

# **Close Reading of Modern Poetry: A Study in Form and Content**

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**Overview**

This unit is designed for middle school students studying Literacy, English, or Language Arts. Its purpose is to expose students to the method and pedagogy of a collaborative close reading as well as to expose students to poets and individuals who used words to make sense of their realities. Unlike close reading in other disciplines, the collaborative close reading that the students will participate in during this unit of study will be text-based as much as possible. It is not the intent of the course of study to learn the historical and contextual backgrounds of the poet or poems, but rather it is a study of the process and form of the poetry. The close reading activity in most cases will be a “cold reading” where the teacher does not provide background information on the poem or poet. Furthermore, students will be encouraged to produce works that are representative of their own identities and realities.

During the close reading, the teacher will act as a facilitator in the process, offering positive feedback and encouragement as well as providing a framework for the reading through thoughtful questioning techniques. The method of collaborative close reading breaks down the barriers between the teacher and those being taught; it fosters and empowers the students by allowing for their ideas, reading ability and capability, and their knowledge to be valued and acknowledged. Sitting down side-by-side reading collaboratively with the student, rather than “teaching” a piece to them, allows for greater ownership and agency on the students’ part.

Close reading a text alongside the students allows for the text to be the expert and the teacher and the student to both participate in the conversation as learners. Collaborative close reading allows for the discussion in the room to become dialogic talk rather than monologic talk. Students and teachers alike are interacting with the text both as inkblots on the page and through “the interplay between particular signs and a particular reader at a particular time and place (Rosenblatt, x).” This helps relieve the teacher of the anxiety

of being “an expert” on the piece and acknowledges the power of the written word and text, in this case the poem itself, and the students in the room.

## **Rationale**

According to recent studies, many students are showing up unready and underprepared for college. The results of the ACT indicated that more than a quarter of the 2012 graduates did not meet the college readiness benchmark scores for all four-subject areas in English, reading, math and science, and sixty percent of students missed the benchmark scores in at least two of the four subject area tests. The 2012 results of the SAT indicate that the fifty-seven percent of the 2012 graduating class who took the test earned a combined score below the level needed to earn a B-minus or better in the first year at a four-year college (Sheehy, 2012).

In his book Engaging Ideas: The Professor’s Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom, John Bean argues that students are not prepared for the demands of college reading. He discusses the causes of students’ poor reading habits and suggests strategies and assignments to improve reading skills. Included in his suggestions to improve instructions are that teachers show their own reading processes and annotations, and develop assignments that require students to interact with texts (Bean, 2011).

In June 2010, the Common Core State Standards were released, and forty-six states (excluding Texas, Alaska, Virginia and Nebraska) and five territories adopted the standards. The standards require students to engage with texts of increased complexity with the stated intention of ensuring that students are prepared to enter credit bearing entry courses in two and four year college programs, or are prepared to enter the workforce. The Core emphasizes students building knowledge about the world through TEXT, the building of transferable vocabulary, increased time for close reading, and the engagement of students in rich and rigorous conversations about text (National Governor’s Association, 2010).

According to Richard Paul and Linda Elder in the article “The Art of Close Reading,” skilled readers do not read blindly, but purposefully. They have an agenda or purpose in mind before and during their reading; they have learned to read in different ways for different purposes (Paul & Elder, 2003). Skilled readers know when to slow down, when to speed up, when to read closely and when to skim a text. Skilled readers have a broad vocabulary and a wide range of skills and strategies.

In his book Reading Poetry in the Middle Grades, Paul Janeczko argues that poetry helps awaken quiet students and that poetry is “inherently turbocharged” and will allow for teachers and students to engage with both content and skills. Furthermore, in the book Notice and Note Strategies for Close Readings by Kylene Beers and Robert E. Probst, it is argued that by increasing the dialogic talk in the classroom, thus decreasing the amount of monologic, authoritative lecture increases students’ engagement. By participating in

dialogue, students become co-constructors of their own knowledge, and they are more likely to take ownership and find relevance in their learning (Beers & Probst, 2013).

My first conscious experience in the value of close reading did not come until the first semester of my graduate year at Penn. Before this time, I read and analyzed texts for class, but not closely. The activity that I had participated in to that point that most closely resembles close reading was the reading I had done of the Bible personally, at school and in Church. For the most part, I had spent my formational academic years reading for the “big ideas” and for a surface level understanding of many different disciplines- trusting that the experts were telling me the truth about life and “what is.” My reading, and learning for that matter, focused generally on what knowledge I could gain or acquire, rather than my interaction with a text and its ideas. Furthermore, my “academic reading” would not illicit questions; I was simply engaging in the process because I had to, or because I wanted to prepare for and do well on an exam. Sure, I was learning some, but quite honestly, most of what I had read academically speaking had bored me. That all changed when I enrolled in a class taught by Dr. John Fantuzzo, a GSE professor at Penn.

At the start of the semester, Dr. Fantuzzo discussed the difference between graduate education and undergraduate education. He used an analogy to illuminate the difference, comparing reading to target practice. No longer would students be aiming to just hit the target while shooting arrows; they needed to hit the bulls-eye and become precise in their knowledge about a specific text. He suggested that there needed to be a shift in his students’ perspectives. The lecture began to spur on thought within me, and then came the first assignment- reading Francis Bacon’s *Of Studies*. In the piece, Bacon asserts, “Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention (Bacon, 1601).” We read *Of Studies* once; we read it twice; we read it a thousand times, then we wrote and rewrote a paper on its meaning. Believe it or not, it was the first time in my formal education experience that I was truly intellectually curious, and to this day the two lines from the piece that I have shared have stayed with me and have influenced my practice.

My approach as an academic reader was forever changed by this experience, so when I eventually became a reading teacher, close reading became the method I used for teaching my students how to read a text. When the Common Core standards called for the practice to be implemented in classrooms across the country, I was not shocked. Though it has quickly become one of the new “buzzwords” in the educational field, close reading is not a fad and it has a multitude of benefits.

Most times, close reading involves a short piece of text that is read multiple times for the purpose of appreciation and deep comprehension and analysis. The process allows for the gradual release of responsibility by the teacher, so that eventually after the teacher has modeled the approach, the students bear the burden of the reading and questioning. Not

only does close reading allow for a deep understanding of a selection, but if done collaboratively, it is a technique that teaches students to think critically, create logical arguments based on textual evidence, and to analyze and critique the arguments of others (Brown and Kappes, 2013).

In order to meet the demands of the Common Core Standards and to prepare students for the rigors of college reading, students will participate in collaborative close reads in this unit. They will be exposed to various texts of modern poets who have used words and art to celebrate and make sense of their identity and their world. The major purposes of the unit will be to expose students to modern poetry and to emphasize the art of close reading. Students will learn that many of modern poets have focused on the process and form of their poem rather than the content that their poems relay, with the HOW being more important than the WHY.

Modern poets hoped to make language new again. Stylistic choices and the breaking of formal conventions by the modern poets allowed for a reinvention of the concept of art and beauty. Students will learn that words can be used to explore their personal identity, their world and that their experiences are integral to fostering agency and independence in learning. It is this very opportunity to express themselves without feeling the need to create something that makes sense that cultivate a thirst and hunger to be literate and educated- and therefore liberated.

As stated previously, close reading has been a strategy that I have used with my students since I became a reading teacher, so when I noticed that a class was being offered at Penn on the collaborative close reading of poetry, I jumped at the opportunity to learn more about the practice and about poetry. Watching Al Filreis, the professor, teach in real-time and through video lessons has helped me refine how I approach close reading tasks with my students. Three areas of my close reading approach have changed from my experience in the class. Now as I approach close readings with my class, I attempt to withhold my interpretation while reading with my students, attempt to allow the kids to discover the devices while reading rather than looking at the devices in isolation, and allow more student agency and ownership by lessening my talk. Below, I have shared an example of a close reading lesson using Theodore Roethke "My Papa's Waltz."

The poems that are included in this unit were carefully selected after participating in the semester long seminar class at the Kelly Writers House at the University of Pennsylvania with Professor Al Filreis. Filreis teaches versions of this class using the collaborative close reading approach to Penn undergraduate students as well as over 36,000 people through Coursera. His modern poetry site is an exhaustive resource for materials on modern poetry if the chosen poems are not appropriate for your class or grade level. Not only does the site contain links to many poems; it also includes video recordings of Filreis teaching, and links to Penn Sound materials. Penn Sound is an audio archive that includes many of the poet's reading their individual material. The following four sites will be most beneficial to teachers preparing to implement similar units in their classroom.

<http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/>

<http://writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88v/>  
<http://writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88v/>  
<http://writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88v/tip2013.html>

## **Objectives**

Students will be able to participate in a collaborative close read that is TEXT BASED.

Students will explore the nuances of language and the multiple meaning of words.

Students will distinguish between form and content in a poem.

Students will identify and analyze poetic devices.

Students will argue that the form is just as, or more important than, the content of the poem.

Students will write in the style of an author we studied.

Students will be exposed to modern poetry.

## **Strategies**

Various strategies will be used to explore the modern poetry works. The overarching strategy that will be used is the collaborative close read approach. To exemplify the approach that will be used with the students, I will share a modeled lesson of the approach using Theodore Roethke's poem "My Papa's Waltz."

My Papa's Waltz  
BY THEODORE ROETHKE

The whiskey on your breath  
Could make a small boy dizzy;  
But I hung on like death:  
Such waltzing was not easy.

We romped until the pans  
Slid from the kitchen shelf;  
My mother's countenance  
Could not unfrown itself.

The hand that held my wrist  
Was battered on one knuckle;  
At every step you missed  
My right ear scraped a buckle.

You beat time on my head  
With a palm caked hard by dirt,  
Then waltzed me off to bed  
Still clinging to your shirt.

An Audio file of this poem can be found at:  
<http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/13>

### Guide to Close Reading “My Papa’s Waltz”

1. Begin by providing each student with the poem on a single sheet of paper. The margins should be large enough on both sides so that students can make annotations as they read.
  - a. It might be helpful to provide students with this handout from the University of Texas. It can serve as a guide for their individual reading of the poem. <http://uwc.utexas.edu/handouts/poetry-close-reading>
2. While they are reading, students will mark poem using AVID “Charting the Text” method. The left-hand margin will be used to annotate the content of the poem (what AVID calls the SAYING or summarizing column), while the right-hand side will be used for analyzing sound, word choice, poetic devices and writing down thoughts and questions (what AVID calls the DOING column).
3. After the students read the poem independently, the teacher will read the poem aloud. Students should be seated in a circle or another manner where they can clearly see and hear one another.
4. Students will be assigned words or phrases to define. This will allow for students to have a close look at the diction, the content, the style, the poetic devices and the form of the poem.

- For example with My Papa’s Waltz, the teacher might assign eight students two lines of the poem to talk about aloud.

Student one might be assigned:

The whiskey on your breath  
Could make a small boy dizzy;

- The student would begin to talk about what he or she noticed in the lines. It might be meanings of words, images that are created, or poetic or sound devices that he or she noticed. For example in these lines, the student might mention speaker of the poem, the close proximity of the boy to his father because the boy is able to smell the whiskey. The student might also offer the point of view of the poem.

Then, student two will discuss the next two lines:

But I hung on like death:  
Such waltzing was not easy.

- The student would begin to talk about what he or she noticed in the lines. It might be meanings of words, images that are created, or poetic or sound devices that he or she noticed. Then he or she would connect these two lines to the previous two lines. For example in these lines, the student might mention the simile and the positively and negatively connotated words. He might also note that the poem might be a metaphor for the relationship between the father and the son.
- At this point, the teacher might ask another student in the class to tell the story of what is happening thus far in the poem.

Student three would then begin talking about his assigned lines.

We romped until the pans  
Slid from the kitchen shelf;

- For example in these lines, the student might mention the word “romped” and the image of sounds of the loud kitchen dance.

Student four would then begin to discuss

My mother’s countenance  
Could not unfrown itself.

- The student, depending on the grade level, might need help either from context, the other students in the classroom, a dictionary or the teacher for the word countenance (face or facial expression). He might note aloud that the mother was unhappy with the dance, and quite possibly students in the class might begin to explore or question why the mother was unhappy.
- At this point, the teacher might have another student in the class tell the “story” of the second stanza.

Student five would begin discussing the next two lines.

The hand that held my wrist  
Was battered on one knuckle;

- The student might mention the image of the battered wrist, the use of the word “the” instead of “his”, and possibly the alliteration in the first line.

Student six would then begin discussing the next two lines.

At every step you missed  
My right ear scraped a buckle.

- The student might mention the close proximity between the father and the son, the use of the image of the belt buckle, and the nature of the relationship between the father and the son. If not already mentioned, the meter of the poem might be mentioned at this point. If not by the student, then by the teacher.
- The poem is written in iambic trimeter; has an ABAB rhyme scheme and uses some slant rhymes. If these aren't terms familiar to the children, this might be a mini-lesson for the students.

Student seven would then begin discussing his assigned lines.

You beat time on my head  
With a palm caked hard by dirt,

- The student might mention the images of beating on the head and question if the beating is physical or musical, and the student might mention the dirty hands of the father. She might also question why a "tough" father would initiate such a dance.

Student eight would then begin discussing the last two lines of the poem.

Then waltzed me off to bed  
Still clinging to your shirt.

- The student might mention the dance ending and the boy unwillingly going to bed. The student might also note that even though the waltz (relationship) between the father and son is rough, that the boy still clings to it.
- At this point, if it hasn't begun to be discussed, which is fairly unrealistic, the teacher will ask about the nature of the relationship between the father and son. There might be differing views on the relationship (some might see it as an abusive one, while others might see it as a loving one). If the conversation leads to divergent views on the relationship, the teacher can allow for the natural flow of conversation to lead the discussion, reminding the children to stay as close as possible to the text when providing the evidence for their assertions. It might be helpful to split your class into two groups who favor similar opinions.

An interesting paper about how two divergent readings

appeared in one teacher's class while studying this poem is included here:

[http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/virtualit/poetry/critical\\_definition/readrespessay.pdf](http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/virtualit/poetry/critical_definition/readrespessay.pdf)

- One of the final questions about the poem should be: Is the content of the poem enhanced or detracted by its use of form?
- Some students might point out that since the poem uses trimeter and the waltz is three beats, that the poem's form fits its content. Others might mention that a rocky relationship, if it is that, should not be portrayed in a "sing-song" rhythmic poem. Allow the discussion to continue and for student's to make assertions and claims supported by textual evidence.
- After the discussion ends, you might have the students write a position piece on the final question.

### **Poets/Poems that will be used in the Unit**

Ten days of lessons are provided in the following pages. If a teacher wants to shorten or lengthen the number of days in the unit, modifications are possible. That being said, the works that are selected were done so carefully. The unit begins with works by Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman, considered by many to be the founders of modern poetry. After discussing Dickinson and Whitman, the unit will move to selections by William Carlos Williams, an imagist. Following Williams, will be close readings of Gertrude Stein and Tristan Tzara. The end of the unit is comprised of poems written by poets that are still writing today; some of which are language poets, such as Perelman and Hejinian, and some that are conceptualists, like Magee. Each of these selections conveys how the form of the poem is more important in conveying the author's message than the content of the poem. After careful study of different variations of modern poetry, students will be given an opportunity to write poetry in the style of one of the poets that we have studied.

- **Day One (90 minutes)**
- **Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)**
  - Short Biographical Information: Dickinson, born in Massachusetts, was prolific as a poet but her work wasn't acknowledged publicly during her lifetime. She attended Mount Holyoke for a time, but returned home after a year. Although she spent a large portion of her life in isolation from others, she maintained correspondence with others through letters. Dickinson, along with Walt Whitman, is often credited with creating a uniquely American poetic voice. The first volume of her poetry was published after her death in 1890.

- "I dwell in Possibility"
  - Watch video of Al Filreis and class participating in a collaborative close read.
  - Word-by-Word analysis and close reading of the poem
  - Look at use of metadashes, capitalizations
  - Discuss Poetry versus prose
  
- **Emily Dickinson links**
  - <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/182904>
  - <http://media.sas.upenn.edu/watch/132491>
  
- **Day Two (90 minutes)**
  
- **Walt Whitman (1819-1892)**
  - Short Biographical information: Whitman, born in New York, was a printer, teacher, journalist, hospital clerk, and editor. He published multiple editions of Leaves of Grass that included collections of his poetry.
  
  - *Song of Myself* cantos 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 14, 47, 52:
    - Listen to Al Filreis read excerpts of Walt Whitman
    - Word-by-Word Analysis of certain cantos
    - Focus on diction and sound of poem.
    - Compare styles of Dickinson and Whitman
      - use chart from Filreis's class
  
  - **Walt Whitman links**
    - <http://www.daypoems.net/poems/1900.html>
    - <http://media.sas.upenn.edu/afilreis/88/song-myself.mp3>
  
- **Day Three and Four (180 minutes)**
  
- **William Carlos Williams (1883-1963)**
  - Short Biographical Information: Williams, born in New Jersey, began writing poetry in high school. He decided to become both a writer and a doctor, eventually receiving his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania. After receiving his degree, he returned to Rutherford and began both his medical and writing career. According to poets.org, Williams sought to create an entirely new, and American, poetic form which focused on the everyday circumstances of life and common people.
  
  - "The Red Wheelbarrow"
    - Questions: What depends upon the red wheelbarrow?
    - Why is there no punctuation?

- How does the title fit in?
  - Is there a purpose in the simplistic language?
  - Talking points: juxtaposition, still life, natural and basic, rain makes old wheelbarrow new, connection to modernism and imagist movement
  - Ideas for student work: pictures from everyday life. Write poems on still life or “life as we live it is beautiful.”
  - **Pictures that can be used with the unit:**
    - <http://www.nga.gov/kids/zone/>
    - <http://www.nga.gov/kids/DTP6stillife.pdf>
- "Between Walls"
- Word-by-Word analysis and close read of the poem
  - Focus on the connotation of words used
    - Define connotation/denotation
    - Give examples
  - Questions: What’s between the walls?
  - Where are the back wings of a hospital?
  - What are cinders?
  - Why is the glass green?
  - How is sound used in the poem?
  - Talking points: Length of lines, dependence of title on poem, “bounded but open form”
  - Ideas for student work: pictures from everyday life. Write poems on still life or “life as we live it is beautiful.”
- **William Carlos Williams links**
- <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15537>
  - <https://jacket2.org/commentary/four-recordings-william-carlos-williams-performing-red-wheelbarrow>
  - <http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88v/wcw-between-walls.html>
  - <https://jacket2.org/?q=poemtalk/broken-pieces-poemtalk-1>
  - [http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Williams-WC/between\\_walls.php](http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Williams-WC/between_walls.php)
- **Day Five (90 minutes)**
- **Gertrude Stein (1874-1946)**
- Short Biographical Information: Stein, born in Pennsylvania, spent some of her early childhood in Europe until her family settled in California. Both her parents died before she was 17. Stein studied psychology and medicine, but did not receive a formal degree from either Radcliffe or John Hopkins. At the age of 29, she moved with her partner to Paris. They lived there for thirty years. Stein counted William Carlos Williams, as

well as many other artists, writers and painters among her friends. Her second publication, *Tender Buttons*, published in 1914, showed how modern painting, mainly cubism, had an effect on her writing (poets.org).

- "Let Us Describe"
  - Examine the language and diction. Lead students in noticing the use of religious terms.
  - Questions: Tell the story.
  - What are the three intentions of a eulogy?
  - Where does the story start to go amok?
  - Is there connection between the content and the form?
  - What is the mood of the poem?
  - Distinguish between the "us" and the "they" in the poem using a "T" chart.
  - One might have to show another Stein poem so students can get a sense of her style.
  
- "If I Told Him: A Completed Portrait of Picasso"
  - Questions: How did Stein attempt to do Picasso?
  - Would Picasso like this rendering of himself?
  - Talking points: Why are there references to Napoleon, cubism (the students are going to need background on both Picasso and cubism)
  - <http://artsmarts4kids.blogspot.com/2008/09/cubism.html>
  - [http://www.ducksters.com/biography/artists/pablo\\_picasso.php](http://www.ducksters.com/biography/artists/pablo_picasso.php)
  
- **Gertrude Stein links**
  - <http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88/let-us-describe.html>
  - [http://www.writing.upenn.edu/library/Stein-Gertrude\\_If-I-Told-Him\\_1923.html](http://www.writing.upenn.edu/library/Stein-Gertrude_If-I-Told-Him_1923.html)

- **Day Six (90 minutes)**

- **Tristan Tzara**

- Short Biographical Information: Tzara, born in Romania, was best known as one of the founders of the Dada movement. The cultural movement occurred after World War I. Dada is a French word for "hobby horse." This movement was a cynical response to the evil capabilities of humans. Dadaist creations are not created with meaning in mind, but rather interpretation is reliant on the viewer.
  
- How to Make a Dadaist Poem (method of Tristan Tzara)
  - Show Duchamp's "Fountain"
  - Create Dadist poems using newspapers.

- **Tristan Tzara link**
  - <http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88v/tzara.html>
- **Day Seven (90 minutes)**
- **John Yau (1950-)**
  - Short Biographical Information: Yau, born in Massachusetts, is both a poet and art critic. He currently teaches art criticism at the Mason Gross School and at Rutgers University.
  - “830 Fireplace Road”
    - Introduce Jackson Pollack’s work to the children.
    - Does the poem’s form and the poet’s process fit the message he is trying to convey?
  - **John Yau link**
    - <http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88v/yau.html>
- **Jaap Blonk (1953-)**
  - Short Biographical Information: Blonk, a Dutch composer and performance artist, studied various disciplines, but did not complete a formal degree. Primarily a sound poet, his live performances include humor and improvisation.
  - “What the President Will Say and Do”
    - Question: Does the form of the poem fit the content?
  - Jaap Blonk link
    - [http://mediamogul.seas.upenn.edu/pennsound/authors/Blonk/KWH%2011-11-04/Blonk-Jaap\\_What-the-president\\_06\\_UPenn\\_11-11-04.mp3](http://mediamogul.seas.upenn.edu/pennsound/authors/Blonk/KWH%2011-11-04/Blonk-Jaap_What-the-president_06_UPenn_11-11-04.mp3)
- **Day Eight (90 minutes)**
- **Bob Perelman (1947-)**
  - Short Biographical Information: Perelman, born in Ohio, eventually earned his PhD from University of California, Berkeley. His work includes over a dozen poetry books, and he has edited two poetry anthologies. He currently teaches at the University of Pennsylvania
  - “Chronic Meanings” from the Book Virtual Reality

- Give children the background on Lee Hickman. The information can be found on the second link below.
    - Look at the individual unfinished phrases, which phrases can be finished?
    - Discuss open vs. closed poetry.
    - Does the poem's form and the poet's process fit the message he is trying to convey?
  - **Bob Perelman links**
    - <http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88v/chronic-meanings.html>
    - <http://writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88/chronic-meanings.html>
- **Lyn Hejinian (1941-)**
  - Short Biographical Information: Hejinian, born in San Francisco, is a poet, translator and essayist. Each section of her book My Life chronicles a year in her life.
  - Page 24-26 "The obvious analogy is with music" from My Life
    - Discuss the memoirs that we have read as a class before this one (e.g. Sherman Alexie's "Superman and Me" and Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings)
    - Give the children background on the concept of the book.
    - Read the selection and have the children respond to their favorite parts.
    - Have a discussion about whether the selection's form fits the content.
  - **Lyn Hejinian links**
    - <http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88v/happily.html>
    - <http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88v/lyn-reads-my-life.html>
    - [http://media.sas.upenn.edu/afilreis/ModPo/Hejinian-Lyn\\_My-Life\\_excerpt.pdf](http://media.sas.upenn.edu/afilreis/ModPo/Hejinian-Lyn_My-Life_excerpt.pdf)
- **Day Nine (90 minutes)**
- **Mike Magee**
  - Short Biographical Information: Perelman, born in Ohio, eventually earned his PhD from University of California, Berkeley. His work includes over a dozen poetry books, and he has edited two poetry anthologies. He currently teaches at the University of Pennsylvania
  - "Pledge" excerpts

- Have the children say the Pledge of Allegiance.
  - Read the poems aloud to the students.
  - Discuss the sound quality of the poems.
  - Does the poem's form and the poet's process fit the message he is trying to convey?
- "Final Word" excerpts
  - Read the selection aloud to the students.
  - Discuss the works that the students are reminded of while reading the selection.
  - Does the selection's form and the process fit the message he is trying to convey?
- **Mike Magee link**
  - <http://writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88v/magee-pledge.html>
  - <http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88/mike-magee-final-word.html>
- **Day Ten (90 minutes)**
  - Students will be given the entire 90 minutes to create a poem that is inspired by the style or form of one of the poets that we studied in this unit.
  - Students will have a chance to read their poems aloud and the poems will be compiled into a class anthology.

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<<http://www.corestandards.org/resources/frequently-asked-questions>>

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## **Ancillary Material**

### General Simple Steps for a Collaborative Close Read

1. Students will be given poem to read independently. In most cases the poem will be on a single sheet of paper with margins large enough on both sides for annotation purposes.
2. Students will mark poem using AVID "Charting the Text" method. The left-hand margin will be used to annotate the content of the poem, while the right-hand side will be used for analyzing sound, word choice, poetic devices and writing down thoughts and questions.
3. Teacher will read the poem aloud.
4. Students will be assigned words/phrases to define. This will allow for students to have a close look at the diction, the content, the style, the poetic devices and the form of the poem.
4. Discussion will follow building an understanding line by line of the content of the poem offering synonyms. For middle school students, a dictionary might be needed.
5. Students will then discuss the poems through the careful questioning of the teacher. Most oftentimes, the questions will be open ended, so that discussion is fluid and nonthreatening. One of the questions continuously used throughout the unit will be: What is the relationship between a poem's form and its content?
6. Having students read texts closely will help them think about the text more deeply. The students will be required to continually go back into the text to get a strong sense of what the poem is saying and doing. They will then be able to make assertions and claims about the piece based on textual evidence.

Students will be given a handout from the University of Texas that will help guide them through their individual reading of the poem.

<http://uwc.utexas.edu/handouts/poetry-close-reading>

## **Common Core Standards**

The following Common Core Standards will be addressed in the unit.

### **R.CCR.1:**

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

### **R.CCR.4–**

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

### **R.CCR.9–**

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

### **R.CCR.10**

Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

**SL.CCR.1:** Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**W.CCR.10:** Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.