

Question Sheet for Class #9

Please note: These poems are not in our textbook. You may access and download a copy of each these poems via [The Weekly Reading](#) page of our website.

Howard's questions for "Safe Subjects" by Yusef Komunyakaa

1. What is the tone of this poem?
2. What does Yusef mean by safe subjects?
3. How would you interpret the meaning of this poem? What is Yusef trying to say?
4. How do you interpret lines 4-6? Why "Let is surface".

Howard's questions for "Pulled Over in Short Hills, NJ, 8:00 AM" by Ross Gay

1. Does Short Hills give this poem some underlying meaning?
2. How does this poem impact you, the reader?
3. Do you think it is reality based? Why?
4. Who is the audience?
5. The fact that this poem is quite literal. Does that deplete its quality?

Howard's questions for "I Know All Mothers Say Their Children Are Sweet" by

1. Is this poem about racism?
2. How does the title integrate with the narrative?
3. What is the tone of this poem?
4. Does this poem elicit positive or negative energy?

Natalie's questions in response to "What Would Gwendolyn Brooks Do?"

1. When you have rough patches in your life, how do you handle them?
2. What can we do to help the African American community achieve the goals of the Black Lives Matter movement?

Supplementary questions for "What Would Gwendolyn Brooks Do?"

1. Parneshia Jones tells us that her encounter with Gwendolyn Brooks was crucial moment in her life. How does that encounter play out in this poem? Does the poem answer the question posed by the title?
2. The refrain "Hold on" appears at least eight times in the poem. Is its meaning the same each time. Does its meaning evolve? Is the phrase powerful enough to offset the wreckages of the world listed in the poem?
3. About halfway through the poem, the wreckages of the world seem to include degradation of the environment (and maybe terrorism? maybe the mistreatment of immigrants.). What do you think of these thematic inclusions?
4. Who is the "They" mention in the poem? What do you make of the two verses that begin "We are a world of lesions. . . ."
5. This poem refers to many social and political problems. Would you have included it in a Black Lives Matter reader?