



Wichita East Senior IB World Lit Summer Reading 2019

***The Hatred of Poetry* by Ben Lerner** (ISBN: 978-0865478206)

Chapter 2 of *Why Poetry*, “Literalists of the Imagination” by Matthew Zapruder (handout)

Sylvia Plath: The Collected Poems (ISBN: 9780061558894)

***The Refugees* by Viet Thanh Nguyen** (ISBN: 9780802127365)

These texts will be used to ground our study of literature in the first weeks of school, and **we will start with them on the first day**. Additionally, you will study a specific selection of Plath poems for your oral internal assessment, so you're actually getting a head start on IB assessments with your summer reading.

Read carefully to study, understand, explore and reflect on the texts. Read slowly. Reread when you need to. What do the poems and books say about human beings and how they approach and think about their lives, and how do they convey their stories and feelings through language?

Take a few moments to look up any terms, names, ideas you aren't familiar with as you read. I hope you can find some aspect of the books enjoyable, but consider that you're reading to restart your literary engagement after a relaxing summer.

If affording any of these books is a problem for you and your family, please do not hesitate to see Mr. Boykins in the IB office or me (Mr. Maack). We can help.

➤ **Lerner's *The Hatred of Poetry***

As literary criticism goes, *The Hatred of Poetry* is not terribly hard to read, but if you're not used to reading literary criticism, it may take some getting used to. You will have to read carefully and take your time with it. You may need to look up several poems or allusions, but most of them are readily available online, whole or in excerpts.

- **Assignment 1:** Take notes as you read, especially since you can't write in the book I check out to you. Your notes may take any form: notation or paraphrase of important points, questions you have, personal response, actions you took while reading (like looking up a poem online), connections with other works or ideas. I just want to see evidence that you genuinely thought about Lerner's essay as you read it. I will ask for these notes immediately upon your return to school.
- **Assignment 2:** Here are the exact questions you will need to answer about *Hatred of Poetry* after we've studied some poems. You will have to refer to/quote specific arguments that Lerner makes to respond to questions 1, 2, and 3 from an unmarked copy of *Hatred of Poetry*, so think about that as you read. Question 4 is something to think about over the summer in light of your new appreciation for Poetry, if not for poems. Nothing to write this summer—just reflect.

1. According to Lerner, what distinguishes Poetry (with a capital “P”) from poems, and why is this distinction significant?
2. What does it mean to have a “perfect contempt” for poems, and how does this contempt for poems help us appreciate Poetry (note the capital “P”)?
3. Explain what Lerner has to say about the conflict between “individual voice” and “universality” in poetry. How does that conflict shape our expectations of and experience with poetry?
4. Choose a line or 5 from any Plath poem you read. Explain how, for you, it comes as close as any of her poems does to being “Poetic.” How do those lines create that effect for you? What does the combined language of the lines express that achieves, or nearly achieves, “Poetry”?

➤ **Matthew Zapruder: Chapter 2 of *Why Poetry*, “Literalists of the Imagination”**

This chapter asks you to read poems *literally*, no matter how unusual or unacademic or strange that feels to you. A literal reading privileges the *experience* of reading a poem’s more surprising or beautiful language over what we usually call “meaning” in English class, even if the language of the poem seems impossible to read literally.

- **Assignment 1:** Be prepared to write about your experience of reading one or more of Plath’s more difficult later poems (from 1962-63) “literally.” Try to follow Zapruder’s advice and think about these questions: How does this “literal” approach change your appreciation for the poem’s language? How does reading a poem literally change your assessment of later readings when you’re trying to figure out what it means? How is reading literally different than you might have read poems before reading this? How does it open up or close off interpreting poems for you?

➤ **Sylvia Plath: *The Collected Poems***

The IB curriculum requires that we study one poet in detail, and in January, you will have to do an oral commentary on a poem by that poet. We will be studying Sylvia Plath. In the fall, I will be asking **you to select which particular poems you’d like to study in greater detail for your internal assessment (oral)**. One aspect of our detailed study of a poet’s work is that you understand how knowledge of a larger body of work by that poet contributes to your understanding of each individual poem, so you need to read many poems.

Because you will study some of these poems in detail for your IB assessment and will want to annotate them, you should purchase a Plath book so you can write in it.

I have narrowed the poems to the list on the accompanying “Plath Poems for Study.” There are about 90 poems, so it would be a bit foolish to wait until the last few days of summer to begin. And don’t recommend trying to read more than 10-12 in a sitting.

Assignment 1: Read all the poems on the study list, for sure, but you can read others if you wish. In Assignment 2, you’ll have a chance to choose some poems to look at more closely, so read the first time to get a feel for the poems, their common images and language, and their tone.

Assignment 2: Complete the “Plath Poetry Response” sheets for a total of 20 poems. At least 15 of those must be 24 lines or longer. I have provided a couple sheets for you, and there is an electronic copy available at www.usd259.org/east > Programs > IB Program > Summer Reading Guides. You do not have to use the response sheet—you may type it yourself or handwrite it on your own paper, as long as you include all the elements of the original response sheet, including the heading. See the

sample responses for ideas about the kinds of things you might include in your response and in your main points.

Assignment 3: Choose one poem of at least 20 lines, annotate it thoroughly in your book, and type (double-spaced) a well-written paragraph of analysis that includes:

- a focused main point that concisely expresses your interpretation of the poem's meaning/significance
- an organized explanation of how the poem's language and literary elements contribute to its feeling and meaning
- coherently integrated quotes from the text that help support your interpretation

➤ **Nguyen's *The Refugees***

Read each story carefully and enjoy them. Having short stories to work with will give us many options for study and discussion as we begin the year. Please look up allusions to Vietnamese history as necessary—that might help with some of the stories.

Assignment 1: Remember that there will be an objective test over the stories in the first week of school. Read them carefully, and you'll be fine. But the test will reward those who read most carefully.

Assignment 2: Choose one of the stories from *The Refugees* (except for "Black-Eyed Women"—I'm reserving that story for class activities), and do the following:

- Decide on a topic or interpretation of the story you want to write about. Make sure you have something significant or meaningful to say about the story.
- Annotate the story—not every page, but find and be able to explain any text evidence you might use in your writing. Post-its are fine if your book is borrowed.
- Type (double-spaced) a well-written introduction and at least 2 body paragraphs that explain your interpretation of the story.
- Make sure your interpretation includes:
 - a. a focused main point that clearly expresses the story's primary meaning or significance
 - b. discussion of how the language, imagery, characterization, setting, and/or dialogue contribute to the story's meaning or significance
 - c. coherently integrated quotes from the text that help support your interpretation of the story's meaning or significance
 - d. Write a concluding paragraph if you want, but don't worry about it. We'll deal with conclusions later.

There will be an additional writing assignment upon your returning to school that depends upon you having finished reading the book and completed your brief analysis.

PLEASE do not hesitate to email me with questions. I'd be happy to help!
smaack@usd259.net or steve.maack@gmail.com

Also you can join my Remind text group by texting @ibworldlit to 81010.

Plath Poems for Study from *Sylvia Plath: The Collected Poems*

You may read and study any of the poems in Plath's *Collected Poems* for your analysis assignment (except for "Street Song" and "A Secret") but you are assigned to read all the poems listed below. They are NOT listed by page number but by poem number. You'll notice in the book that just to the left of the title of every poem, each has a number that corresponds with its sequence in the book. I've listed poem numbers to avoid confusion when two poems begin on one page. If it would help, I recommend marking the required poems in the table of contents of your books.

Some of the poems have notes accompanying them near the end of the book, pp. 275-95. Most of Plath's allusions are easily found with a quick Google search. Please look up what you don't know. Some biographical knowledge of Plath can be helpful, but it can also be limiting. Don't trouble yourself too much with it.

Poems marked with a * are rooted in classical art or myth.

Poems marked with a † are based on visual art (usually with the same title) and you are invited to look for the images online in conjunction with your reading of the poems.

Poems marked with ^A appeared in Plath's groundbreaking posthumous collection, *Ariel*, or in her originally submitted manuscript of *Ariel*.

And, of course, please look up words (especially titles) you don't know.

1	Conversation Among the Ruins [†]	131	Candles
2	Winter Landscape, With Rooks	133	Waking in Winter
3	Pursuit	138	Morning Song ^A
5	Tale of a Tub	140	Heavy Women
9	The Queen's Complaint	145	Widow
11	Firesong	147	The Rival ^A
12	Song for a Summer's Day	149	Blackberrying
13	Two Sisters of Persephone*	154	Mirror
17	Faun	159	An Appearance
18	Street Song	161	Among the Narcissi
23	Monologue at 3 a.m.	162	Pheasant
24	Miss Drake Proceeds to Supper	164	The Rabbit Catcher ^A
26	The Shrike	165	Event
35	Spinster	166	Apprehensions
39	Resolve	170	Poppies in July ^A
41	Ella Mason and Her Eleven Cats	177	The Arrival of the Bee Box ^A
43	November Graveyard	181	A Secret
44	Black Rook in Rainy Weather	182	The Applicant ^A
50	The Thin People	183	Daddy ^A
54	The Lady and the Earthenware Head	184	Medusa ^{A*}
60	The Disquieting Muses* [†]	185	The Jailer ^A
61	Night Shift	186	Lesbos ^A
66	Virgin in a Tree* [Apollo and Daphne]	188	Fever 103 ^{oA}
72	Memoirs of a Spinach-Picker	189	Amnesiac ^A
74	Sculptor [†] [Leonard Baskin was a close friend of Plath and Hughes]	192	By Candlelight ^A
76	Lorelei [myth about an overlook on the Rhine—also see poem by Heinrich Heine]	194	Ariel ^A
78	Moonrise	196	Nick and the Candlestick ^A
83	Owl	198	Lady Lazarus ^A [Biblical allusion]
84	Whiteness I Remember	201	The Night Dances ^A
85	Fable of the Rhododendron Stealers	202	Gulliver ^A [of Swift's <i>Gulliver's Travels</i>]
90	Poems, Potatoes [consider Lerner]	204	Letter in November* ^A
98	Aftermath* [sonnet]	206	Years ^A
99	Two Views of a Cadaver Room [†] [Breughel's <i>The Triumph of Death</i>]	207	The Fearful ^A
100	Suicide off Egg Rock	209	Winter Trees
101	The Ravaged Face [sonnet]	211	Childless Woman
102	Metaphors	213	Sheep in Fog ^A
104	The Beekeeper's Daughter	216	Child
107	Old Ladies' Home	217	Paralytic ^A
110	The Sleepers	218	Gigolo
113	The Manor Garden	219	Mystic
117	The Colossus* [†]	220	Kindness ^A
118	Private Ground	221	Words ^A
121	Mushrooms	222	Contusion ^A
124	Stillborn [consider Lerner]	223	Balloons ^A
126	Sleep in the Mojave Desert	224	Edge* ^A [Medea and classical tragedy]