



US LITERATURE: Study Guide 3: Poetry

ποίησις

“poesis” (Greek): to make, to do, to “bring something into being that did not exist before”

“The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem.”

-Walt Whitman

“If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry.”

-Emily Dickinson

“Make it new.”

-Ezra Pound

“For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.”

-Audre Lorde

essential understanding

Poets in the United States have, from the earliest years of the country, used poetry to champion the ideal of democracy. Other poets have challenged American society's failure to live up to the promise of that ideal. Despite living and writing in different eras, American poets across time share some things in common: a yearning for **artistic innovation** ("make it new" was the motto of American modernists), to authentically **express one's individual experience** (whether in ecstasy or agony, or somewhere in between), and to use poetry as a way to **raise our social awareness and political conscience**. This quarter, we will take a deep dive into different eras and kinds of poetry in America, and to investigate the diverse forms of poetic expression...

overview

The emphasis of the quarter will be on understanding how **forms** of poetry create the unique experience of a poem--the feelings it inspires, the thoughts and images it provokes, the social bonds it brings into being, the political messages it conveys, and the spiritual wonder it produces. There will be assigned poetry readings on CommonLit (see below), poetry packets (made by Mr. Neilson), as well as student-selected poems. Over the quarter, we will investigate American poems, poets, and poetry, and the term will culminate in a **group research project** on a single American poet and a **creative project on poetic terms**.

guiding questions:

- I. How do you define beauty? Is beauty subjective or objective?
- II. What are the main formal features of poems? How does a poem's *form* create or shape its *content*?
- III. What is the relationship of poetry to song? How do some of your favorite songs utilize the formal tools of poetry?

lessons

_____ "Lyric" Poetry & Lyrics as Poetry ("Book of Rhyme")

_____ Poetic terms (on various days: line, stanza, formal & free verse, rhyme, rhythm, metaphor, etc.)

_____ 19th-century poets: Walt Whitman & Emily Dickinson

- ___ Modernism
- ___ Post-war & Contemporary Poetry
- ___ Concrete Poetry & Other Experimental Styles

group work

- ___ **In Class, Oct 29 or 30:** Opening Socratic Seminar on Reading Poetry Today
- ___ **Due Nov 8 or 9:** Lyrics Unbound: Annotation of a Favorite Song in Groups
- ___ **Due Dec 20 or 21:** Modern American Poet Project

individual work

- ___ **Due Nov 5 or 6:** “On Beauty”: Creative / Reflective Essay
- ___ **Due Nov 15 or 16:** *Poesis* Assignment: Exploring Forms in the World
- ___ **Due Dec 20 or 21:** Favorite Poem Analysis (2-3 pages)
- ___ **Due TBD:** Poetry Out Loud Memorization

Vocabulary Practices

Mechanics Warmups

SAT Exercises

assessment

- ___ **Due Jan 17 or 18:** Poetic “Lexicon” Project

extensions

Extensions will **only** be given to students who fill out and turn in an Extension Request Form **one class prior to an assignment’s due date**. Any late work without a prior request will be marked down a half grade (A to A-, A- to B+) per each day late.

readings

For this Unit, **all readings** will be provided by Mr. Neilson. They will either be

- a) Distributed in class as a hard copy and posted in Google Classroom under “Poetry.”
- b) From “Common Lit” (site for Literature reading) & posted on Google Classroom

c) Provided by **you, the members of this class.**

links

Use these links to aid you in your **group research project** and other assignments:

[Poetry Foundation](#)

[Common Lit](#) (Some readings found here)

[Book of Rhymes](#), by Adam Bradley (on the poetics of Hip-Hop)

[Rap Genius](#)

[Modern American Poets Site](#)

[Whitman on “America the greatest poem”](#)

[Emily Dickinson Museum site](#)

[A Brief Guide to the Beat Generation](#)

[A Brief Guide to Nuyorican Poetry](#)

[A Brief Guide to the Harlem Renaissance](#)

[A Brief Guide to the Black Arts Movement](#)

And check out [more Brief Guides at Poets.org](#)