

## Question for Class #10, Session #1

### Wendy's Questions for sonnets by Marilynn Nelson

"Balance" pg. 296

1. If you consider weight distribution, steadiness, equality of proportion as elements of balance, what is being balanced and where are the imbalances presented in the poem?
2. Why are the four lines of the first octet in parenthesis? How does that choice affect your reading of the poem?
3. How do you react to the separation of the colloquial voice and the primary narrator?

"Chosen" pg. 296

In this poem, Nelson works with slant rhyme, which is described as a rhyme with words that have similar, but not identical sounds. They are usually created by using words that have the same vowels and different consonants or the same consonants and different vowels.

1. How does Nelson's use of slant rhyme affect your reading of the poem? Does it strengthen the story's action or characterization?
2. What words and images affect you most in this poem?
3. How do you respond to these two poems together? Do they create one narrative? Can they stand on their own?

Nelson wrote a book of 15 sonnets as a Heroic Crown of Sonnets, called *A Wreath for Emmett Till*. This link contains three of those sonnets and allows you see how the structure works. For our last class, although we probably won't discuss these sonnets, I thought it might be interesting to spend a few minutes discussing this unusual sonnet form.

Here is the link to the sonnets:

<https://womensvoicesforchange.org/poetry-sunday-three-sonnets-from-a-wreath-for-emmett-till-by-marilyn-nelson.htm>

Here is Nelson's description of a Heroic Crown of Sonnets:

"...And a crown of sonnets is a sequence of 7 interlinked sonnets in which the first line of the first sonnet becomes the last line of the last sonnet, and the last line of each sonnet is the first line of the following sonnet. That's a crown of sonnets. A heroic crown of sonnets is a sequence of 15 sonnets, which are interlinked like the normal crown of sonnets, except that in the heroic crown the last sonnet is made up of the first lines of the previous 14 sonnets. So that's a heroic crown of sonnets. My crown is slightly different because the last sonnet is also an acrostic. So the first letters of each line, if you read down, spell out the phrase, "RIP Emmett L. Till."

"Marilyn Nelson Authors Up-close Program." TeachingBooks.net.(n.d.). TeachingBooks.net LLC. 17 Mar. 2005 <http://www.TeachingBooks.net>.