

Question Sheet, Class #8

Chris's comments and questions in response to W. H. Auden's "Our Bias" pg. 211

1. See the essay about this poem. The link is posted on our website.
2. "Our Bias" suggests we are driven by time. How might that have changed since March 2020 due to the world pandemic? Have we maybe become more natural?
3. Time is such a demanding presence since the invention of clocks, etc., more so than when we simply were awake with the daylight and went to sleep with the dark. How has the nature of time changed for us in such different circumstances?

Chris's suggestions in response to W. H. Auden's "The Door" pg. 213

1. Please think of your own threshold moments. What happens at doors and doorways, behind doors, the other side of doors? Doors opening and closing? Doors can keep you safe but also lock you out.

Gordon's comments and questions for Robert Lowell's "Ezra Pound" pg. 231

Ezra Weston Loomis Pound, 1885-1972, was an American expatriate and a major figure in "modernist poetry" which emphasized an economy of words. Disgusted by the carnage of W.W. I, which he blamed on "finance capitalism," he moved to Italy in 1924 where he promoted an economic theory then called "social credit" (see line 3). During W.W. II his Fascist leanings prompted him to give radio broadcasts from Rome ("the Rome wireless" of lines 11-12), against the Americans with particularly vile rants against Jews. After the Allied invasion of Italy and the fall of Mussolini, Pound was taken prisoner and charged with treason. He was deemed unfit to stand trial and spent over 12 years in a psychiatric hospital outside Washington, D.C.

Lowell appealed to Pound a decade earlier to become his student in Rapallo, Italy (see line 6) when Lowell was 19 (1936) and Pound took him on.

1. In line 2, is Pound the intended "feeble-minded felon in pajamas"?
2. Any ideas about Possum's homage to Milton?"
3. Who is "she" on line 12? If the speaker is Pound, does he years later believe his own "nonsense about Jews" was "s__t", or rather did he appreciate unnamed "her" for recognizing how offensive his speech was and yet she still gave him a pass?
4. Significance of last line (line 14)?
5. Besides having 14 lines, are there other characteristics that make this a "sonnet?"

Linda's questions for Elizabeth Bishop's "The Prodigal" pg. 217

1. Bishop is telling one portion of the biblical story of the Prodigal Son. Why this portion?
2. Bishop is known for focusing on ugly things and making them beautiful. Does she succeed in this poem? Why do that in this poem?
3. Bishop was an alcoholic. Is it possible or fair to read the poem through that lens?
4. Frost reminds us that all poetry is metaphor. Regarding this poem, does the poem suggest metaphoric readings other than the comparison with addiction?
5. In what ways is this a traditional sonnet and in way does it push against the tradition? Why might Bishop have chosen the sonnet form for this story?

Linda's questions for Elizabeth Bishop's "Sonnet" pg. 218

1. Is this a sonnet? In what ways?
2. What is this sonnet about? Is it saying something about the sonnet form, itself?