

Poetic Forms using Lorenzo Thomas Lecture excerpts, Lesson 2

CONTENT AREA & GRADE LEVEL: Poetry/Literature, Upper Level High School

TIME: One Class Period

FOCUS: Students study African historical roots in US poetry to learn where our ideas about what makes a poem come from and about our African poetic inheritance. Students will apply this knowledge to understanding these historical influences on artists and writers such as Zora Neale Hurston and Spike Lee.

STANDARDS ASSESSED:

Colorado Reading and Writing Standard 4: Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

As students in grades 9-12 extend their knowledge, what they know and are able to do includes:

- recognizing an author's point of view, purpose, and historical and cultural context;

ASSESSMENT: Evaluate the students' writing and classroom discussion about their understanding of normative values that Thomas discusses.

MATERIALS/BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- Naropa Archive Lecture excerpts from Lorenzo Thomas' 1989 lecture "What is the function of the word?". (See URL listed below 89P113 00:09:53-00:24:33).
- Ch. 1 of *Mules and Men* by Zora Neale Hurston.
- *A Story, A Story* by Gail E. Haley

Previously in this unit, students have discussed their personal definitions of poetry and why poetry is written. Students have written their own lyric poems and begun to look at different poetic forms and categories of poetry. In *Poetic Forms using Lorenzo Thomas Lecture excerpts, Lesson 1*, students listened to and discussed poet Lorenzo Thomas' lecture on the European historical roots of US American poetry and analyzed the poets Anne Bradstreet and Emily Dickinson in the context of Thomas' comments.

POSSIBLE PROCEDURES:

1. Read *A Story, A Story* by Gail E. Haley
2. **Do Now (5 minute period of writing in journal):** Can a story be poetry? Why/why not? How does the way a person tells a story differ depending on who the story is being told to? Give specific examples.
3. **Introduce** Lorenzo Thomas and lecture material from Naropa Institute, 1989. Play excerpt (public poetry, protest poetry, point of view, African American oral tradition, middle passage, social and political position of the black community in the US, folklore, fables, Anansi stories, Spike Lee, Brair Rabbit and Tar Baby, John and Ole Massa). Students take notes on lecture.

Audio:

http://www.naropa.edu/archive/audio/thomas_lorenzo_89p113_clip_us_poets_and_african_societies.mp3

4. **Discuss:** Did anything in Thomas' lecture surprise you? Do you agree/disagree with anything Thomas said? What are some of the normative values in your community? Do you notice anyone expressing those values publicly? How/why/why not?
5. **Read:** Ch. 1 of *Mules and Men* by Zora Neale Hurston.
6. Write a poem or story which expresses a normative value in your community. For example, you could write a story which expresses the value "do the right thing" if you believe that is a normative value of your community. Try to show that value or theme without simply telling the reader the value or theme you are trying to express.
7. Discuss the writings as a class.

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