

Question Sheet for Class #8

Vivian's questions for "The Rites for Cousin Vit" by Gwendolyn Brooks, p. 318

1. What do you know of Cousin Vit from reading this poem? Is this a typical memorializing poem, would you say? In the tradition? What is different from many poems about someone's death?
2. What in this poem offers surprise/wit to you? Did you hear a voice speaking out loud?
3. What is its formal structure? What are some poetic devices used? Role of rhyme?
4. How does formal structure promote/suit the poem's "meaning" or content?
5. Why happy? What word choice seems especially right, impactful?
6. If you were to describe this poem to someone else, what would you say? What stands out? What one word might you choose?

Vivian's questions for "the death of thelma sayles" by Lucille Clifton, p. 320

1. Like Brooks poem, this is a memorial to a beloved, but different in what ways?
2. What do you know of thelma sayles from this poem?
3. What do you make of "I leave no tracks"
4. What happens during the poem? Jump(s)? A twist?
5. What stands out for you—what is moving or fresh, especially.
6. How would you describe this poem to someone else?

Note: Vivian will show us readings of two extra poems. These poems are on page 2 of this question sheet.

Chris' questions for "Go Down Death" by James Weldon Johnson, pg. 330

1. Would you like this at your funeral? Why or why not?
2. What makes this poem seem recognizable?
3. Why anthropomorphize Death?

Chris' questions for "Wake" by Langston Hughes, pg. 328

1. Why red?
2. What is wrong with a quiet death?
3. Are you sympathetic with the sentiment in this poem?
4. Is it a serious poem?

Chris' questions for "A Death Song" by Paul Laurence Dunbar 322

1. Where does it show the speaker's connections lie?
2. What does he want at the end and why? Are his reasons good?
3. Say something about the language used.

“The Chicago Picasso” by Gwendolyn Brooks

August 15, 1967

“Mayor Daley tugged a white ribbon, loosing the blue percale wrap. A hearty cheer went up as the covering slipped off the big steel sculpture that looks at once like a bird and a woman.”—*Chicago SunTimes*
(*Seiji Ozawa leads the Symphony. The Mayor smiles. And 50,000 See.*)

Does man love Art? Man visits Art, but squirms.

Art hurts. Art urges voyages—
and it is easier to stay at home,
the nice beer ready.

In commonrooms
we belch, or sniff, or scratch.
Are raw.

But we must cook ourselves and style ourselves for Art, who
is a requiring courtesan.

We squirm.

We do not hug the Mona Lisa.

We

may touch or tolerate
an astounding fountain, or a horse-and-rider.

At most, another Lion.

Observe the tall cold of a Flower
which is as innocent and as guilty,
as meaningful and as meaningless as any
other flower in the western field.

out of body by L. Clifton

(mama)

the words
they fade
i sift
toward other languages
you must listen
with your hands
with the twist ends
of your hair

that leaf
pick up
the sharp green stem
try to feel me feel you
i am saying I still love you
i am saying
i am trying to say
i am trying to say
from my mouth
but baby there is no
mouth