



Essential Words: LTAB Online 2020

Lesson plans and writing prompts for teens



Lady Lazarus & Taboos

by Tianna Jones

DURATION: 1.5 hours

GRADE LEVEL: High School

WRITING LEVEL: Developing & Experienced Writers

FOCUS: taboo

EXAMPLE POEM

[Lady Lazarus](#) by Sylvia Plath

FOR TEENS, BY TEENS
A lesson plan from InsideOut's Youth Advisory Board

Check in | 15 minutes

What fruit are you and why?

Resource Building | 15 minutes

Make three lists:

- 5 things that are taboo in your family, community, culture or society
- 5 things that are valuable to you
- 5 items or people you are connected to

Close Reading | 20 minutes

[Lady Lazarus by Sylvia Plath](#)

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Who is the poet speaking to in this poem?
- In what ways do you relate to this poem?
- How does the time we currently live in affect how we think and behave?
- What parts of this poem do you not understand?
- What feelings does this poem evoke in you?

Writing Prompt | 20 minutes

Write about something that is taboo in society today. Why or why shouldn't it be taboo? OR Write about 2-3 items from one of your lists. OR Write about the things and people that would be affected if you were gone.

Share Out | 15 minutes



Essential Words: LTAB Online 2020

Lesson plans and writing prompts for teens



Lady Lazarus by Sylvia Plath

I have done it again.
One year in every ten
I manage it—

A sort of walking miracle, my skin
Bright as a Nazi lampshade,
My right foot

A paperweight,
My face a featureless, fine
Jew linen.

Peel off the napkin
O my enemy.
Do I terrify?—

The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth?
The sour breath
Will vanish in a day.

Soon, soon the flesh
The grave cave ate will be
At home on me

And I a smiling woman.
I am only thirty.
And like the cat I have nine times to die.

This is Number Three.
What a trash
To annihilate each decade.

What a million filaments.
The peanut-crunching crowd
Shoves in to see

Them unwrap me hand and foot—
The big strip tease.
Gentlemen, ladies

These are my hands
My knees.
I may be skin and bone,

Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman.
The first time it happened I was ten.
It was an accident.

The second time I meant
To last it out and not come back at all.
I rocked shut

As a seashell.
They had to call and call
And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls.

Dying
Is an art, like everything else.
I do it exceptionally well.

I do it so it feels like hell.
I do it so it feels real.
I guess you could say I've a call.

It's easy enough to do it in a cell.
It's easy enough to do it and stay put.
It's the theatrical

Comeback in broad day
To the same place, the same face, the same brute
Amused shout:

'A miracle!'
That knocks me out.
There is a charge

For the eyeing of my scars, there is a charge
For the hearing of my heart—
It really goes.

And there is a charge, a very large charge
For a word or a touch
Or a bit of blood

Or a piece of my hair or my clothes.
So, so, Herr Doktor.



Essential Words: LTAB Online 2020

Lesson plans and writing prompts for teens



So, Herr Enemy.

I am your opus,
I am your valuable,
The pure gold baby

That melts to a shriek.
I turn and burn.
Do not think I underestimate your great concern.

Ash, ash—
You poke and stir.
Flesh, bone, there is nothing there——

A cake of soap,
A wedding ring,
A gold filling.

Herr God, Herr Lucifer
Beware
Beware.

Out of the ash
I rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air.

[Lady Lazarus by Sylvia Plath, The Poetry Foundation](#)