



Essential Words: LTAB Online 2020

Lesson plans and writing prompts for teens



Navigating Pain: Writing for Post-Traumatic Growth

by Justin Groppuso-Cook

DURATION: 1.5 hours

GRADE LEVEL: High School

WRITING LEVEL: Experienced

FOCUS: pain

EXAMPLE TEXT:

[On Pain](#) by Kahlil Gibran

Check in | 15 minutes

WATCH | Amir Sulaiman's performance "[Of Beauty & Breaking](#)". Watch it first for a general impression, and then a second time to take notes on specific lines and images.

WRITE | **What is Amir Sulaiman saying about pain? About heartbreak? What images stood out to you? Why? Do you agree or disagree with his perspective?**

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How can our pain, trauma, or heartbreak be transformed into a positive thing?
- Why is it important to accept and work with our "negative" experiences rather than rejecting them?
- Physical exercise can be painful, but over time it makes you stronger: could the same be said for our emotional body?

Resource Building | 15 minutes

Think of moments in your life where you experienced deep pain. Maybe it was the loss of a family member or close friend. Maybe it was your first heartbreak. Maybe it was a mistake that you made and were punished for. Take this time to write about these moments in your life. Try to really feel into the experience and write with sensory details and vivid language. Treat this exercise as if you were writing in your journal.

What images symbolize your pain? These will form the base metaphors of your poem. (Example: a gravestone, a ripped-up love letter, an alcohol bottle, the shell of a bullet, etc.) **Find 1-3 images and highlight them.**

Close Reading | 20 minutes

On Pain by Kahlil Gibran

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What is the poet trying to tell us about pain? Use lines from the poem to explain your reasoning.
- Why do you think he claims pain "is the bitter poison...[that] heals your sick self"?
- What is the relationship between medicine & poison?
- What do you think this line means: "And could you keep your heart in wonder at the daily miracles of your life your pain would not seem less wondrous than your joy"?
- Do you agree or disagree about the poet's view on pain? Why or why not?



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Writing Prompt | 20 minutes

Write a poem using the images you highlighted above.

Begin your poem with the line: "I transform my _____ into _____".

In the first blank, write one of your symbols; in the second blank, you will put an image that is empowering or uplifting.

Example: "I transform my **pain** into **seeds of a tree that reach for the sun.**"

Then, extend that metaphor for 5 - 8 lines. Feel free to use imagery from the previous sections to build the metaphor.

Once you complete one stanza, select another one of your images and create a second metaphor.

Again, extend this metaphor for 5 - 8 lines. Once completed, your poem should be 3 stanzas, each one beginning with the line: "I transform my _____ into _____".



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On Pain

by Kahilil Gibran

And a woman spoke, saying, Tell us of Pain.

And he said:

Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding.

Even as the stone of the fruit must break, that its heart may stand in the sun, so must you know pain.

And could you keep your heart in wonder at the daily miracles of your life your pain would not seem less wondrous than your joy;

And you would accept the seasons of your heart, even as you have always accepted the seasons that pass over your fields.

And you would watch with serenity through the winters of your grief.

Much of your pain is self-chosen.

It is the bitter potion by which the physician within you heals your sick self.

Therefore trust the physician, and drink his remedy in silence and tranquility:

For his hand, though heavy and hard, is guided by the tender hand of the Unseen,

And the cup he brings, though it burn your lips, has been fashioned of the clay which the Potter has moistened with His own sacred tears.

[On Pain by Kahilil Gibran, Academy of American Poets](#)