

Questions for Poem for Class #1, Jan. 11, 2022

Poem: "Song at Midnight" by Lucille Clifton, pg. 170

1. The speaker starts this poem by calling out to "brothers," but are *you* pulled into this poem? When and how does the poem call out to include you?
2. As this poem unfolds, line by line, image by image, it seems to change its subject (or subject matter) just a little. How do you trace the unfolding subject matter or logic of the poem, line by line?
3. The language of this poem is fairly simple, and the lines are short. But there are lots of unusual uses of words (and grammar), surprising turns of phrase, and special imagery. What do you make of these elements in the poem? Which of these are the most significant for your way of reading the poem?
4. The tone of this poem is celebratory and happy, but what about those last two lines – do they change the tone, meaning or impact of the poem?
5. What about the title? Why is this poem called "song at midnight"? And with no capital letters? Why midnight?
6. What would you say are the themes of this poem? What's African American about this poem?

Suggested: Also read "Introduction" pp: xix-xxix, *The Oxford Anthology of African American Poetry*.