

10/27 AGENDA

1. Gift Cards—Abundance of Fantastic Writing
2. Discuss *Grief*
3. Workshop Frictions/Break (join the small group meeting and consult with your group leader on timing)
4. Return at 8:30 to receive: Your New Mission
5. Closing Ritual

DETAILED CLASS PLAN

1. What has been your favorite book so far?
2. Celebration of Beautiful Talent
3. Discussion of *Grief is a Thing with Feathers*
 - a. What did you learn as a writer?
 - b. What course concepts were most evident?
 - c. It's a classically constructed novel—with a simple story and clear arc, traditional climax. How is a hybrid?
 - d. What did you most get out of watching Max Porter speak? If you don't have access to the video, what do you miss?
 - e. Other thoughts about the book?
4. Workshop
 - a. Leaders: keep careful track of time and make sure each other gets all these questions answered; make sure you have the call in number and text contact so you can re-connect if you are kicked off the meeting.
 - b. Go in alphabetical order of your childhood nickname.
 - c. QUESTIONS
 - i. What is best about the piece? What course concept does this writer own?
 - ii. Most importantly, is the fictional narrative grounded in space in time? Are there scenes?
 - iii. Does the story show progression? Are there beats? Do things *happen*?
 - iv. Evaluate the use of the triangle. Is there tension? Could there be more?
 - v. Evaluate the metaphor: is the non-human element providing a meaningful subtext layer?
 - vi. Do you find first, second, third, fourth, fifth exits? Where? Why?
 - vii. Lastly, comment on word choice, sound work, and language—is the language itself playing a vital and fresh, sparkly role? How could it do so more?

- viii. Conclude by giving the author one course concept to work on, going forward.

PILLOW BOOK ASSIGNMENT

Experimentation and hybridization often use interrogation and imitation of previous texts.

Most artists and many athletes borrow and reinvent—purposefully, out in the open—including us in a kind of rich literary conversation.

Musicians “cover” songs.

1. **Jimi Hendrix**, “All Along the Watchtower” (Bob Dylan) ...
2. Aretha Franklin, “Respect” (Otis Redding) ...
3. Johnny Cash, “Hurt” (Nine Inch Nails) ...
4. Whitney Houston, “I Will Always Love You” (Dolly Parton)

Artists like [Kehinde Wiley](#) imitate the “great Masters” in order to reinvent and create political and emotional commentary

There’s a GAP – between the original and what is on the page before us.

M11 and M12 “afters”

- We have two weeks for our next project (so, more time to talk about the texts)
- New peer groups
- A chance to think through your “after” idea and get feedback on it before launching in)
- Next week 11/3: read the two texts and respond in a Discussion
- We will go over the texts in class
- Pitch your after idea to me
- We will go over your ideas in class
- Before class on 11/10: submit your reading response for *A Pillow Book* (Buffam), and post your “after” imitation.

A Pillow Book

- Front cover
- Back cover
- Opening pages

The Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon

- Japanese. She was born in the year 965
 - Lady in waiting to the Empress
 - Personal notes
 - 100s of lists, a world master of close observation and enabling detail
 - Father was a poet
 - Wealthy, snooty, entitled, judge-y, harsh—she is all these things. Unedited. Reality show!
- READ p 69, 81, 83
- You: Read the excerpts in the module

NEXT WEEK HOMEWORK:

Read these two texts

Discussion—reacting to the readings

PITCH—your idea for the project

Remember: Betwixt and Between is not required; it is for extra credit.

CLOSING RITUAL

For October 20

6: 30 – 7	Teach the new course concepts in Grief and Macnolia, make a power point
7:00-7:30	Van
7:30 – 8:45	Workshop
8:45 – 9:15	Assignments, Closing ritual

Grounded in space and time

Gaps and leaps.

Action

Dialogue

Subtext

Sparky Word Choices

Bonus Points: word play

Grief is a Thing With Feathers _____ is a Thing With _____

Your mission is to create a three-beat fictional narrative, using human and a non-human character in a tense triangle, and to progress the story through at least three beats.

1. Choose a fifth-exit non-human character, something you're obsessed with (and/or willing to research). Your non-human character will have to have best-whiskey metaphor significance for you. You'll be using the non-human character to create a complex embodied actual character to represent and play out a part of yourself.
 - a. First exit: Demon on your shoulder shows your struggle with temptations.
 - b. Fifth exit: Crow is your grief for your dead wife/mom. Crow comes to live with you; Crow is a jerk, but also charming. Consult with your professor if you seek helping formulating your excellent choice.
2. Develop a triangle: two *human* characters are in a relationship of some kind with each other but because of an EXTERNAL EVENT, find themselves in direct opposition, wanting two very opposite things. One of your human characters can be a collective character, such as "Boys".
 - a. First exit choice: two teens go to a party, one wants to take risks, the other doesn't. Demon on shoulder!
 - b. Fifth exit choice: the father can't move after the loss of his wife; the boys are able to let go. Crow helps the boys and irritates the father. Grief is a living, embodied thing, to be worked with. To be set free.
3. Build out your story situation. You have to know enough about the situation to provide enabling detail and close observation. You are writing about a big emotion—jealousy, grief, loss, fear, isolation, passionate neglect, etc. But your story situation will be very grounded in space and time: getting ready for school two weeks after mom died; trying to sleep but a giant bird might have been in your room; the first meal at a restaurant

with your family after you came back home from the Awful Life Experiment. You can have one situation or a series of situations.

- a. First exit choice: the funeral itself.
 - b. Fifth exit choice: the days after the funeral when daily life is supposed to be happening, but isn't because it can't.
4. Deploy the EXTERNAL EVENT to start your story.
- a. First exit choice: "Oh, no!" or "I woke up."
 - b. Fifth exit choice: "There's a feather on my pillow."
5. Create a story of about 750-1000 words (that's 3-4 pages double spaced) where, in sections, you alternate telling the story from the three points of view.

If you like, you can use this assignment to begin a larger story—what you submit could be part of something much larger—that you develop later.

- You must have at least one section from each of the three character's POV.
- Each section must contain a progressed, new story beat.
- Label your sections with the speaker of each, exactly as Porter does.
- Title your overall piece "___ is a Thing with ____." Fill in the blanks with the core emotion that troubles your characters on the deepest level and with the element of the non-human character that troubles your characters, but also frees them.
 - First exit choice: the tongue of the demon
 - Fifth exit choice: crow feather

Remember: Each section must have a story beat: something happens.

Tip: Use lots of gaps and leaps.

Here are the course concepts you are aiming to demonstrate in this project:

Grounded in space and time

Gaps and leaps.

Action

Dialogue

Subtext

Sparky Word Choices

Bonus Points: word play

READING RESPONSE

In the novel, find a fantastic example of each course concept listed below. Quote the example, and explain your choice in a couple of sentences.

In a summary paragraph at the end, describe which of the new course concepts you like the best, as evidenced in this book.

Progression
Subtext
Triangulation
Vulnerable and True
Pattern
Sparky Word Choices
Syntax
Word Play

In a summary paragraph at the end, describe which of the new course concepts you like the best, as evidenced in this book.

Course Concepts

In our remaining readings we will be studying:

Cohesive
Imitation
Tail in Mouth

And Carrying over Directly From Poetry:

Sound work
Imitation
Implication