

College Guild
PO Box 6448 Brunswick, Maine 04011

Poetry Club

~ Mountains, Deserts, and the Sea ~

Unit 2 of 8

The six poems in Unit 2 describe nature in unique ways. Some are written from the perspective of a person, such as the first two about the sea. Note that one is told in the first person, (the poet is telling the story about his own experience). The other is in the third person, (the poet telling a story about someone else). Other poets speak in the voices of the subjects they are writing about, giving a desert or a mountain human emotions.

Note the titles of these poems. Picking the right title can be tricky, in fact many poems are left untitled. A great title intrigues its readers, making them want to discover what the poem is about. You don't want to give away a story's end or a powerful metaphor by simply using the last line. That would be like titling a good mystery, "The postman did it"!

A Humbling Find is built on the belief that if you put a conch shell to your ear, you can hear the ocean.

A HUMBLING FIND by Joseph Hudgins

*My bare foot sucked wetly in the moist sand
Salty water peppered my thought lined face
Side stepping a conch shell
I pick it up
And nestle it closely to my ear*

*Inside I hear a Breathing Ocean
that never was
an orchestra of crashing waves
pulling tides and lunar swells*

*The diversity of a hidden world
removes the veil of Daily Blindness
that measures importance by size
and monetary value*

*Completing my obligation
I return the conch for the
next traveler*

1. Why is finding the conch shell a "humbling experience"?

The person's story is simple and peaceful – he finds a shell at the beginning, then puts it back at the end. The imagined life inside the shell is wild and dramatic.

2. Write a poem where opposite moods or feelings combine into one story. (It doesn't have to be about the sea.)

FISH EYES by Gabriel Roberson

*Purple waves rain over the ship's bow
washing away the remains of fish
from the nets*

*The fisherman faces into the stinging spray and froth
giving heed to neither
as he hauls on a line
prying loose the sea's contents
with muscle strain
with aching joints and bones
his feet planted firmly upon the rolling deck
his body swaying with the swelling sea*

*Holds full of ice
full to bursting
with sleek scaled bodies
fish eyes that will never glimpse the depths again*

3. In "Fish Eyes", did you sympathize with the fisherman or the fish and why? What specific lines in the poem made you feel that way?

4. Why did the poet title his work "Fish Eyes" when it is the story of a man toiling at sea?

From the ocean, we travel to the desert. Note how the poets of *Dry Graveyard* and *Crumbly Waves* inject personality into their deserts.

DRY GRAVEYARD by Carlos Bellamy

*Through me
many have wandered.
I cover their
hard trails
with a dry kiss.
Day after day
the mighty sun
places his
impressive weight
on my back.
I laugh.
I am not a forest.
The fear of fire
does not pierce my soul.
But I envy the sea
who has abundance
of water.
So I dream mirages
and build an oasis.*

CRUMBLY WAVES by William Armistead

*Sun bleached Bones
Sand all around
Land of death and decay
Crumbly waves abound
The desert hates water
Plod on to my mirage
Trick bred from despair
Few thing survive here
Though I am not one
The desert plots against me
With her lover, the sun*

5. Compare the personalities of the graveyards in *Dry Graveyard* and *Crumbly Waves*. How do they feel about water? What is the role of the sun in each?
6. Pick an image from either of these poems, (survival, heat, mirages, decay, etc.). Write a poem about that image that has nothing to do with a desert.

To another change of scenery, we head to the mountains. Like the two poems about the desert, the poems are told as if the subjects have distinct personalities.

THE MOUNTAINS WEEP by Alan Haughton

*The magnificent peaks are the hands of the earth,
futilely outstretched toward a withdrawing creator.
"Don't leave me!" they cry,
as fingertips brush the clouds
for one last touch.*

7. What is implied about the creator in "The Mountains Weep"?
8. Compare the mountain's sorrow to that of humankind. Do you think the poet meant the mountain to be a metaphor for man? Why or why not?

MOUNTAINS by Derek Leconte

*Pegs that make earth firm
Yet arrows that point to God's home
Mother's natural pyramids
Under Father's atmospheric dome*

*Mountains are canvases
Carved by weather's edge
Their slopes luring skiers
Challenging climbers to grip their ledge...*

*Sunrise or sunset
They frame the sun's rays
Creating a horizon so stunning
Not a person can avert his gaze*

9. The first poem about mountains was sorrowful. Where does the mountain's joy in the second poem come from?
10. If you gave a mountain and a desert human-like personalities, what would they be?
11. Write a poem about a forest, meadow or river.
12. What have you learned from any of these poems that you might want to apply to your own work?
13. Write an original poem, one created specifically for this course, on the subject of your choosing.

14. Compare the titles of the six poems from Unit 2. Which do you think is the best and why?

15. Which poem is your favorite and why?

All of the poems in Unit 2 were written by College Guild students taking Poetry Club!

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Unlike the light-hearted *Theme in Yellow*, where a pumpkin is speaking, in *A Teamster's Farewell*, Sandburg speaks in the

voice of a man being sent to prison. Note what the condemned man is thinking about. He was a teamster, his identity tied to a life driving horses in a busy city.

14. Pick a different time period. Write a poem in the voice of a man, woman, child, animal or object that takes your reader to that specific time and place.

Remember Antoine de Saint-Exupery’s quote at the beginning of this unit? *Perfection is achieved, not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing left to take away.* Ask yourself for every poem you write: Would fewer words would result in a stronger impact?

15. Write an original poem, one created specifically for this course, on the subject of your choosing.

When you write your poems, think about format, vocabulary and imagery as well as your message. If you are struggling to fit the whole poem around rhyming words, ask yourself if the poem needs to rhyme. Instead of assuming that your first draft is complete, leave the poem for a few days, then come back and read it. Your goal is to convey your message or paint a scene in a way it’s never been done before!

16. What have you learned from Sandburg’s poetry that you might want to apply to your own work?

17. Which Sandburg poem in this unit is your favorite and why?

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