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putting literature and art on the streets

Title: Versioning & Poetic Choices

Lesson Plan: Sebastian Caswell Merrill/Lisa Sette, "[Letter with My Ghost](#)" by CN Fabian

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

Objectives:

1. To analyze complex versioning in poems;
2. To think critically about how each piece of a poem matters, no matter how small it may seem;
3. To practice close reading of poems on the fly;
4. To think about how stereoscopic poems work and why one might choose this form;
5. To transfer all of the above objectives into their own writing!

Lesson Suggestion:

Note: this type of activity could be done with many poetic forms, and versioning could also be discussed if you separate poem, title, and artwork and have students analyze them individually!

1. Break students up into small groups of two-four;
2. Give each group a different version of "Letter With My Ghost." Since this poem has (at least) three-four possible readings, give a different version to each group. For example:

- Left side (w/o title)
- Right side (w/o title)
- All together (w/o title)
- Left side (w/ title)
- Right side (w/ title)
- All together (w/ title)
- If you have more groups, you can also provide some groups with versions with and without the artwork attached!

3. As the groups read through their version, have them do a cursory close reading. Some questions to answer:

- What sorts of themes do you notice?
- What is the word choice and imagery doing for your reading?
- How does the title/artwork (if you have it) tie in?
- This part should take the longest since it will be their first read-through (20-25 minutes suggested)

4. After giving each group ample time to complete a close reading of all the elements they received, pair each group with another who did something different from them (e.g. pair a "Left side w/o title" group with a "All together w/ title" group)

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- If you have a more advanced class, you could also pair groups with similar versions (e.g. two “Left side” groups, one w/o and one w/ title), so they can see the nuances that arose between their readings
 - (10-15 minutes suggested)
5. After the larger groups have compared their notes, bring up the entirety of Merrill’s “Letter With My Ghost” along with Sette’s artwork and read as an entire group (2-5 minutes suggested)
6. Have a discussion about:
- Versioning and the importance of poetic and artistic choices;
 - How stereoscopic poems work and what the form does for the content;
 - How we might go about crafting a stereoscopic poem ourselves
 - (15-20 minutes suggested)
7. If you also want to assign a take-home activity, you could have students create their own stereoscopic poems and find artwork online to pair with them, making sure that they are being mindful about their poetic and artistic choices. The next class could be a paired discussion of these poems where students get to tell each other about their craft process!

Other Broadside’s That Could Work for This Activity:

Maureen Seaton/Jennifer Bevill, [“Rules for Cave Diving”](#)

Amy Newman/Stace Isenbarger, [“The Fox”](#)

Broadside’s [Haiku Year-in-Review pieces](#)