POEM # 1: GUIDELINES FOR THE ANAPHORIC POEM

DIRECTIONS:

Follow the guidelines for the assignment below, and most importantly, remember every poem must be a minimum of SEVEN LINES and ALWAYS PROVIDE A TITLE FOR YOUR POEMS. Of course, you can exceed seven lines. Also, avoid forced rhyme, cliché terms, artificial flowery wordiness, or unoriginal phrases like “roses are red…” and maintain showing, not telling, even in poetry.

You will be writing an anaphoric poem with a repetitive phrase or word only two-thirds of the time in your poem and not every line. You have several examples that I have provided, such as Rudyard Kipling’s “If”. You may want to apply your brainstorming lists from our pre-writing activity on your views about love, your own character traits, death, your future, overcoming obstacles, etc when choosing from the two options below.

CRITERIA:

- You may select from one of the following options (1) Write a poem that shows a person reacting aloud to an uncomfortable situation (failure, loss of love, death, etc.), or (2) write a poem in which you or an imaginary character are waiting for someone or something that never arrives. Another way would be writing about a certain obstacle presenting itself to prevent you or the imaginary character from reaching a destination or achieving a certain goal/dream if you rather approach it as not waiting but as an obstacle preventing you from reaching someone or something.

- Several questions you will want to consider if you choose option 1: Will your reader be able to recognize the emotions this person is confronting? Will he/she get a clear picture of your character from the description you use? Does your setting contribute to character development? What do you want the reader to feel after finishing your poem?

- Several questions you will want to consider if you choose option 2: Who is the speaker? What is his/her personality like? Is he/she cocky, nervous and/or fearful? What is their relationship to the thing or person for whom he/she is waiting? Does he/she believe his/her waiting is in vain? What will happen if the thing or person does not show up or he/she does not reach their goal/destination?

- Several factors to keep in mind: Use significant concrete details to SHOW rather than tell an emotion. You may want to apply the five senses to make it come alive and vivid for your reader. You will want to move us and trigger an emotion in your reader, so avoid trite phrases, clichés, or flowery language. Do not try to sound poetic but write with honesty. Finally, do not use forced rhyme.
POEM # 2: GUIDELINES FOR THE SETTING POEM

DIRECTIONS:

Follow the guidelines for the assignment below, and most importantly, remember every poem must be a minimum of SEVEN LINES and ALWAYS PROVIDE A TITLE FOR YOUR POEMS. Of course, you can exceed seven lines. Also, avoid forced rhyme, cliché terms, artificial flowery wordiness, or unoriginal phrases like “roses are red…” and maintain showing, not telling, even in poetry.

Write a poem about a place that comforts you and gives you hope. You will want to describe some feature of the natural world, such as types of plants or trees, mountains, a river, a lake, or even the dirt. You will want to use a feature of the natural world as a metaphor – SHOWING your state of mind, dominant emotion, or true identity through the comparison. Your poem should show how your interaction with nature has altered you in a significant way.

Ask yourself: What changed or changes when I visit this place? What do I discover and learn about myself? What do I find in this place beyond hope? What significant colors and details stand out? What does the air smell and/or taste like? What do I hear and/or see? What season is it? Are you alone? Etc. It may be your backyard, the beach, a mountain retreat, a local park and/or a specific town or country, but you must focus on the setting of an outdoor place. It may even be a place that no longer exists.

CRITERIA:

• If you can visit this particular place, sit down to observe your surroundings while you answer the questions listed above in your journal, but if you cannot visit the location, you may want to go outdoors like a backyard or a local park and brainstorm about your place. Focus on the five senses and what they trigger in you in the outdoors and what you recall about the particular place.

• Use concise, concrete language and specific details to evoke a certain tone, emotion, and/or mood to your poem (perhaps focus on significant details from one or all of the five senses), but avoid cliché, flowery language and trite phrases because it will seem contrived and you want to move us with honesty and precision.

• Remember you must use a metaphor in the poem to SHOW your state of mind, dominant emotion, or true identity.

• Use as much internal music and rhyme. However, DO NOT force the rhyme. Consider including alliteration, assonance, and rich or partial consonance, but do not force it
POEM # 3: GUIDELINES FOR THE PHOTO POEM

DIRECTIONS:

Follow the guidelines for the assignment below, and most importantly, remember every poem must be a minimum of SEVEN LINES and ALWAYS PROVIDE A TITLE FOR YOUR POEMS. Of course, you can exceed seven lines. Also, avoid forced rhyme, cliché terms, artificial flowery wordiness, or unoriginal phrases like “roses are red...” and maintain showing, not telling, even in poetry.

Describe a photograph of yourself, friends or some member(s) of your family in a minimum of seven lines. Look at the photograph long and hard until you are deeply moved. Perhaps the subject of the photo is no longer alive, or it was taken before you were born, or you are there in the picture as a young child – standing in front of the house where you grew up and to which you have not returned in many years.

Try to capture the emotion expressed and how it inspires or affects the observer today. Begin the poem by describing the photograph, making three observations about it. Then tell us two or three things that we would not know from the picture. Let those draw you into your past until you discover something that you had never realized or had never articulated or had never before dared reveal to yourself or others. Finally, at the end of your poem, you should reveal an epiphany to the reader.

CRITERIA:

- Bring the photo to the next class meeting to discuss and begin our brainstorming activity.

- Begin the poem by describing the photograph, making three observations about it, such as who has been photographed, when was the photo taken, where was it taken, and/or why was it taken (What was the occasion)?

- Then tell us two or three things that we would not know from the picture. Let those draw you into your past until you discover something that you had never realized or had never articulated or dared to reveal to yourself or others.

- Try to show the emotion then and your reaction to it now by selecting DETAILS of the character’s appearance and physical stance or movement (are they dancing, riding a bicycle, hugging, etc...).

- Finally, you should end with an epiphany about the individuals and/or event captured in the photograph.
POEM #4: GUIDELINES FOR AN EMINENT CONVERSATION POEM

DIRECTIONS:

Follow the guidelines for the assignment below, and most importantly, remember every poem must be a minimum of SEVEN LINES and ALWAYS PROVIDE A TITLE FOR YOUR POEMS. Of course, you can exceed seven lines. Also, avoid forced rhyme, cliché terms, artificial flowery wordiness, or unoriginal phrases like “roses are red…” and maintain showing, not telling, even in poetry.

Write a poem that takes the form of a dialogue between two famous people. The two individuals can be dead or alive, and they do not have to have lived at the same time. Try to think of two individuals who are not normally paired but who still have interesting things to say to each other.

For instance, Jesus talking with St. Paul would not be as suggestive as Jesus talking with Hitler. A few examples of interesting (and sometimes outrageous) pairings generated by one group of students included the following: Joseph Stalin and Queen Elizabeth, Sigmund Freud and Dr. Ruth, Christopher Columbus and Frederick Douglass, Kurt Cobain and Charles Darwin, and Albert Einstein and Ice Cube.

CRITERIA:

- You will want to make a list of three pairings of people (total SIX people) that are famous enough to be common knowledge for most people and not some obscure historical figure.

- Next, narrow down your list of three pairings to one pair and construct at least TEN questions that these two individuals could raise and argue/challenge each other to answer. It may range from a controversial issue or be more personal about their identities, accomplishments or failures, etc.

- Then, you will want to begin your brainstorming by asking yourself as well as five different people to answer some of your questions that you posed in the prior step. What would they argue if they were one of these individuals? Others may offer insight into these two individuals through your line of questions and provide material for you to begin constructing a poem.

- You will want to begin constructing your poem and keeping several factors in mind. Use significant concrete details to SHOW rather than tell their emotions. You will want to move us and trigger an emotion in your reader, so avoid trite phrases, clichés, or flowery language. Do not try to sound poetic but write with honesty. Again, DO NOT use forced rhyme.
POEM # 5: GUIDELINES FOR THE SONNET

DIRECTIONS:

Follow the guidelines for the assignment below. Your sonnet assignment requires FOURTEEN LINES and you must PROVIDE A TITLE FOR YOUR POEM. Avoid forced rhyme, cliché terms, artificial flowery wordiness, or unoriginal phrases like “roses are red...” and maintain showing, not telling, even in poetry.

A sonnet is a poem of fourteen iambic pentameter lines. It follows one of several set rhyme schemes, and the sonnet tradition carries its own peculiar conceits or notions of idealized love or unconditional love. The sonneteer took on a persona of a “humble servant” tossed by a tempest on a sea of despair for their love and described their beloved one’s beauty in a stereotypical fashion, such as her cheeks are like roses, and this fanciful notion was expressed through an elaborate analogy or metaphor.

Although you will be required to use figurative language, such as metaphor, simile, personification, and/or hyperbole (overstatement), you will not use stereotypical language or unoriginal phrases. The basic types include the Petrarchan, Shakespearean, and Spenserian.

- The Italian or Petrarchan is generally an octave + a sestet (abbaabba + cdecde, cdcdec or cdedce). The octave presents a narrative, raises a question or states a proposition to which the sestet then responds.

- The English or Shakespearean uses four divisions: three quatrains + a rhymed couplet for a conclusion. The quatrains can have different rhyme schemes, but the typical pattern is abab cdcde gefg.

- The Spenserian is quite rare and this style complicates the Shakespearean form by linking rhymes in the quatrains: ababcdeefg.

You will be writing an English sonnet (rhymed ab sol cdcd efef gg). Be certain, of course, to maintain iambic pentameter; five beats in each line. (Think of it as ten syllables per line, but when you count it off, you will hear the five beats.) Try for perfect rhymes rather than off rhymes. Remember the trick is to get your meters and rhymes right without sacrificing other elements of the poem.

Do not torture your syntax in order to get your rhythms or rhymes. The poems must flow naturally. If any of it sounds tortured or artificial, keep working until it does not – and until you have a real poem. Keep your language contemporary: just because the sonnet is a traditional form does not mean it has to sound like an old-fashioned poem. Your sonnet should try to define ideal, unconditional love.
CRITERIA:

- Your sonnet must be fourteen lines because you will have three quatrains + a rhymed couplet for a conclusion. The quatrains can have different rhyme schemes, but the typical pattern is abab cdcd efef gg.

- You will maintain the iambic pentameter (five beats in each line). Iamb is a metrical foot in verse in which an unaccented syllable is followed by an accented one, as in “caress” or “a cat”.

- Your sonnet should describe ideal love and use the seasons (consider the elements associated with them like rain or snow) and nature imagery, such as the sun, stars, moon, mountains, tempests, the sea, flowers, and so on, to portray the changes in the material, physical world in contrast to your ideal love that transcends or overcomes any barriers, superficialities or changes in the course of one’s life with the one whom they love. Basically, you want to emphasize the unwavering aspect of ideal love despite time and the seasons changing.

- Take on a personae of a traveler or explorer who has fully experienced the pleasures and hardships of the world, and after witnessing the glory of nature’s beauty in the oceans/seas, sky, and land (break each of the sections into nature imagery based on those elements), the traveler comes to the conclusion in the couplet that nothing is more beautiful, dependable, enduring as ideal, spiritual love in comparison to everything else the world has to offer.

- You are required to use a metaphor (comparing two unlike things in which no words of comparison, such as like or as, are used: “That new kid in our class is really a rat.”) in the first four lines; a simile (comparison of two unlike things in which a word of comparison, such as like or as, is used: “She eats like a bird.”) within lines five to eight; personification (literary device elevating an animal, object or idea to the level of a human such that it takes on the characteristics of a human personality: “The rock stubbornly refused to move.”) of an element in nature within lines nine to twelve; and finally, the couplet should be a hyperbole which is basically overstating or stretching the truth for literary effect because you want the sonnet to emphasize the depth and strength of this ideal love.

- Again, avoid forced rhyme, cliché terms, and artificial flowery language, and maintain SHOWING, not merely telling, emotions.
POEM # 6: GUIDELINES FOR THE SOCIAL ISSUE/CURRENT EVENT POEM

DIRECTIONS:

Follow the guidelines for the assignment below, and most importantly, remember every poem must be a minimum of SEVEN LINES and ALWAYS PROVIDE A TITLE FOR YOUR POEMS. Of course, you can exceed seven lines. Also, avoid forced rhyme, cliché terms, artificial flowery wordiness, or unoriginal phrases like “roses are red...” and maintain showing, not telling, even in poetry.

Select a social issue or current event of political interest about which you feel passionately and write an “argument,” addressing those who hold beliefs and attitudes you passionately oppose. Assure them that you understand and sympathize. Do not paint their argument with so broad a satiric brush that your opposition to their ideas is apparent.

Keep your irony so retrained that it cannot be seen, but then, find some way of SHOWING the absurdity or horror of their position without departing from your rational and sympathetic tone. The great model in English literature of the devastating use of this satiric strategy is Jonathan Swift’s “A Modest Proposal.” It would be a good idea to read Swift before beginning your poem.

A PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING POEMS OF SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS:

- To prime yourself for writing a poem of social consciousness, do the following:
  - Start clipping articles and photos from your daily newspaper that sadden you, anger you, or in some way move you. Keep the articles in a folder and the photos where you can see them.
  - List the social issues about which you feel deeply.
  - Recall an incident of mockery directed at someone for being old, poor, fat, disabled, homosexual, socially awkward, or “ugly.”
  - Recall someone you knew who had been touched by war.
  - Recall encountering someone who was homeless and/or desperately poor.
  - Recall an injustice that you witnessed.
  - Make a list of other “political” incidents or encounters in your life, things that have either happened to you or that you have witnessed that involved such issues as injustice, intolerance, exploitation, war, or cruelty.
CRITERIA:

- After priming yourself with the steps listed for developing poems of social consciousness above, you will select one specific issue of interest and free write a response to it. You may want to compose several pages of political invective, curse, rant, accuse, threaten, explode, and give vent to all your pent-up political frustration and rage. It will be disorganized and chaotic in the initial stage, but your next step should be to shape it into a coherent, powerful poem by taking the most significant details and piecing them together to show your argument on this social issue with satire.

- Then, if someone (a political leader) was described in your free-writing as evil, spiteful, irrational, and self-serving, you may want to list those characteristics in one column of a chart and in another column list opposite characteristics as if they were saints, martyrs with fuzzy pink slippers, teddy bears, or big fluffy bunnies – whatever it takes to SHOW the IRONY and absurdity behind the social beliefs of this current event or issue you oppose and why you do.

- However, if free-writing about the social issue is not as productive an activity as you would like, try your hand at a political cut-up, using at least two articles or advertisements from the steps listed above to prime yourself for writing on a social issue. These articles or advertisements should act in ironic counterpoint to one another.

- For example, an article about religious persecution or bigotry cut in the fragments from the Bible, or an article about starvation diets cut in with an article or advertisement about gourmet foods or haute cuisine. A list of current street and military weapons could be interspersed with dialogue from a romance novel to form a nightmarish poem and SHOW the IRONY and absurdity behind the social beliefs you oppose.

- Remember the poem must be a minimum of SEVEN lines and try to remind yourself when using the literary device of IRONY that a writer says one thing but means something quite the opposite. Satiric writing uses derisive humor to ridicule human weakness and folly or attack political injustices and incompetence.

- Maintain SHOWING and avoid forced rhyme, cliché terms, and artificial flowery language in this poem.