

## Poetry Class #8 Question Sheet

### Vivian's questions for Audre Lorde's "Echo" pg. 151

First, please read ["Coal" by Audre Lorde](#).

Second: Echo in Greek mythology is a mountain nymph punished by Hera because Echo's chattering kept Hera from spying on Zeus' amours. Hera punished Echo by depriving her of speech, except for the ability to repeat the last words of another. (Her hopeless love for Narcissus also made her waste away to nothing, excepting her voice)

1. Do you see a connection between the mythical Echo and this poem or no connection? What expectation(s) do you think are set up or suggested by the poem's title?
2. Do you find a literal echo in the poem?
3. Why the space after the word "Quiet?" Why two stanzas? Is there a change in the poem—a resolution of some kind?
4. I had trouble with a couple of specific images in this poem: "brick-caught silk?" "shadowless laughter"? What do these phrases evoke for you?
5. Cleanth Brooks claims that "a true poem is a simulacrum of reality...an experience rather than any mere statement about experience or any mere abstraction from experience." Does his view relate to your reading of Lorde's poem? Is it about....?

### Vivian's questions for "Omnivore" by Harriet Mullen, p. 154

1. I highly recommend reading this poem out loud to yourself. What do you find most engaging about it, as you pronounce the words?
2. Mullen has said: "I am writing for the eye and the ear at once, at that intersection of orality and literacy, wanting to make sure that there is a troubled, disturbing aspect to the work so that it is never just a 'speakerly' or a 'writerly' text." Do you find that this description applies?
3. Would you call this a love poem? How do you interpret the ending?
4. What feelings/responses does this poem evoke in you?
5. Why "ancient" fish? Other single word choices that stand out for you?

### Linda's questions about Everett Hoagland's "The Anti-Semanticist," pg. 148 – 149

1. Do you like this poem? Why?
2. There is a lot of repetition of words and phrases in this poem. Does this quality add to or detract from the poem? How so?
3. There is absolutely no punctuation or capitalization in the poem. Do these qualities add to or detract from the poem? How so?
4. The title implies that the speaker is arguing with some people about the way they are using language or enforcing the meaning of certain words or phrases.
  - a. What is the nature or line of the argument?
  - b. What about the lines "It matters only that there is/ black power/ in your loving". Is this an ironic twist in the line of argument or a natural resolution to the argument?
  - c. What about the final verse? And especially "night interrupted"?
5. Is this poem political or personal (or both)? What *images* and *phrases* push it one way and the other?

### Linda's questions about Langston Hughes' "My People," pg. 74

1. This poem is only six short lines, three brief couplets, yet it makes a big impact. Why? How?

2. Each couplet makes a comparison.
  - a. What do these comparisons have in common?
  - b. What does each comparison add to the overall themes of the poem?
  - c. Is there a progression of some sort from couplet to couplet?
  - d. What about the repetition of “beautiful” – is this a lack of imagination or deliberate?
3. This poem is typical of many of Hughes’ poems—short lines; clear, simple wording and images; obvious themes of racial pride.
  - a. Do you like or admire this style?
  - b. Is this a poem for its time or a great poem that is meaningful beyond its time period?
  - c. Hughes was often criticized by more radical Black writers for not being political and by traditional critics and scholars for lack of stylistic depth. How would you respond to these critics, in agreement or disagreement?
  - d. Would you have included this poem in your own collection of African American poetry while omitting Countee Cullen’s sonnet “Yet Do I Marvel,” as Rampersad has done with our book?