

a lesson plan from

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putting literature and art on the streets

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Title: Threading a Poem: Literal and Figurative Threads

Lesson Plan: [Alison Pelegrin/ Millian Pham Lien Giang “Feast of Banana Spiders, Starlight, and Roadkill”](#) by Caroline Chavatel

Audience: High School, College or Continuing Education Creative Writing Class

Objectives:

1. To generate new work using an associative exercise related to the concept of poetic threads.
2. To consider the duality present in Millian Pham Lien Giang’s artwork, REFUSE REFUGE, and Alison Pelegrin’s poem’ “Feast of Banana Spiders, Starlight, and Roadkill” to expand understanding of threading a poem.
3. To use Pelegrin’s image pool and diction choices and the observed visual elements of Millian Pham Lien Giang’s artwork to inform students’ image and diction choices in their own poems.
4. To expand and sharpen vocabulary and diction for students’ poems.

Lesson Suggestion:

1. Instruct students to create a document or page in their notebook with two columns.
2. Have the class observe only the visual elements of the broadside (without reading the text of the poem) and have them make a list of at least five words that come to mind. (These can be descriptive or just loosely associative. There are no incorrect answers here.)
3. Have students put away or turn over the broadside. Read the poem aloud to them twice through. As you are reading, ask them to jot down, in their second column, at least five words that strike them as interesting. (Each student should now have at least ten words written down.)
4. In a full class discussion, have students discuss the similarities and differences of the words they wrote down. Some helpful questions for the instructor to ask might be: Are there other definitions of any of the words? Do any of the words mean something else in other contexts? Are there any homophones? What would a word’s antonym be?
5. Have students choose one word from either column. Without using any of the words they previously wrote down, they should brainstorm as many associative words as possible that relate to their new chosen “thread” word. (5-7 minutes suggested)
6. Instruct students to choose one line, phrase, or word from Pelegrin’s poem which will serve as their working title to inform their drafting. Using this title and their new list of associative threaded words, have students draft the beginning of a poem (20-25 minutes suggested)
7. After time for research and drafting, come together and ask the students to talk about their process and the choices they made. What associative words did they choose? How did using material from the poem as a title influence the direction they went in their own drafting process? How did observing the visual elements of the artwork, REFUSE REFUGE, inspire them to weave linguistic meaning and imagery?
8. If anyone is very proud of what they have drafted, let them share their work with the class.

Other BroadSides That Could Work for This Activity:

Catherine Pierce/Ira Joel Haber [“Dear Atom Bomb,”](#)

Philip Metres/Sara Tabbert [“The Trees in My Chest”](#)

Melissa Fite Johnson/Amy Meissner [“Backyard”](#)