

**Guidelines for Leading a Discussion in
LLC's *Luminous Things: Ways of Reading and Enjoying Poetry* - Fall 2021**

- **Select one longer poem or two shorter poems** that have caught your attention from among the those in the assigned chapter and lead a discussion in which class members share their responses and questions. Here is a suggested approach for setting up the discussion and leading it.
 - **Before class**
 - Read the poem many times and note what has attracted you to this poem, how you are making sense of it, and anything else you would like to share about the poem and its features.
 - Develop a few questions about the poem for the class to consider beforehand, questions that will help generate discussion. For help with identifying good questions see the list below, and see Edward Hirsh's essay [on "How to Read a Poem" on the Resources page of this website](#).
 - A week before the class meets, send the questions to the class or send them to Linda to share with the class.
 - Prepare a brief introduction to the poem—10 minutes, perhaps, that includes why you have selected the poem and any background or contextual information that you would like to share about poem, anything that would help understand the poem. If you choose to tell us about the author, *see the guidelines below*.
 - **During class:**
 1. Explain why you have selected the poem. Share anything that made the poem special for you.
 2. Briefly add any other information or thoughts about the poem that you think would be helpful for the class to understand: Special terms, places, images, vocabulary that you could elucidate. If you choose to include a biography of the poet, *adhere to the guidelines below*.
 3. Read the poem aloud or ask for a volunteer.
 4. Pose a question from your question list to help get the discussion started.
 5. As the discussion continues, pose other questions from your question list, as seem appropriate. Also feel free to point out aspects of the language, form, structure, imagery, voice, and so on, that have caught your attention.

Variations:

- Select two or more poems by different poets from among the those in the assigned section. You could help us compare and contrast the poems—their similar or contrasting features of language, voice, imagery, tone, intention, etc., and your experiences of reading through the poems.
- Select a poet whose poems in the assigned chapter and in other chapters has caught your attention. Help us appreciate this poet as we read and discuss the poems together.

Important guidelines about presenting a poet's biography:

- Limit your comments to 5 – 7 minutes, maximum.
- Include only those details that will help the class appreciate the specific poem you have selected.
- Do not include lists: no lists of awards, publications, degrees, etc.
- Possibly include a couple of helpful quotes by the poet and insightful quotes by critics or scholars.

Questions to provoke discussion and help us dig into the poem:

- Do you find this poem (or poet) appealing? Does it draw you in? Why?

- Do you see in this poem a particular sequence, structure, narrative? What are the highpoints or turning points? Does there seem to be a particular occasion that sparks the events of the poem?
- Is there a speaker, an “I” of the poem? What can we tell about her? What does she reveal about herself, directly or indirectly? Are there other speakers or characters? What do they contribute?
- What about the imagery and the language of the poem? Do you find them striking, surprising, penetrating? Where in the poem? Are some of these puzzling? Which ones?
- What would you say is the tone of the poem? Is this appropriate? Surprising? Puzzling
- Does the poem have a message or theme? Is it stated or implied? Where in the poem? Is it appropriate? Persuasive to you? Why? Why not?