its last line. And because it's a form of repeating lines, it depends on variation in order to have ant progression. Also, it's syllabic rather than metrical—nine to eleven syllables per line, which, sure, ultimately gets us to something like iambic pentameter, and that was something that I wanted. I wanted East married to West, so I started thinking about syllabics, and yet I was still thinking about meter. So I'm like, "Oh, if I can make the syllabic structure loose, like instead of saying it has to be a nine-syllable line, if I say nine to eleven syllables, then I'm dealing with something that also will, because of American English, be related to iambic pentameter." [As Published in The Bennington Review](#)

1. What lines or phrases stand out to you? Why?
2. What does the speaker mean when they say "a poem is gesture toward home."?
3. This poem talks about physical interactions that leave marks on bodies. What are other gentle things like rain that leave marks physical or emotional?
4. How do you feel about this format of poem compared to others like a sonnet? Can you feel the blues in it?

After Avery R. Young pg 22

1. Take a moment to look at [Avery R. Young's website](#). What are a few things you learned about them?
2. What lines or phrases stand out to you? Why?
3. How does this poem bring to life Black community and culture, specifically rural Black culture?

Poetics**Choose one poem and prompt below as a model for your own poetry.**

- Your poem should have at least 10 lines, but could have more.
- Your poem should have at least one metaphor, simile, rhyme, or other clear poetic devices
- Your poem must be original and written for this task.
- Remember how your poem looks on the page should be intentional and is important.

Prompt 1

- Look at "Flower" on Page 7.
- Write a poem that centers a color.
- Your title SHOULD NOT be the color. Choose another word or element from the poem.

Prompt 2

- Look at "The Microscopes" on Page 9
- Write a poem about what you show of yourself to the world and what you hide.

Prompt 3

- Look at "Foreaday in the Morning" pg 14 of "After Avery Young" pg 22.
- Write a poem to or about someone who has incorrect thoughts about you, your family, or people like you. Prove them wrong.

Part II THE TRADITION

Reading Guide

Duplex pg 27

CONTENT WARNING - Rape

1. What lines or phrases stand out to you? Why?
2. Do you agree that the opposite of rape is understanding? Why?
3. When we think of male violence we often think of violence against women. This poem showcases an example of men on men violence. Why do you think this often gets less attention in the media and our collective conversation?

Riddle pg 28

1. What lines or phrases stand out to you? Why?
2. Who is the “we” of this riddle? Why does this matter?
3. Answer the riddle.

Correspondence pg 30

1. What lines or phrases stand out to you? Why?
2. This poem is considered an ekphrastic. Take a look at this image [The Jerome Project via The Brooklyn Museum](#). What do you notice about this image?
3. What do you think the poet found moving enough about this image to write a poem about it?



The Legend of *Big and Fine* pg 33

1. What lines or phrases stand out to you? Why?
2. What do the words big and fine mean to you? Are they used around you in conversation?
3. Describe the relationship between the words big, fine and masculinity? How do these ideas relate to possession?

Dear Whiteness pg 40

- 1) What lines or phrases stand out to you? Why?
- 2) How does the speaker use irony to convey their point about whiteness?
- 3) What about this poem gives you a lighter feel?

Entertainment Industry pg 42

- 1) What lines or phrases stand out to you? Why?
- 2) How do mass shootings and gun violence steal our joy?
- 3) Watch this brief [video about The Blues](#). How do you see elements of the blues playing out through this poem and others you've read in this book?

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Prompt 1

- Take a look at "Correspondence" on page 30
- Choose an image; it could be an image you've taken of art in Philadelphia or a found image online.
- Write an ekphrastic, a poem that vividly describes a work of art.

Prompt 2

- Take a look at "Dear Whiteness" on page 40
- Write a poem letter to a construct of oppression.
- Bonus creativity points for incorporating a song lyric into your poem as Brown has done here.

Part III THE TRADITION

Reading Guide

Duplex pg 49

- 1) What lines or phrases stand out to you? Why?
- 2) The speaker says, "Some of us don't need hell to be good." What causes people without a religion to strive for what is right?
- 3) In this poem that poet alludes to a sickness. What is the sickness? How do you know?

After Essex Hemphill pg 51

- 1) What lines or phrases stand out to you? Why?
- 2) [Read about Essex Hemphill here](#) and view [images of him and his work](#) in the National Museum of African American History. Based on what you've read about Essex Hemphill, how did he inspire this poem?
- 3) How might this tree function as a symbol?

Of My Fury - The Virus pg 50 - 55

CONTENT WARNING - Death and sickness

- 1) What lines or phrases stand out to you? Why?
- 2) Utilize this [guide from The Westport Library to learn more about HIV and AIDS](#).
- 3) Find examples in this poems of loss, a fear of loss, and grief. Do these examples resonate with your own ideas about grief and loss.
- 4) How is the fear of losing someone sometimes worse than the loss itself?

Token pg 58

- 1) What lines or phrases stand out to you? Why?
- 2) How can a city offer anonymity?
- 3) When, if ever, have you been the only one or the token? How did it make you feel? Does this poem resonate with you? How so? If you haven't experienced that, how might you build empathy for those that do? How does this poem give you some insight?

Crossing pg 62

- 1) What lines or phrases stand out to you? Why?
- 2) adrienne marie brown says, "be like water." What might that mean in the context of this poem?
- 3) Reflect on the idea of change or crossing over in this poem.

Dark pg 67

- 1) What lines or phrases stand out to you? Why?
- 2) This poem shows the poet struggling with confidence. How does this poem do a good job of illustrating an internal struggle?
- 3) What do you struggle with in your own self talk? How do you deal with internal dissonance?

Stand pg 71

- 1) What lines or phrases stand out to you? Why?
- 2) How does loving someone create an insular world? How does this poem illustrate that idea?
- 3) Explore how the world stops but doesn't when we lose someone we love?

Poetics

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Prompt 1

- Looking at “Dark” on page 67
- Write a poem where you tell yourself how it is. Make sure to include your own name. Where do you need to be better.

Prompt 2

- Look at “Duplex: Cento” on 72.
- Write a cento; a poem created from quotes from this book.