

Poetry Class #5: Chapter 11 "They Are All of Me"

Harriet's question for two poems by Nikki Giovanni

"Mothers" pg. 255

1. Why is this poem called "Mothers"?
2. What is universal about this poem? What is not?
3. The poem zigzags throughout the near and distant past. How does the structure of the poem reveal shifting points of view?
4. The last lines mention "pleasures" that have to be "borne." Why?

"Knoxville" pg. 257 by Nikki Giovanni

1. What are the themes of this poem?
2. Is the poem distinctly Black?
3. How does the language of the poem help to convey its meaning?
4. How do the final lines of the poem strike you?
5. The editor, Rampersad, has included both "Mothers" and "Knoxville, Tennessee" in this section on family. How are the two poems alike and how are they different?

Barbara's questions for "Black Mother Women" by Audre Lorde pg. 267

1. Do you see a connection between last week's discussion of "Incident" and this poem?
2. In poems in this anthology words and phrases are often given unusual meanings often to express tensions – here examples are "heavy love", flesh split", "deceitful longings" and "myths of little worth". Can we discuss?
3. Why did Lorde use a caesura in lines 19 and 21?
4. Explain the last three lines of the poem. Was this a satisfactory ending for you?

Barbara's questions for "Saturday Afternoon, When Chores are Done" by Harryette Mullen pg. 275

1. This poet says, "I like to look at the "outer self" in my poems." Is she doing that here? How?
2. The "old jumprope" is a good metaphor for what emotion in the poem?
3. What does the flashback do for this poem?
4. Does the setting contribute to the poem?