10H Remote Learning Assignment #5

There are **two topics** for this lesson. One is **how to end a poem**, and the other is **syllabic poetry**. The first is a principle that can be applied to all your poems—and, for that matter, all creative writing—and the second is simply the form of poem I’m asking you to write this time around.

1. Poem endings, if they are satisfying to a read, most often feel simultaneously surprising and inevitable. It’s a bit of a paradox, but that’s also why they can be difficult to pull off. Here are some poems to read, whose endings all feel surprising and inevitable, in different ways…

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46712/introduction-to-poetry>

 If you completed RL2, you read this already, but notice how the dialogic rhetorical structure sets up the punchline, and yet the level of violence in the last two stanzas’ imagery makes it much more dramatic than we were expecting. It’s a significant tonal shift at the end that delivers the surprise.

[https://writersalmanac.publicradio.org/index.php%3Fdate=2009%252F07%252F27.html](https://writersalmanac.publicradio.org/index.php%3Fdate%3D2009%252F07%252F27.html)

 Here it’s the addition of a new *subject* at the end via a new set of pronouns. It seemed to have been a math poem, but that last line renders it a love poem. The utterly calculating and impersonal is rendered suddenly and delightfully intimate.

<http://psa.fcny.org/psa/poetry/poetry_in_motion/atlas/newyork/i_fin_man_to_spe_to_her/>

 Here the surprise is achieved through understatement, through the implication the speaker may be disappointed with the result. But then, the title is a reminder that this ending could actually be construed as a victory. The key to an understatement being sufficiently surprising is providing the right context leading up to it.

The three below I won’t comment on. Please read them and figure for yourself what makes the endings work (or not work, if that is your opinion). They are fantastic poems:

<https://emilyspoetryblog.wordpress.com/2013/04/16/mrs-darwin-by-carol-ann-duffy/>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48486/to-help-the-monkey-cross-the-river>

<https://scbaskin.tumblr.com/post/75169906991/interchanges-by-yannis-ritsos/amp>

1. A syllabic poem is one that either has the same, designated number of syllables per line, or has a recognizable pattern of syllables per line. The definition I previously offered of loose-blank-verse would make that a syllabic poem (lines consistently 10 syllables long).

On page 3 of this document, I’ve included an example of my own syllabic poem. Notice how it has a syllabically progressive pattern.

Another possibility might include a poem of 3 stanzas, where each stanza has 5 lines with syllable lengths of 7, 5, 2, 5, 7. There is a Japanese-inspired form that has ongoing 3-line stanzas that follow the pattern 5, 7, 5—I forget the name of this, but it’s like linked haikus.

**HERE IS THE ACTUAL ASSIGNMENT: Write 2 more poems of your own. At least one of them should be a syllabic poem.** The other may also be in this form, but could be another form with which you are familiar. The *topics*, based on your nominations and votes, are: **coffee** and **cold**.

 \***If you accept this mission, share poems with me by Wed 4/1\***

**Spindle**

My

daughter’s

most and least

favorite witch

from any story

is Maleficent, who,

in *Sleeping Beauty*, wears some

purple—the only color my

daughter correctly identifies—

and likes to make grand entrances with green

flames preceded by gusts of wind, so Ella’s

favorite question whether we are walking to

the playground and the breeze picks up or reading the book

is Is That The Evil Witch, which is complicated by

Her Evilness’s proclivity for supernatural

teleportation coupled with her evidenced ability

to transform into a dragon, which means she could essentially be

anything, anywhere: so I think my two-year-old is both courageous

and insightful for asking the big, bad, dark questions everyone else believes

are too obvious. Her second favorite question is Why Does The Evil Witch Go

Ha Ha Ha, and I want to say it’s because the witch is a sadist and takes pleasure

in the suffering she causes others, but instead I say the witch isn’t actually

laughing because nobody laughs that unnaturally; she’s clearly uncomfortable in

forced social situations, which is probably why the King didn’t invite her to Aurora’s

christening feast—a *favor* to the witch, who probably *prefers* to be alone with her raven

and a hot cup of tea: some of the greatest human beings have been introverts, and only

thrived because their societies respected, valued and demanded such types. What I

do not understand—I say to Ella as I turn off her light—is why the witch

curses Aurora to *prick her finger on the spindle of a spinner and*

*die* before the sun goes down on her sixteenth birthday. It sounds so random

yet specific. If you have the power to curse somebody, why not

make it easier on yourself and say the girl will have a

*heart attack* the *morning* she turns sixteen. That way, you have time

to troubleshoot in case anything goes wrong such as not

having a *spindle of a spinner* handy and/or

Prince Philip showing up with his sword and lips. Yes,

it might be a metaphor for the random

dangers that can change or end your life when

you least expect them, which is why I

spend a significant portion

of each day imagining

worst case scenarios

for those I love, why

I hold her hand

long past she’s

gone to

sleep.