

***A New Land* Unit Plan**

Grade Nine - English Language Arts

Introduction to *A New Land* and The Telling Room:

The mission of The Telling Room is to empower youth through writing and share their voices with the world. As a literary arts education organization focused on young writers ages 6 to 18, The Telling Room seeks to build confidence, strengthen literacy skills, and provide real audiences for students. The organization believes that the power of creative expression can change communities and prepare youth for success both now and in the future.

Since 2004, The Telling Room has been nurturing the voices and publishing the work of some of today's most talented and inspiring young poets and writers. Organized into three sections mirroring the transitional stages from childhood into adulthood, *A New Land* packages 30 groundbreaking poems from The Telling Room's first 15 years. Introduced by inaugural poet Amanda Gorman, the poems here offer a stunning exploration of coming-of-age and a triumphant chorus of American youth, whose voices make up their "new land" and also reckon with the social issues that impact us all.

Learn more and purchase copies of *A New Land* [here](#). Educator discounts are available. Find podcast episodes featuring Maine Poet Laureate Stuart Kestenbaum interviewing poets featured in *A New Land* [here](#).

Unit Overview

This one week poetry unit inspires students to see themselves as writers by exposing them to examples of excellent peer writing, providing opportunities for collaboration and discussion, and supporting them through the revision process. By the time they reach high school, some students have developed negative associations with both poetry and creative writing. In an effort to make poetry analysis accessible to all students, no matter their previous exposure or level of academic development, lessons have been designed to scaffold analytical skills and offer a variety of ways for students to engage with texts. The progression of the unit reflects the central tenets of The Telling Room's educational philosophy by giving students low stakes opportunities to practice writing and share their ideas with their peers. Students will leave the unit with a drafted and revised poem and, hopefully, more confidence in themselves as writers and thinkers.

Acknowledgments:

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How to Use This Resource

This curriculum unit is designed for ninth grade ELA classrooms to accompany the Telling Room’s youth poetry anthology *A New Land*. Educators can teach the unit as written to reinforce group work and revision skills, use it to introduce a longer poetry or writing unit, or pick and choose particular lessons to support other classroom goals. While poetry anchors the unit, many lessons and activities are transferable to other genres and even subject areas. Special emphasis has been given to supporting a strong classroom community through opportunities for students to share their writing, practice and refine discussion skills, and collaborate with classmates to read and interpret texts. Teachers who have the time and resources might further support this community by providing students with additional time to edit their final poem and compiling a class compilation to share with students, parents, and/or the wider school community.

Alignment with Maine Learning Standards	Alignment with Common Core Standards	Essential Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SL.1.9-Diploma <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, student-led, and teacher-led) on grades 9-Diploma topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. B. Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas. ● W.2.9-Diploma Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, composing, revising, editing, rewriting, reflecting, and/or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (a) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.A <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. ○ Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas. ● CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.5 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are the characteristics of poetry? How does it compare and contrast to prose? ● How can poetry help us share our stories with a wider audience? ● How does discussion and collaboration contribute to the writing process? ● How can revision help us tell our most authentic story?

Unit Calendar:

Lesson One	Lesson Two	Lesson Three	Lesson Four	Lesson Five
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduction to Unit ● Quick Write ● Read “Grendel’s Mother” ● Final Word Discussion ● Discussion Reflection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Writing into the Room ● 1 Minute Sensory Writing Prompts ● Read “Plastic Palaces” ● Draft Poem ● Partner Share 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Writing into the Room ● Read “When They Ask Me” ● Draft Poem (Who I Will Be) ● Partner Share 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opening Reflection ● Introduction to Revision ● Skill Focus Rotation ● Small Group Share 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sharing Circles ● Final Revision ● Class Share



Lesson One:

Objective(s):

- Students will prepare for a small group discussion by using personal responses to a poem to guide textual evidence selection.
- Students will participate in a small group discussion, building on others' ideas and thoughtfully expressing their own.

Readings and Materials:

- [“Grendel’s Mother Takes the Mic”](#) by Lulu Rasor (page 10)
- [Video for “Grendel’s Mother Takes the Mic”](#)
- Index cards
- [Sample Group Work Rubric](#)

Teacher Prep:

- Make copies of “Grendel’s Mother Takes the Mic”
- Prepare to project video
- Decide how to create small groups. You might allow students to make their own 3-5 person groups, assign them a new group each class, or assign them a group they will stay with throughout the unit.

Lesson Plan:

1. Introduction to Unit

- a. As students come into class, ask them to write a brief response to the question: **What makes a piece of writing a poem?** Encourage them to write in list form. Then, give students 2 minutes to share their answer with a partner.
- b. Bring the class back together, then generate a list of characteristics of poetry on the board. Students may share that poetry is arranged into lines, contains figurative or sensory language, is often short, etc. Use this opportunity to clarify any misconceptions or to complicate students’ assumptions (epic poems are not short, for example, and prose poems are not arranged into lines). Students may also share more personal characteristics—that poetry is hard, for example, or that it’s confusing. Write these down on the board as well, and give students an opportunity to explain their thoughts.
- c. Tell students that poems can vary widely in their structure and content, and it’s not always easy to come up with a clear definition of what makes something a poem. What poems have in common, though, is the communication of a particular experience or emotion through sensory language. In other words, poetry is meant to evoke emotion. The goal of this unit is to learn new strategies for reading and engaging with poetry. Reassure students that they do not need to understand



every aspect of a poem in order to be a good reader! They should focus on being curious and trusting their own reactions to what they're reading.

- d. Introduce *A New Land* and inform students that everything they will read this week was written by someone around their age. Emphasize that anyone can write poetry, and in fact they will be writing their own as part of the unit. Tell students that every poem in *A New Land* went through many revisions to get to its final version, and the focus of the week will be on the process of writing, not on producing a polished piece. They should be thoughtful, brave, and willing to experiment! Ask students what questions they have and answer those questions before moving on.

2. Review Discussion Norms

- a. Put students in partners and ask them to discuss the following questions. Give them 2 minutes to answer each question, then prompt them to begin the next one.
 - i. Think about the best experience you've ever had working in a group. What made it so productive?
 - ii. Think about the worst experience you've ever had working in a group. What made it so challenging?
 - iii. In this unit, you'll be sharing your writing with your peers. What might be important to keep in mind when you're discussing a peer's writing?
- b. Bring students back together and ask for volunteers to share their responses to one or more questions. Lead a discussion about what discussion norms students should follow during the week, with particular emphasis on how to be a good audience for personal writing. It may be helpful to record notes from this conversation to reference later. See the "Sample Group Work Rubric" under Readings and Materials for an example of discussion norms.

3. Quick Write

- a. Tell students that they will be doing lots of writing over the course of the week, and that they will start by trying to see the world through the perspective of a mythical creature. Have students write their name on the front of their index card. Then, give them 5 minutes to brainstorm as many responses to the following prompt as possible:
 - i. Think of a mythical creature, like a vampire or mermaid. Make a list of ways your creature feels misunderstood. For example, a vampire might say "Nobody believes that I make the best chocolate chip cookies!"
- b. Give each student in the room an opportunity to share one item on their list.

4. Read "Grendel's Mother Takes the Mic"



- a. Tell students that they will have their first small group discussion about the first poem in *A New Land*—"Grendel's Mother Takes the Mic." Explain that Grendel is a monster in the epic poem *Beowulf* whose unnamed mother seeks revenge after he is defeated by Beowulf, the hero of the story. Pass out copies of the poem, and tell students that they should prepare for the discussion by underlining lines they love (for any reason), putting stars next to lines they can make a connection with, and putting question marks next to lines they are uncertain about or want to discuss further.
- b. Read "Grendel's Mother Takes the Mic" twice aloud. The first time through, tell students just to listen. The second time through, they should read along with pen in hand. Give students a few minutes after the second reading to mark up their poem. Students may benefit from seeing this annotation process modelled first.
- c. Tell students that you're going to show them a short video based on the poem you just read. They should pay attention to the emotions evoked in the video, as well as the places where their interpretation was similar or different. Play the video, then lead a discussion based on the following questions:
 - i. How does this poem align with the criteria for poetry we generated earlier? In what way does it work against your expectations for poetry?
 - ii. What stood out to you in the video? Did anything surprise you?
 - iii. How did your interpretation of the poem compare and contrast to the filmmakers' interpretation? What did you like? What would you have changed?

5. Final Word Discussion

- a. Tell students that they will be engaging in a Final Word Discussion using one of the lines they marked earlier, and read the following description:
 - i. One student will begin by reading their chosen section aloud without offering additional commentary. One by one, moving around the circle, everyone else should comment on the selection. You can offer an explanation of what's happening, express an emotional response to the lines, make a connection, describe a place of confusion, etc. In the end, the person who read the selection has the final word, explaining the significance of the selection and the motivation behind their choice. This process repeats until every student in the group has had the Final Word.
 1. Students often want to talk back and forth instead of going person by person around the circle; let them know that they can respond to what other people have said when it's their turn to talk, but they shouldn't jump into the discussion otherwise.
- b. Model process with volunteers by having one student offer to read something they underlined, starred, or questioned and asking 3 other students to offer a commentary. The student who read the lines should then explain why they chose it.



Remind students that “I liked it” IS a perfectly good reason for choosing lines, as long as they can be specific! What, in particular, did they like? Why?

- c. Divide students back into small groups (either the same groups as earlier in class, or new ones). Give them about 10 minutes to discuss “Grendel’s Mother Takes the Mic” in groups.

6. Discussion Reflection

- a. Bring students back together, and ask for volunteers to share a highlight from their discussion. Then, ask students the following:
 - i. Think back to our discussion about group work. What did you do well in your groups? What do you think you could work on for next time?
- b. Before students leave class, have them flip over their index card and write one thing they’re proud of from their group discussion and one thing they’d like to improve for next time. Encourage them to be specific! Then, collect these cards for information about where students may need support in coming days.

Homework/Optional Opportunities for Extension:

- Ask students to choose a photograph from their childhood to bring to tomorrow’s class. Ideally, the photograph will include other people, feature an interesting background, or spark a particular story (a school picture is not a good choice). Students will use their photograph to generate ideas for writing, but they will not have to share it with others.
- Optional: Have students listen to the conversation between Maine Poet Laureate Stuart Kestenbaum and Lulu Rasor, the author of “Grendel’s Mother Takes the Mic.” Ask them to bring one observation to class tomorrow. You can find the podcast [here](#)—it is Episode 9.



Lesson Two:

Objective(s):

- Students will generate ideas and share writing with a partner while following class-generated discussion norms.
- Students will identify similarities between prose and poetry using “Plastic Palaces” as a model.
- Students will draft a poem that incorporates a personal memory.

Readings and Materials:

- [“Plastic Palaces”](#) by Siri Pierce (page 63)
- Memory Poem Drafting Organizer (students could also do this work in designated journals)
 - [Paper Copy](#)
 - [Digital Copy](#)
- Folders to organize drafting materials, if using

Teacher Prep:

- Make copies of “Plastic Palaces” and Memory Poem Drafting Organizer (if using paper copy)
- Decide how to create small groups. You might allow students to make their own 3-5 person groups, assign them a new group each class, or keep the same groups from the last class.
- [Review The Telling Room Guide to Giving Feedback](#)

Lesson Plan:

1. Writing into the Room

- a. Start class by giving students a low stakes opportunity to write creatively (either in journals or in the Drafting Day 1 Organizer). Use the following prompt to get students to start thinking about a specific memory:
 - i. Look carefully at the childhood photograph you brought into class today. Pay attention to the details: the expressions on people’s faces, the specific color of the sky, the texture of the furniture, etc. Then, write a list of everything you see. Challenge yourself to use as many descriptive phrases as possible. For example, instead of listing “my younger brother,” you might write “my younger brother, the raggedy sleeves of his blue sweatshirt tucked over his fists.”

2. Sensory Quick Writes



- a. Tell students that by the end of class today, they will have drafted their first poem, and all of the writing activities at the beginning of class are designed to help them generate ideas. Remind them that the goal of this unit is not to produce a polished piece of writing, but to feel more comfortable and confident engaging in the writing process.
- b. Ask students to imagine a place where they spent a lot of time when they were younger. This could be a childhood home or another place that was particularly meaningful to them. Give them 1-2 minutes to walk through that space in their mind, picturing the people, animals, and objects they might encounter there. Then, have students write about each of the following sensory prompts for 1 minute. They can use their journal or the Drafting Day 1 Organizer. It may be helpful for teachers to model the prompts before students begin working.
 - i. Smell: Write about what your childhood place **SMELLS** like.
 - ii. Taste: Write about what your childhood place **TASTES** like
 - iii. Touch: Write about what something in your childhood place **FEELS** like
 - iv. Sound: Write about what your childhood place **SOUNDS** like
 - v. Sight: Write about what your childhood place **LOOKS** like

3. Thickening the Air

- a. Divide your whiteboard into five sections, and spend some time eliciting responses from students for each sensory prompt and noting them on the board. The goal is to hear from every student; if your class is small enough, you might consider quickly asking each student to share a response for each sense. At the end of this activity, you should have a collection of sensory descriptions. For example: “Folgers coffee brewing on the counter,” “Jazz music playing from under a door,” etc.
 - i. For a larger class or a class that would benefit from movement, consider having students write one response for each sense on Post It notes—one Post It per description. Designate an area of the room for each sense, have students place their Post Its in the correct spots, then offer 5-7 minutes for students to participate in a silent Gallery Walk. Students should make their way around the room, reading their classmates’ descriptions and silently noting any observations.
- b. Ask students what they notice about the descriptions they shared. They might note the wide range of responses or some surprising overlaps. Tell students that they have just generated a list of imagery—language that evokes one or more of the five senses. Before erasing the board, encourage students to jot down any additions to their original lists inspired by their classmates’ contributions.



4. Poetry as Storytelling with “Plastic Palaces”

- a. Review yesterday’s learning by leading students in a discussion around the following questions:
 - i. What makes a piece of writing a poem?
 - ii. How might a poem differ from a piece of prose like a short story or a novel? How might it be similar?
 - iii. [OPTIONAL] What stood out to you when you listened to Lulu Rasor’s discussion with Poet Laureate Stuart Kestenbaum?

- b. Tell students that poems can tell stories just like fiction or memoir and that today they’ll be writing a poem that tells a story from their past or present. First, though, they’ll read a student model called “Plastic Palaces.” Read “Plastic Palaces” aloud 3 times. The first time, students should just listen and follow along on the page. The second time, students should create a list of what happens in the story (the narrator gets a babysitter, etc.). The third time, students should make a list of the most striking images from the poem in the order that they appear. Tell students that some images might appear more than once; if that’s the case, the image can be repeated in the list. At the end of the exercise, students should have two lists: one that functions as a timeline of the poem’s events, and one that captures its most powerful language.
 - i. Students may benefit from seeing this list-making process modelled, completing it with a partner, or participating in a whole-class brainstorm. If you decide to generate the lists as a class, lead a class discussion about questions 2 and 4 from the following activity and skip the circling aspect.

- c. Have students make two circles, with the inner circle facing outward and the outer circle facing inward. Students will have 2-3 minutes with each partner to answer one of the questions below. In between questions, the outer circle should shift one person to the right:
 - i. Read your first list aloud, then listen to your partner read their first list. What events did you both include? Which events made it onto one list but not the other? How come?
 - ii. What is it like to just hear the events of a story in list form? How might a reader feel if they were reading a poem similar to your first list?
 - iii. Read your second list aloud, then listen to your partner read their second list. What images did you both include? What images made it onto one list but not the other? How come?
 - iv. What is it like to hear the poem’s images in list form? How might a reader feel if they were reading a poem similar to your second list?



- d. Have students return to their seats and ask them to share something interesting they heard from someone else. Guide students to think how Siri's clear storyline and powerful language work together to create an emotional response in the reader. Both are necessary to help a reader understand the importance of the story being shared.

5. Draft Poem

- a. Give students 15-20 minutes to write a first draft of a poem that tells the story of a moment or event from their past or present. Introduce the assignment in the following manner:
 - i. Today, you'll be writing the first draft of a poem about a moment or event from your past or present. Your moment can be big or small, but it should be something you can describe with as much detail as possible. When in doubt, narrow your focus! It will be easier to describe the time you skinned your knees jumping out of your neighbor's tree than it will the entire summer after fourth grade. You can use the writing you did earlier in class to jumpstart your thinking. Once you've chosen your moment, you might use the list-making we did for "Plastic Palaces" to prepare to write. Consider making one list of all the events you want to include in your poem and another of the clearest images you can remember from the moment you're planning to write about. Try to use elements from both lists in your writing!
- b. The focus of this unit is on drafting and revision, and you should allow students to own the process. Remind them that **THEY** get to decide what story to tell and how to tell it. You might circle the room as students are writing to help brainstorm ideas, identify options, or ask questions, but resist the urge to tell students what to write. See [The Telling Room Guide to Giving Feedback](#) for more information.

6. Partner Share

- a. Have students partner up with a classmate, and ask them to share something that they wrote—a line, a section, or the entire poem. Model supportive responses ("Wow, that's really powerful." "I love that you describe _____ as _____.") and unsupportive responses ("I don't get it." "What if you changed it to _____?"). Students will have the opportunity to offer constructive feedback later in the week, but this first round of sharing is just to build confidence and give students the opportunity to hear their work aloud.
- b. If there is time, you may ask for volunteers to share their writing with the whole class. Students can snap after each person finishes to signal their support. After someone has read, ask the other members of the class to share particular



words, images, or lines that they remember. This strategy gives writers initial feedback about the most powerful elements of their drafts.

Optional Homework/Opportunities for Extension:

- Have students watch the video version of “Plastic Palaces” and consider the impact of the included footage from the author’s childhood. If someone was filming the moment they chose to write about in their poem, what would they see? Students might choose to add these visual details to their existing draft.



Lesson Three:

Objective(s):

- Students will prepare for a silent discussion by using personal responses to a poem to guide textual evidence selection.
- Students will participate in a silent class discussion, building on others' ideas and thoughtfully expressing their own.
- Students will draft a poem that imagines some aspect of the future.

Readings and Materials:

- [“When They Ask Me What Will Be the First Thing I Will Do When ‘This is Over’”](#) by Amanda Dettmann (page 116)
- 3 large pieces of blank paper
- Markers and colored pencils
- Future Poem Drafting Organizer (students could also do this work in designated journals)
 - [Paper Copy](#)
 - [Digital Copy](#)
- [Hyperdoc Version of Assignment](#)

Teacher Prep:

- Review [Rotating Questions](#) guidelines and set up the activity by writing “Lines I Love” on one large sheet of blank paper, “Lines I Connect To” on another blank sheet, and “Questions I Have” on a final blank sheet.
- Make copies of “When They Ask Me What Will Be the First Thing I Will Do When ‘This is Over’” and Future Poem Drafting Organizer (if using paper copy)
- Prepare to Project [“What NYC Sounds Like Every Night at 7”](#) and [Amanda’s Reading](#)

Lesson Plan:

⇒ **Note: Students can also complete an abbreviated version this lesson independently using the hyperdoc assignment linked under Reading and Materials.**

1. Writing into the Room

- a. Ask students to make a list for each of the prompts below. Give them about 3 minutes per prompt to write.
 - i. Make a list of ten challenges you’ve faced in the last year
 - ii. Make a list of ten challenges you’ve faced in the last week
 - iii. Make a list of ten things you want to do in the future



2. Thickening the Air

- a. Have students discuss the following questions with a partner or small group:
 - i. How do the events on your “year” list differ from the events on your “week” list? Which list would be easier to write a longer piece about? Why?
 - ii. If you were asked to make a list of ten challenges you faced ten years ago, would you find the task easy or hard? What kinds of events are easiest to remember? What kinds of events might be quickly forgotten?
 - iii. Do you see any connections between the challenges you wrote about and the things you want to do in the future?
- b. Bring students back together, and ask for volunteers to share observations from their discussions. What seems to be true about how and why we remember certain events? Students may share that it is easier to remember the details of recent events but that big events are memorable no matter when they occur. Emphasize that there are poems about all parts of human experience, from dealing with the death of a loved one to feeling awkward at the grocery store.

3. Introduction to Objective

- a. Connect this lesson to previous assignments with the following introduction:
 - i. This unit is all about poetry as communication, about finding in poetry the things that make us most human: community, connection, and emotional recognition. Appreciating poetry means putting aside thoughts like “I don’t get it” and “this doesn’t make sense” and substituting questions instead.
 1. What do I understand?
 2. What images, lines, and stanzas stand out to me? Why?
 3. What does this remind me of?
 4. What do I want to know more about?

We will practice this process today using a poem written by Amanda Dettmann called “When They Ask Me What Will Be the First Thing I Do When ‘This Is Over.’” The “this” in the poem is the COVID-19 pandemic, which is a challenge we’ve all been impacted by. At the end of class, you’ll draft a poem about some aspect of your life in the future.

4. Work with Student Model

- a. Play the video “What NYC Sounds Like Every Night at 7” for students to provide context for Amanda’s poem. The video captures the spontaneous celebration of healthcare workers that regularly took place during quarantine.



- b. Play Amanda's reading of "When They Ask Me What Will Be the First Thing I Do When 'This Is Over'" for students two times. The first time, have them just listen and follow along on their copy of their poem. The second time, have students underline lines they love (for any reason!), put stars next to lines they can make a connection with, and put question marks next to lines they are uncertain about or want to discuss further.
- c. Rotating Questions: Set out the three large sheets of paper around the room, along with a collection of markers or colored pencils (see Teacher Prep). Divide students into three groups, and assign each group one of the sheets. Give students 4 minutes to record 1+ lines on their assigned paper. Then, give students 6 minutes to move around the room, read the lines their peers wrote down, and record ideas and observations based on the selected lines from the poem. They might use arrows, stars, and other symbols to make connections between ideas or show appreciation. At the end of the 6 minutes, have students circle one more time to review their classmates' additions. Then, lead a discussion based on the following questions:
 - i. What lines did people particularly enjoy? What did those lines have in common?
 - ii. What kinds of connections were people able to make to the poem? Even if you haven't experienced the same events, what feelings or ideas felt familiar?
 - iii. What lines do you still have questions about?

5. Draft Poem

- a. Give students 15-20 minutes to write a first draft of a poem that tells the story of something they will do in the future. Introduce the assignment in the following manner:
 - i. Today, you'll be writing the first draft of an "I will" poem—a poem that tells the story of something you will do in the future. You can write about a future five minutes from now or one five decades from now. Consider using your lists from the beginning of class, as well as Amanda Dettmann's poem, to jumpstart your thinking. What challenges have you faced in the past, and how will you act differently in the future? How have the challenges you've experienced shaped the person you want to be and the way you want to treat others? Try to incorporate some of the elements you noticed in the poem we read together. What writerly "moves" can you try out? What kinds of connections can you build with your audience? Be creative and remember that this unit is all about process, not perfection. Also remember that you are in charge of what you decide to write about. There is no requirement that you write a poem about something painful or private—remember that your challenge can be an ordinary, everyday hurdle.



- b. Students may need more support to begin this poem because it asks them to imagine something new rather than describing a memory. A frame like “Because of _____, I will _____” may help students get started.

6. Partner Share

- a. Have students partner up with a classmate, and ask them to share something that they wrote—a line, a section, or the entire poem. Model supportive responses (“Wow, that’s really powerful.” “I love that you describe _____ as _____.”) and unsupportive responses (“I don’t get it.” “What if you changed it to _____?”). Students will have the opportunity to offer constructive feedback later in the week, but this first round of sharing is just to build confidence and give students the opportunity to hear their work aloud.
- b. If there is time, you may ask for volunteers to share their writing with the whole class. Students might snap after each person finishes to signal their support!

Optional Homework/Opportunities for Extension:

- Have students listen to the conversation between Maine Poet Laureate Stuart Kestenbaum and Amanda Dettmann, the author of “When They Ask Me What Will Be the First Thing I Will Do When ‘This is Over.’” You can find the podcast [here](#)—it is Episode 1.



Lesson Four:

Objective(s):

- Students will identify and analyze imagery, audience, and comparison in a selection of poetry.
- Students will revise their drafted poem to include some or all of the poetic features they discussed in groups.

Readings and Materials:

- Index cards
- [Revision Rubric](#)
- Skill Focus Worksheets
 - [Imagery](#)
 - [Comparisons](#)
 - [Audience](#)

Teacher Prep:

- Prepare to project rubric
- Make copies of Skill Focus Worksheets
- Decide how to run Skill Focus Rotation (see Skill Focus Rotation Adaptations for ideas)

Lesson Plan:

1. Opening Reflection

- a. Have students take out their two drafted poems and choose the poem they are most excited to continue working with. Tell them that they'll be revising that poem over the next two days and will have the opportunity to share it with others. Then, ask them to answer the following questions on their index card:
 - i. What is your favorite part of your poem so far? This could be a line you like, an idea you've included, etc.
 - ii. What do you want your reader to come away with after reading your poem?
 - iii. If you had to choose one part of your poem to develop more, which part would it be?
- b. Collect index cards from students and use them to guide revision if students are feeling stuck.

2. Introduction to Revision



- a. Tell students that tomorrow they will turn in a revised draft of the poem they chose to write about during the Opening Reflection. You can introduce the revision in the following way:
 - i. The purpose of this unit is to build your confidence as writers, which means remembering that writing is a process, not something that happens perfectly the first time. The goal of revision is just what it sounds like—to see your work in a different way—which requires identifying the elements of your writing that you want to explore further and building your toolbox of strategies for improving your writing. Good writers revise their works dozens of times because they know that exploring new ideas and experimenting with language are necessary steps in creating the best work they can. The piece you turn in tomorrow will not be perfect, and that’s okay! What I’ll be looking for is evidence that you tried out a variety of revision techniques and took ownership over your work by deciding what was important to keep and what could be changed.
- b. Project the Revision Rubric on the board and briefly walk students through the assignment expectations.

3. Skill Focus Rotation

- a. Split students into groups of three and ask each member of the group to choose one of the three Skill Focus Sheets to start with. Tell students that each Skill Focus Sheet introduces a specific poetic element, shows examples of that element in a poem published in *A New Land*, explains how writers can use the poetic element to impact the reader, and provides a quick writing exercise so that students can practice the skill themselves. Each student will be responsible for reading their Skill Focus Sheet in its entirety, asking clarifying questions, and trying out the writing exercise. Then, they will serve as the Skill Expert for their group, introducing their assigned skill and explaining the writing exercise to their peers. Students don’t have to read the example poem during their explanation, but should aim to provide a working definition of the skill as well as a few examples and an explanation of how the poetic element can impact the reader. See a sample timeline below:
 - i. 15 minutes: Each student reads their Skill Focus Sheet and completes the writing exercise
 - ii. 25 minutes: One by one, each student introduces their skill and provides 5 or so minutes for their group members to complete the writing exercise. The presenting student can expand on their own writing during this time.
- b. Tell students that they can complete the writing exercises in a journal, a lined sheet of paper, or on their Drafting Organizer from a previous class. They should plan to turn in these exercises as part of their revision portfolio.



⇒ **Note: There are a variety of ways to adapt this assignment to fit the needs of your classroom. See other options under “Opportunities for Extension”**

4. **Small Group Share**

- a. Have students remain in their groups to share something they wrote during class. They might choose to share each of their writing exercises, a single image, or something in between. If there’s time, students might discuss how they’re planning to incorporate their new writing into their poem and ask for feedback.

Optional Homework/Opportunities for Extension:

- Ask students to spend some time revising their poem using the new writing they produced in class. Remind them to underline any additions and mark any changes with either a comment (if students are writing digitally) or with arrows (if students are writing on paper).
- If you have time to extend this lesson over more than one class period, consider reinforcing student learning by asking students to identify examples of imagery, comparison, and audience in other poems from *A New Land*. You might ask them to respond in writing to the following questions:
 - How does the author of your chosen poem use imagery, comparison, and/or a particular perspective? What is the impact on the reader? Please refer to specific textual evidence in your response.

Skill Focus Rotation Adaptations:

1. If you have less time or a less independent group of students, you may choose one Skill Focus Sheet to discuss as a class and lead students through the writing exercise as a group.
2. If you have more time or a more independent group of students, you might assign each student to work through each Skill Focus Sheet independently, perhaps over a series of classes or as a homework assignment.
3. If you anticipate that your students will need more support in understanding and presenting their assigned skill, consider dividing students into three “expert groups” and assigning each group one of the three Skill Focus Sheets to read and discuss. Then, move students into three-person “home groups,” with one person representing each of the three skills, to share what they learned.



Lesson Five:

Objective(s):

- Students will work in groups to offer thoughtful, generative feedback about each other's poetry drafts.
- Students will use peer feedback to guide revision.
- Students will share their writing (whether a line, a stanza, or the whole poem) with the class.

Readings and Materials:

- [Peer Review Questions](#)
- [Revision Checklist](#)

Teacher Prep:

- Make copies of Peer Review Questions and Revision Checklist
- Decide how to create small groups. You might allow students to make their own 3-5 person groups, assign them a new group each class, or keep the same groups from a previous class.

Lesson Plan:

1. Sharing Circles

- a. Pass back the index cards that students filled out yesterday. Tell students that they will have the opportunity today to ask for specific feedback from their peers and to try out some additional revision techniques. They can use what they wrote yesterday to remind themselves of their goals for their poem.
- b. Divide students into groups of 3-5. You may choose to use the same groups as yesterday, assign different groups, or allow students to choose their own groups. Students should read the Peer Review Questions and individually choose 1-2 questions they would like their peers to answer about their poem. Then, students should take turns sharing their chosen question(s), reading their poem, and recording peer feedback in the space provided. It may be helpful to model this process for students first. Consider sharing your own piece of writing and asking for student feedback, highlighting especially productive comments and explaining why they are helpful.

2. Final Revision

- a. Give students 20 minutes to make final revisions to their poems. They can use the new writing they did yesterday, the peer feedback they just received, and the Revision Checklist for ideas. Remind students that they have ownership over



their own writing: they get to decide what elements of their poem to emphasize or delete, and they are not required to incorporate anyone else's suggestions. They should make sure to mark any revisions to their original poem by underlining additions, marking changes using a comment (if drafting digitally) or arrow (if drafting on paper), and striking through any deletions. If students want to produce a final copy without these marks, they should do so on a separate sheet of paper or document. Remind students that they will turn in all evidence of revision in a Revision Portfolio at the end of class.

3. **Class Share**

- a. With remaining class time, provide students an opportunity to share their poems aloud. The goal should be to hear from every student, but allow students to choose how much they are willing to share. Students can snap after each person finishes to signal their support.

4. **Student Reflection**

- a. Give students 10 minutes to complete the Student Reflection portion of the Revision Rubric.
- b. At the end of class, students should turn in their revision journals or a folder with their revision materials, including their index card. Grade their work using the Revision Rubric.

Optional Homework/Opportunities for Extension:

- If time allows, give students additional time to revise and edit their poem and compile finished drafts into a class publication to share with students and their families. Consider sharing the [Telling Room Submissions Page](#) with students so they can find a broader audience for their work.

Additional Writing Prompts to Spark Student Thinking:

- Teacher brings in spices or flowers to pass around the room. Students write about a specific memory sparked by the sight, touch, or smell.
- Teacher pulls a random tarot card from a deck or online generator and explains what it means (meanings are easy to find online). Students use the card's meaning as a theme or starting place
- Smell: Write about the smell of a fresh cut orange
- Taste: Write about the taste of saltwater



The Telling Room - 2021

- Touch: Write about the touch of a soft animal
- Sound: Write about the sound of lightning and thunder
- Sight: Write about the sight of an old man crossing the street



GRENDEL'S MOTHER TAKES THE MIC

Lulu Rasor

Listen up! I don't care for your petty battles, your forgettable epics. Your tongues can't pronounce

my name, so don't even try. They say to name a thing is to tame a thing, so I'm safe from domestication. Just hand

me that mic—while you still can. A tooth for a tooth, an eye for an eye might not be your class of justice, but I make my own rule

beneath the murk and algae, over silver-darting slashes and the endless sway of reeds. Where's your hero now, safely

sleeping in dreams of victory? Your swords and soldiers can't hold me—I line my kitchen with the bones of kings. I won't pretend

I'm here for parley or peace. We don't have diplomacy down in the mud and sludge. Teeth are the only treaty I know.

I'm unnamed, untamed, unnatural, unloved because I know the silent death of womanhood. Mother sister wife

daughter lover princess queen—they stitch the world together when your honor slashes it apart,



but who knows their names now? Tell me how it's worthwhile
to follow rules when all you get is a gouge in the family tree.
Names are overrated, legacies a scam—that's the harshest truth
you only find alone at the bottom of a lake.

And here's a secret: wicked witches always have more fun.
I'm going down, but I'll claw my way into your epics anyway,
nameless as I am.

Sample Group Work Rubric

	Beginning 1	Needs Improvement 2	Acceptable 3	Accomplished 3.5	Exemplary 4
Preparation	Student enters discussion without having prepared.	Student enters discussion with preparation incomplete.	Student completes preparation before discussion, but with minimum effort.	Student completes preparation before discussion and shows strong effort.	Student completes preparation before discussion with exceptional thought and creativity.
Engagement	Student is minimally engaged in group discussion. S/he may have head down, be on phone, or be distracted.	Student is somewhat engaged in group discussion, but is frequently distracted. Speaks infrequently.	Student is generally engaged in group discussion. Shares perspective and answers questions, but does not ask questions of others.	Student is engaged and interested in group discussion. Shares perspective, answers questions, and works to involve others in the discussion.	Student is highly engaged and interested. Serves as a leader in the discussion and pushes group members to reach new levels of knowledge.
Quality of Discussion	Group finishes quickly without delving into text. Not everyone shares their perspective, and no one asks follow up questions.	Group summarizes ideas but inconsistently reaches deeper levels of understanding. Everyone shares perspective, but there is little follow-up.	Group members share ideas and there is some original discussion. Members inconsistently respond to other people's contributions.	Group members share ideas and respond with thoughtful questions to the contributions of others. Discussion results in original insights.	Group members share ideas and participate equally in an original, insightful discussion. Results in college-level understanding.
Effort	Student demonstrates little to no effort in discussion and rarely speaks. Student adopts a consistently negative attitude.	Student demonstrates inconsistent effort in discussion and fails to improve over time. Student may sometimes adopt a negative attitude.	Student demonstrates some effort in discussion and makes some attempt to improve over time. Student may adopt an apathetic attitude.	Student demonstrates clear effort in discussion and strives to improve on previous performance. Student generally adopts a positive attitude.	Student demonstrates exemplary effort and makes significant improvement over time. Student consistently adopts a positive attitude.
Listening Skills	Student shows few signs of listening to peers. May have head down, be on phone, or be talking to others. Student is rude or argumentative during discussions.	Student inconsistently listens to others, and shows clear signs of being distracted. Student may occasionally be rude or argumentative during discussions.	Student generally listens to peers, but may make inconsistent use of eye contact, affirmative comments, or physical cues. Student is generally polite to group members.	Student consistently shows signs of listening by using eye contact, affirmative comments, and physical cues. Student is respectful to group members.	Student demonstrates all qualities of an Accomplished listener and monitors talking time in the group so that everyone participates equally.

Score for Monday	Score for Tuesday	Score for Wednesday	Score for Thursday	Score for Friday	Final Score

PLASTIC PALACES

Siri Pierce

One summer

I met a seventeen-year-old angel.

She had a halo of burnt red hair
and wore a green and gold bikini.

She pressed a button and the garage door to heaven
creaked upwards and away.

Inside were bins of dolls and clothes,
plastic palaces,
and a big, shiny Suburban.

Everything I wanted
when I was eight.

Together we fought sandstorms,
became mermaids,
and drank peach iced tea.

One day, I made a ferocious tiger
out of orange marker and black velvet.

I bedazzled the bluest waves of the bluest water
on my mosaic.

Another day, I got a book and read it to the last page.

I never finished books
back then.

I was in the land of yeses.

I knew the angel for a week.
My mom called it “Babysitter Camp.”
After that I almost forgot about her.
Third grade came.
Sparkly jump ropes, albatrosses, cursive,
and capitalism.
I still played with the dolls
she gave me,
but I had moved on.
I didn’t hear about her again
until sixth grade.

The news came in a text.
A whole life gone,
captured in the ding of a cell phone.
Plastic palaces collapsed.
I had always known she was
an angel,
with her halo of burnt red hair.



Sensory Quick Writes

Imagine a place where you spent a lot of time as a kid. This could be a childhood home or another place that was particularly meaningful to you. Imagine the space in your mind, picturing the people, animals, and objects you might encounter there. Then write about each of the following sensory prompts for 1 minute.

1. Smell: Write about what your childhood place **SMELLS** like.

2. Taste: Write about what your childhood place **TASTES** like

3. Touch: Write about what something in your childhood place **FEELS** like

4. Sound: Write about what your childhood place **SOUNDS** like

5. Sight: Write about what your childhood place **LOOKS** like

Thickening the Air

Jot down new ideas about your place inspired by your classmates' writing:

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Poetry as Storytelling

Complete the following lists based on Siri Pierce's poem "Plastic Palaces"

List One What happens in the poem? <i>Ex: The speaker gets a new babysitter</i>	List Two What are the most striking images in the poem? <i>Ex: Halo of burnt red hair</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">••••••	<ul style="list-style-type: none">••••••

Draft Poem

Write the first draft of a poem about a moment or event from your past or present. Your moment can be big or small, but it should be something you can describe with as much detail as possible. When in doubt, narrow your focus! It will be easier to describe the time you skinned your knees jumping out of your neighbor's tree than it will the entire summer after fourth grade. You can use the writing you did earlier in class to jumpstart your thinking.

- **Tip:** Once you've chosen your moment, you might use the list-making we did for "Plastic Palaces" to prepare to write. Consider making one list of all the events you want to include in



The Telling Room Guide to Giving Feedback

The Telling Room's mission is to empower youth through writing and share their voices with the world. In classrooms, afterschool programs, and summer camps, Teaching Artists support students through the writing process, offering guidance and feedback at every stage. This feedback can take a variety of forms but generally follows the tenets outlined below.

1. Feedback Aligns with The Telling Room's Beliefs about Writing

- a. All young people are natural storytellers
- b. Success may look different for different kids, and we assume that students are doing their best with the skills and knowledge they have
- c. Students are not writing to please adults, nor are we writing the story for them. Students have creative control.

2. Feedback Should Inspire, Not Deflate

- a. We value curiosity and experimentation in the writing process. Feedback should encourage students to try different things.
- b. Sometimes experiments won't go well, but we try them, we keep an open mind, and we know there's a different way if this one doesn't work.

3. Feedback Is Clear about Process and Product

- a. Students should know where they are in the writing process (drafting, editing, etc.), how much time they have left to work on the assignment, and what they are expected to produce.
- b. Normalize revision: all writers revise, and work that needs to be revised isn't "bad," it's just in a beginning stage of the writing process.

4. Feedback Puts the Student in Control

- a. Feedback should provide students with choices, not dictate a particular direction for their writing.
- b. All feedback is take it or leave it.
- c. Teacher is ONE reader, not THE reader. Try to avoid generalizing the experience of reading the piece.

5. Feedback Follows a Consistent Structure

- a. Read the entire piece before commenting.
- b. Begin with one genuine piece of positive feedback.
- c. Explain the biggest opportunity for student exploration (think about the overall piece instead of focusing on particular sentences or paragraphs).
- d. End by expressing excitement: what are you excited to see more of?

***Note: This structure is geared toward revision, not editing.

WHEN THEY ASK ME WHAT WILL BE THE FIRST THING I DO AFTER “THIS IS OVER”

Amanda Dettmann

I do not know what it feels like
to give birth to a child.

But right now there is a sound sizzling
every night at 7 pm
across New York
city
across rooftops
and gutters
and stickered bus benches

Clapping
for doctors, nurses, everyone
on the front lines
City as an entire
clap
City stopping to make the same motion at the same time:

A ten-year-old, clapping,
while her moon-landing puzzle pieces cartwheel
across the woven rug

A 45-year-old mother, clapping,
while her tomatillo soup sings

her engagement ring a ballet not of being found
but of finding someone who sees

A 98-year-old great-grandfather, clapping,
standing at his window with his bent cane
glasses so unfogged and unafraid it hurts a little
to open wider

How weird
for pieces of the body to choose themselves

for they have always known
foreign freckles
wrinkled, unrelated palms
cherried thumbs (not their own) sandpapering the same space they both
call home

Our dangling limbs touching each other
clap clap clap
so more people can touch
again.

There is a plant named bougainvillea.
I am naming my daughter
Bougainvillea—
the daughter we are all growing during this time—

because she will stretch taking nothing for granted into a new vine we call
Now
we call Monday afternoons at the office

we call nights sipping wine with strangers
Nothing will taste bitter again

Bougainvillea will thirst to say “Thank you,” anytime, anywhere, with
anyone
Bougainvillea will feed on firsts, a feast of anything, anyplace, any
moment, anybody

Because we have forgotten how starved we have been.

How a quarter of an inch of butter
did not mean a thing.
A paper movie ticket.
Scissors through hair.
Sleeping next to someone.
Sharing the same spoon.
Holding my grandmother has been a decade of drought
and all the water is yelling at me “Do it now! Do it now.”

We are in battle. This
battle. To prove that Bougainvillea is a climbing plant
even when the dictionary says its flowers are “insignificant” and cannot
move.

To prove that we are not machines
addicted to repetition addicted to repetition addicted to repetition

Our papery green thumbs were once
born as thin sheets of metal, once
gloved and greedy, masked and eyeless,
Our thumbs were shields
to touch

and be touched
to kiss
and be kissed
to breathe
and be breathed into

We have forgotten that a fly can still find its fire
even in capture and we are that fly.

Bougainvillea, you are blind now,
but I promise
you will photograph this world
in its most naked state of being:

black and white
no one is there
click, snap, flutter, flare

you will name a plastic grocery bag dancing in air alone on the street
as its own word. This.

Future Poem Drafting Organizer

Writing into the Room

Make a list of ten challenges you've faced in the last year	Make a list of ten challenges you've faced in the last week	Make a list of ten things you want to do in the future
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.
5.	5.	5.
6.	6.	6.
7.	7.	7.
8.	8.	8.
9.	9.	9.
10.	10.	10.



POETRY ANALYSIS

The Telling Room



Learn more about **Amanda Dettmann** [here](#).

Intro

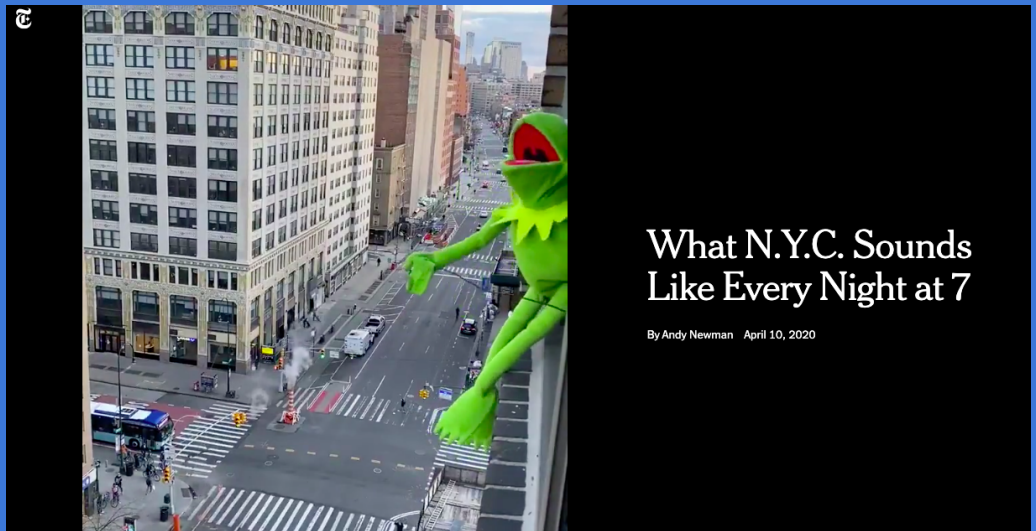
This unit is all about **poetry as communication**, about finding in poetry the things that make us most human: community, connection, and emotional recognition. Appreciating poetry means putting aside thoughts like “I don’t get it” and “this doesn’t make sense” and substituting questions instead.

- What do I understand?
- What images, lines, and stanzas stand out to me? Why?
- What does this remind me of?
- What do I want to know more about?

We’re going to practice this process of questioning with a poem written by Amanda Dettmann.

Video Warmup

Click on the image, watch the videos, then respond to the prompt below.



What N.Y.C. Sounds Like Every Night at 7

By Andy Newman April 10, 2020

“What N.Y.C. Sounds Like Every Night at 7,” *The New York Times*.

Prompt: How did you feel while watching the videos of New Yorkers clapping for first responders during the first weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic? Why do you think this tradition started? What does it show about what people wanted or needed during quarantine?



(Type response here)

READ THE POEM 3+ TIMES
and/or watch it [here!](#)

When They Ask Me What Will Be the First Thing I Do After “This Is Over”

I do not know what it feels like
to give birth to a child.

But right now there is a sound sizzling
every night at 7 pm
across New York
city
across rooftops
and gutters
and stickered bus benches

Clapping
for doctors, nurses, everyone
on the front lines
City as an entire
clap
City stopping to make the same motion at the same time:

A ten-year-old, clapping,
while her moon-landing puzzle pieces cartwheel
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her engagement ring a ballet not of being found
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A 98-year-old great-grandfather, clapping,
standing at his window with his bent cane



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for pieces of the body to choose themselves

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the daughter we are all growing during this time—

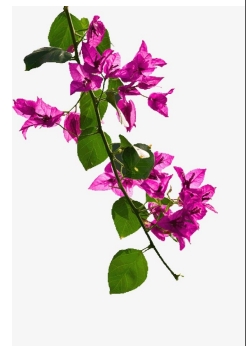
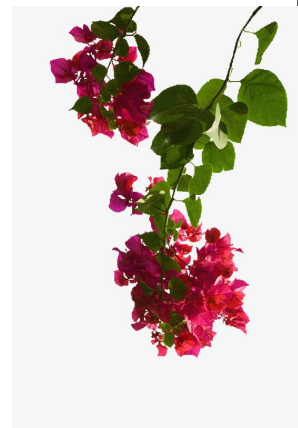
because she will stretch taking nothing for granted into a new vine we call
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Nothing will taste bitter again

Bougainvillea will thirst to say “Thank you,” anytime, anywhere, with
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Bougainvillea will feed on firsts, a feast of anything, anyplace, any
moment, anybody

Because we have forgotten how starved we have been.

How a quarter of an inch of butter
did not mean a thing.
A paper movie ticket.
Scissors through hair.
Sleeping next to someone.
Sharing the same spoon.
Holding my grandmother has been a decade of drought
and all the water is yelling at me “Do it now! Do it now.”





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Our papery green thumbs were once
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We have forgotten that a fly can still find its fire
even in capture and we are that fly.
Bougainvillea, you are blind now,
but I promise
you will photograph this world
in its most naked state of being:

black and white
no one is there
click, snap, flutter, flare

you will name a plastic grocery bag dancing in air alone on the street

as its own word. This.

From A New Land

Line Collection



Highlight lines you love (for any reason!) yellow.



Highlight lines you have questions about blue.



Highlight lines you can make a connection to green.

Writing Prompt

Write the first draft of a poem about an imagined moment or event from your future. Your moment can be big or small, and it can be from a future five minutes from now or one five decades from now. You might choose to weave in the past or present as well, as Amanda Dettmann did in her poem. Be creative and remember that this unit is all about process, not perfection. Try to incorporate some of the elements you noticed in Amanda's poem. What writerly "moves" can you try out? What kinds of connections can you build with your audience?

Draft of Future Poem

(type response here)



Rotating Questions Guidelines

Description:

In a Rotating Questions discussion, students have the opportunity to engage in silent discussion with their peers—a process that can lead to more thoughtful and complete responses, since students don't have the benefit of tone or body language to aid in communication. This type of discussion can be set up in several ways, but in each, the teacher writes one question on each of several papers, and students respond to the question on that shared sheet. This might happen in groups, with students passing questions around the desks, or with a whole class. Group work might be a better fit for idea generation, since each student will have time to engage with each question without having to negotiate for space, while whole-class can make for powerful reflection, with students getting the opportunity to answer each question in the order that feels most appropriate, to circle back to see what others have said, and to watch the conversation develop over time.

How To:

- **Generate questions.** Questions can be about almost anything, but those that are open-ended or rely on personal experience/opinion will often yield the most interesting discussions (so, “How does growing up change your relationship with your parents?” might get better results than “How does Frost use imagery?”)
- **Explain the strategy.** This type of discussion is relatively self-explanatory, but there are a few reminders for students that will help to ensure its success:
 - This discussion is silent. Students will have an opportunity to reflect verbally after it's over, but they shouldn't talk during the discussion itself.
 - After responding to the question, students should read what other students have written and think about how to contribute to the overall discussion. This could mean drawing an arrow to another comment and building on that idea, using symbols to respond to a comment (a check for “agree,” an exclamation mark for “important,” etc.), drawing arrows between comments to make a visual connection, or asking questions that prompt further discussion. Returning to the same question is both allowed and encouraged.
 - Students can see what their peers have written in response to what they've said, and can clarify, add, or revise based on that feedback.
- **Run the discussion.** Decide how you want to structure the discussion: as a group activity or as a class activity. If you want students to work in groups, provide each group with at least one question per person (so, for a group of 4, you might write 4-6 questions). Students should write about each question for a designated period of time, like 2 minutes, then pass the paper to their right. Allow time for each student to encounter each question twice. If you want students to work as a class, spread the questions around the room; one question written on a piece of butcher paper will provide students with enough space to respond. Then, allow students a designated amount of time, like 10 minutes, to walk around the room and answer the questions.



They can respond in any order and circle back to questions more than once. This form of the strategy requires some spatial negotiation (the whole class will not be able to answer the same question at once, and there is sometimes waiting involved), but it ensures that students “hear” everyone’s voices.

- **Reflect.** Ask students what patterns they see and what stands out to them. Then, ask questions about process: How does this kind of conversation change what you’re able to talk about or say? What do you now know? How did this change your perspective of the themes or ideas?

Resource:

This discussion strategy comes from a book called *A Reason to Read* by Eileen Landay and Kurt Wootton. I highly recommend this resource to teachers looking to integrate performance strategies into their ELA classroom.

Poetry Workshop Final Portfolio

To show your growing understanding of the **writing process**, you will turn in a portfolio that shows your use of a variety of different **revision strategies**.

Required Portfolio Components:

- Photograph Prewriting
- Sensory Quick Writes
- Draft of Memory Poem
- Challenges Prewriting
- Draft of Future Poem
- Poem Goal Prewriting
- Writing Exercises from Skill Rotation
- Evidence of Revision for ONE Poem**
 - Additions from Skill Rotation Writing Exercises
 - Changes inspired by Peer Review and the Revision Checklist

Ways to Show Revision:

- Underline new additions, like added words, phrases, or stanzas
- ~~Strikethrough~~ subtractions, like words, phrases, or stanzas that you don't want in the final draft
- Use arrows or comments to mark changes, like lines you want to move or words to swap
- **Remember, your final grade is based on revision, not perfection. Plan to turn in a poem that is still in the drafting process, but show ALL the work you've done to improve it!**

Standard: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, composing, revising, editing, rewriting, reflecting, and/or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

Student Reflection:

- What have you learned about revision during this unit?
- What is the best change you made to your poem? Why do you think so?
- How do you feel about your drafted poem? Would you keep working on it given the chance?

Rubric:

4	3	2	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student demonstrates clear effort at all stages of the writing process, including pre-writing, drafting, and revision ● Poem revisions align with student's stated goal for the piece ● A wide variety of revision strategies are used, including 1+ from each of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Skill Focus Exercises ○ Peer Review ○ Revision Checklist ● Student Reflection shows clear understanding of the purpose of revision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student demonstrates some effort at all stages of the writing process, including pre-writing, drafting, and revision ● Poem revisions largely align with student's stated goal for the piece ● A variety of revision strategies are used, including 1+ from at least two of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Skill Focus Exercises ○ Peer Review ○ Revision Checklist ● Student Reflection shows growing understanding of the purpose of revision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student demonstrates uneven effort during the writing process, including pre-writing, drafting, and revision ● Poem revisions shows partial alignment with student's stated goal for the piece ● Poem shows some sign of revision including at least one strategy from the list below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Skill Focus Exercises ○ Peer Review ○ Revision Checklist ● Student Reflection shows partial understanding of the purpose of revision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student fails to complete one or more stages of the writing process, including pre-writing, drafting, or revision ● Poem revisions do not align with student's stated goal for the piece, or goal is not provided ● Student provides little to no evidence of revision ● Student Reflection shows lack of clarity about the purpose of revision

Skill Focus: Imagery

What is it?

Imagery refers to elements of a poem that invoke any of the five senses (sight, sound, taste, touch, smell) to create a set of mental images.

-Poetry Foundation

Only language that is particularly descriptive or vivid is called imagery. For example, in the poem below, “yellow dress” describes something that the speaker sees, but isn’t by itself descriptive enough to qualify as imagery. When the author expands on the yellow dress, calling it “a drop of honey in the blue abyss,” the additional detail helps the reader to picture exactly what the dress looked like floating in the ocean.

What does it look like?

Read the following poem from *A New Land*, paying special attention to the underlined lines. Not every instance of imagery is underlined—can you identify more?

Georgia

By Liam Swift

I remember packing my old school backpack
for our trip that day;
returning to the house to get the things I forgot.

I remember the early summer air, the morning
sky a high and whirring vacuum.

At the depot I watched you, a distant bob of yellow,
run to me from across the parking lot,

getting closer and closer until you slammed into me,
knocking the wind from my body.

I remember us clinging to each other
like vines.

Auditory imagery (appeals to the reader’s sense of hearing)

Tactile imagery (appeals to the reader’s sense of touch)

I remember the sun-soaked hallway of the train station,
the way you talked fast and moved your hands.

Our faces pressed against the train window;
our eyes caught glimpses of fields from the seat.

I remember the train halting to a stop, you
pulling me from my seat and rushing to the doors so
we could be the first ones off; the sign,
“Welcome to Old Orchard Beach,” was painted red,
just for us.



I remember taking the Amtrak magazine with me,
a pretty good steal,
if you ask me.

I remember going to one of the candy stores;
we could choose from so many.
Buying a squeeze tube of candy threw me off.

It was one of those tubes
that hold sunscreen or paint, filled
with a substance the texture of Elmer's glue,
the taste sweet and bleachy.

It painted your mouth blue, your teeth.
You asked me if your tongue was blue. It
was. Unearthly, chemically
beautifully blue.
It looked like the surface of the moon.

Gustatory imagery (appeals to the
reader's sense of taste)

Most of all I remember your yellow dress.
I always remember
your yellow dress. How it floated
on the ocean's surface as you waded in;
a drop of honey in the blue abyss.
I joined you,
leaving the red-and-white Indian blanket
kicked with sand.
I forgot my swim shorts
so I swam in the shorts I was wearing.
I remember the wave
we didn't see coming; the one that
washed you up onto the shore.
You looked like a yellow tang
out of the fish bowl, delicate, breathing hard;
I don't know if you've seen one before.

I remember the train ride back;
How you fell asleep before I did,
waking up when the train reached home,
hugging you goodbye.
I remember you walking away in your wet dress,
the sky a mandarin blaze,
your feet bare on the pavement,
the dripping trail of ocean you left
in your wake.

Visual imagery (appeals to the
reader's sense of sight)

**Not mentioned: Olfactory imagery, which appeals to the reader's sense of smell



What is the impact on the reader?

Imagery can serve a number of different purposes in a poem. It can help a reader more clearly picture what the author is describing, add interest to the poem, and support developing themes. For example, in “Georgia,” the repetition of the phrase “I remember” emphasizes the extent to which the speaker’s experience at the beach has stayed with him. This idea about the power of memory is supported by the imagery in the final lines of the poem. The author’s description of the “dripping trail of ocean you left/in your wake,” creates an image of the beach trailing after the speaker and his friend, just like his memory of that experience has continued to follow him.

Try it out!

Choose one image or scene from one of the poems that you have written this week. What emotion would you use to describe this image? Is it sad? Lonely? Joyful? Write five descriptions of your image using words that reflect your chosen emotion. If your emotion is “melancholy,” you might describe a tree you see as “lonely and bare.” If it’s a happy image, you might describe the tree as “swaying under the sun.”

You may choose to revise your poem by incorporating one or more of these descriptions. Make sure to mark your revisions by underlining new additions!

Skill Focus: Comparisons

What is it?

Comparison is the act of showing similarities between two unlike things. Two common types of poetic comparisons are similes and metaphors.

- **Simile: Comparison using “like” or “as”**
 - O my Luve is like a red, red rose/That’s newly sprung in June (Robert Burns)
 - I wandered lonely as a cloud (William Wordsworth)
- **Metaphor: Comparison in which one thing is described as something else (does not use “like” or “as”)**
 - Hope is the thing with feathers/That perches in the soul (Emily Dickinson)
 - All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances. (William Shakespeare)

What does it look like?

Read the following poem from *A New Land*, paying special attention to the underlined lines. Not every comparison is underlined—can you identify more?

Thaw

By Madeline Curtis

[Click for an audio version of this poem, read by the author](#)

I wade through knee-deep snow toward sunset. Above me, black clouds boat across a flaming sky. The oak tree is bold and black, limbs stretch up as if in prayer.

As the sun disappears behind the hills, I think about a girl I knew a long time ago. We once shared a grape Popsicle under that oak tree, the sun buttery on our feet. Purple-toothed grins. Daisies twisted in her orange hair. Too shy to look at her face, I’d admired her ear instead. If I saw her now, would we be strangers?

Here is what I’ve learned: People change as quietly as snow melting.

1. “black clouds boat across a flaming sky” contains two **metaphors**
 - a. A comparison between the movement of clouds and the movement of boats
 - b. A comparison between the sky and a flame
2. “People change as quietly as snow melting.” contains one **simile**



- a. A comparison between people and snow melting that contains “as”

What is the impact on the reader?

Comparisons can help readers make sense of unfamiliar images or ideas, add detail and vividness to language, and explain abstract concepts like love and hope. Remember that similes and metaphors are not meant to be taken literally, so when you encounter one in a poem, ask yourself why the poet may have chosen that particular comparison. For example, in the poem above, the metaphor of the “flaming sky” not only helps the reader imagine a colorful sunset but also contrasts with the buttery sun (another metaphor!) from the speaker’s memory, which supports the poem’s message about the way that everything, and everyone, changes over time.

Try it out!

In one of the poems you have written this week, identify three elements that you either mention explicitly or could add to what you have already written: a color, a large object, and a small object. What is something tangible that you can compare each of these elements to? For instance, if there is the color orange in your poem, what kind of orange do you see it as? A traffic cone? A pumpkin? If you write about the moon, what does the moon look like? A fingernail? A silver coin? Try to choose comparisons that will support the larger message you are trying to communicate.

You may choose to revise your poem by incorporating one or more of the comparisons you generate. Make sure to mark your revisions by underlining new additions!

Skill Focus: Audience

What is it?

The audience of a poem is the person or people for whom the poet is writing. A poet may shape the content, tone, and style of a poem based on the intended audience. A poem written for children will likely use more simple language, for example, while a love poem might incorporate specific details that appeal to the recipient's personal preferences.

Clues to an author's intended audience:

- The difficulty of the language
 - The use of specialized terms that only people from a certain profession or region would know
 - The level of detail provided (an author might provide less detail if the intended audience would already be familiar with what's being described)
 - What language(s) are used
 - Moments where the intended audience is being addressed directly (future farmers of America, etc.)
 - Your own level of clarity and comfort as a reader. If you feel particularly connected to a piece of writing, ask yourself what parts of your identity or experience are being reflected. If you're feeling lost, ask what information the author expects you to have that you might be missing.
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What does it look like?

Read the following poem from *A New Land*, paying special attention to the underlined lines. Can you recognize the shifts in the intended audience?

Drop of Melanin and Blood

By Benedita Zalabantu

[Click for a video version of this poem, performed by the author](#)

I.

There's something about my brother that scares me.

He's black and a man.

He's a black man in a world where his skin symbolizes weapon.

He's a black man in a place where his skin symbolizes thug.

How can he move through the world

when his own skin is a shield for protection

and a weapon for destruction?

The way black men walk in this world portrays them.

The way black men walk in this world scares them.

At the beginning of the poem, Benedita addresses a general audience—one who doesn't know her brother personally.



A colored man walks with a weapon, meaning skin.
A colored woman walks with labels that will define her,
but can these labels be erased?

Black boy, don't speak unless you're spoken to.
Black boy, don't make a move.
Black boy, don't adjust while handcuffed.

Here, Benedita directly addresses a more specific audience: black boys like her brother.

At a young age, little black boys are taught how they should and shouldn't act when they're stopped by the cops.

Black boy, breathe. I want you to breathe.
Black boy, you will be treated as a problem before they realize you're human.

Black boy, keep your hands visible.
Black boy, be scared, but not too scared.
Black boy, you will matter.

Don't you know a black man is born with a practice target that can never be removed?
Don't you know black bodies are weapons?

II.

My walk home with my little brother from the bus stop is always interesting.

He talks about kindergarten as if it were heaven, and I smile, glad that I got a brother whose personality rivals my dad's. Sometimes we see birds, sometimes we see rain, sometimes we see snow. Ain't nothing but change. But we don't often see cops. One day we did, and he looked up at me smiling as if it were his first time seeing a blue-and-white car before. "It's a police car!" He jumped and pointed with excitement. His round face looked at me, smiling with a missing tooth. His little brown skin always makes me happy and I smiled.

*He don't know yet.
He is going to be seen as a threat as he grows up.*

It hits me: I'm afraid of how insecure he will have to be around them, around those who are trained to protect us but fail to.

At the beginning of the second section, Benedita shifts back to a more descriptive, and less direct, tone. This widens the audience to include anyone who does not already know the particulars of her experience walking home with her brother.



I'm scared he won't be smiling at them anymore,
 afraid he will have to raise his hands up saying
 "Don't shoot,"
 afraid he will have to say
 "I can't breathe,"
 afraid my brother will look up at the sky and ask,
 "Why me?"
 afraid he will have to say
 "I'm unarmed, I swear."
 I am scared because I know.
 I know this is never going to end.
 I know there will be a lot of reasons
 he won't be able to breathe, and the cops
 are one of them.
 I know he's getting ready for a war that I can't prepare him for—
 never really knowing when danger is around the corner,
 never really knowing when dangerous is in the media.

III.

My melanin has meaning.
 It is profound, dark skin
 so greedy it gobbles up nouns, so tangled
 look what it did to my hair,
 reaching up to the sky at all angles.

To teach someone something about self-love
you got to start with yourself.
Your skin is not a dirty shirt that needs to be washed
like yesterday's shirt.
Your skin is like hot chocolate that warms winter nights.
Like rings around tree stumps, you have a history
attached to your melanin.

Never let the glaring whiteness blind you
 from the beauty you are.
 Dark as the night sky,
 constellations are tucked neatly underneath your bones.
 You know what?
 When they call you dark as the night,
 tell them without you the stars wouldn't have anything to shine for.
Perfection was not your destination,
dark girl, it was your starting point.
 "Some say the blacker the berry the sweeter the juice,
 I say the darker the flesh, the longer the roots."

Benedita again narrows her
audience, this time to other
black people who might be
experiencing the negative
effects of stereotypes and
racism.

At the end of her poem,
Benedita directs her writing
specifically to black girls.



What is the impact on the reader?

A poet's intended audience can shape the reader's experience of a piece of writing. If you are part of the intended audience, you might feel more connected to what you're reading, and if you're not, reading might feel more eye-opening or confusing. Shifts in audience that occur within the same poem, as in the poem above, help to highlight the way that different groups experience the world in different ways.

Try it out!

In one of the poems you have written this week, identify your current intended audience: what kind of reader would be most likely to understand and connect with your poem? You may find that your intended audience is quite broad (perhaps you've written for a general audience) or very specific (maybe the only person who would really understand your poem is your best friend). Choose 3-5 lines that you want to rewrite for a different audience. Use the "Clues to an author's intended audience" list for ideas of what to change. If you wrote for a broad audience, you might try putting your lines in a specific dialect or home language; if you wrote for a specific audience, you might explain any references that most people wouldn't understand.

You may choose to revise your poem by incorporating the lines you changed. Make sure to mark your revisions by underlining new additions!



Peer Review Questions

- What is this piece about? What does the reader learn from it?
 - What does the reader remember most? This could be a detail, or a moment, or a theme.
 - Where is “the heat” of the story, or what strikes the reader most about this poem? If the heat is just one detail can you make it the poem's focal point, or where can you add similar details?
 - One of the hallmarks of great poems is when a reader is affected emotionally. How can you revise to be sure that the reader experiences an emotional shift?
 - Check out the structure. Does the opening capture the reader’s attention or need to be revised? Does the middle fall flat or does the momentum build? Does the ending leave the reader in a good place or wanting more?
 - Where does the poem fall flat? Where could it be strengthened?
 - What details are missing?
 - What parts of the poem absolutely must be preserved?
 - What parts of the poem can be cut or condensed?
 - What concepts in the poem need further exploration or development?
-

Record Peer Feedback Below:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">●●●●●●



Revision Checklist

Try out 1+ revision strategies from the list below. Make sure to underline any additions to your poem and mark other changes using a comment (if drafting digitally), arrow (if drafting on paper), or *strikethrough*.

- Write it backwards
- Change its shape/form/put into an image
- Take your favorite line and put it first
- Take out excess words like "the"
- Rewrite using a different font and see where it takes you
- Look up a key word and incorporate its definition into your poem
 - [Oxford English Dictionary](#)
 - [Online Etymology Dictionary](#)
- Read your poem out loud to yourself
- Write an "opposite poem," where you exchange key words in your poem for their opposite or antonym to change the meaning of the poem.
- Change the length of your lines or your use of stanzas to see how changing from long lines to very short ones, for instance, changes how the poem reads/appears on the page.