



Essential Words: LTAB Online 2020

Lesson plans and writing prompts for teens



Ars Poetica

by Christiana Castillo

DURATION: 1.5 hours

GRADE LEVEL: Middle & High School

WRITING LEVEL: All levels

FOCUS: ars poetica

KEY TERMS: metaphor, ars poetica

EXAMPLE TEXTS

[Ars Poetica](#) by Jose Olivarez,

[Duplex](#) by Jericho Brown,

& [Ars Poetica](#) by Aracelis Girmay

Check in | 15 minutes

What makes a poem a poem?

Resource Building | 15 minutes

How does poetry make you feel? What does poetry do for you?

EXERCISE | Create 5 metaphors for what writing a poem is like and 5 metaphors for what a poem is.

KEY TERMS

- **METAPHOR:** a figure of speech used to compare two things that aren't alike but do have something in common.
- **ARS POETICA:** a poem explaining what poetry is to the author.

Close Reading | 20 minutes

“Ars Poetica” by Jose Olivarez, “Duplex” by Jericho Brown, “Ars Poetica” by Aracelis Girmay

QUESTION TO CONSIDER | What is a poem to Jose Olivarez, Jericho Brown, Aracelis Girmay?

Writing Prompt | 20 minutes

Write your own ars poetica poem. What is a poem to you?

Share Out | 15 minutes



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Ars Poetica by Jose Olivarez

Migration is derived from the word “migrate,” which is a verb defined by Merriam-Webster as “to move from one country, place, or locality to another.” Plot twist: migration never ends. My parents moved from Jalisco, México to Chicago in 1987. They were dislocated from México by capitalism, and they arrived in Chicago just in time to be dislocated by capitalism. Question: is migration possible if there is no “other” land to arrive in. My work: to imagine. My family started migrating in 1987 and they never stopped. I was born mid-migration. I’ve made my home in that motion. Let me try again: I tried to become American, but America is toxic. I tried to become Mexican, but México is toxic. My work: to do more than reproduce the toxic stories I inherited and learned. In other words: just because it is art doesn’t mean it is inherently nonviolent. My work: to write poems that make my people feel safe, seen, or otherwise loved. My work: to make my enemies feel afraid, angry, or otherwise ignored. My people: my people. My enemies: capitalism. Susan Sontag: “victims are interested in the representation of their own sufferings.” Remix: survivors are interested in the representation of their own survival. My work: survival. Question: Why poems? Answer:

[Ars Poetica by Jose Olivarez, Poetry Foundation](#)

Ars Poetica by Aracelis Girmay

May the poems be
the little snail’s trail.

Everywhere I go,
every inch: quiet record

of the foot’s silver prayer.

I lived once.

Thank you.

It was here.

[Ars Poetica by Aracelis Girmay, Poets & Writers Tumblr](#)



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Duplex by Jericho Brown

A poem is a gesture toward home.
It makes dark demands I call my own.

Memory makes demands darker than my own:
My last love drove a burgundy car.

My first love drove a burgundy car.
He was fast and awful, tall as my father.

Steadfast and awful, my tall father
Hit hard as a hailstorm. He'd leave marks.

Light rain hits easy but leaves its own mark
Like the sound of a mother weeping again.

Like the sound of my mother weeping again,
No sound beating ends where it began.

None of the beaten end up how we began.
A poem is a gesture toward home.

[Duplex by Jericho Brown, Academy of American Poets](#)