



EXERCISE: POETIC WISDOM AND PERSPECTIVE

Subject(s): English and Theatre

Goals: Students will be able to:

- Use reading strategies as needed to aid and monitor comprehension when encountering challenging sections of text.
- Develop and accurately use general academic and content-specific vocabulary through reading, discussing and writing about grade-level texts and topics.
- Use context and sentence structure to clarify the literal and figurative meanings of words and phrases.
- Use textual evidence to demonstrate comprehension and build knowledge from a variety of grade-level complex literary texts read to include narratives, literary nonfiction, poetry, and drama.
- Adopt an organizational structure that clarifies relationships among ideas and concepts.
- Document inquiry, research and ideas for theatre.
- Propose and select alternatives to solve problems while building ensemble.
- Refine physical and vocal techniques for theatre performance.

Show Connection: Each of the poets featured in this exercise are either a featured character in *Failureland!* or were a featured character in an early draft before being cut for length and clarity. Even if they hit the cutting room floor, their input on the conversation about failure and success matters. Studying the poetic expressions of these geniuses allows us the opportunity to expand our understanding of these issues and to generate empathy for others' experiences.

Materials: [Poems](#) - (Several Printed Copies for Each Group)

Set Up: Before class begins, preselect group assignments for the students in class. These groups should be equal in size and should feature a strong mixture of student learning styles.

Description:

- Instruct students to sit with their assigned group. Each group should be assigned a different poem than the other groups; each group should be given several copies of their poem.
- Students have ten minutes to read their poem as a group and to begin analysis and group discussion to some of the following questions:
 - What is the poet's perspective on success, failure, the process of working on something in life?
 - Does the title fit with the poem? Why or why not?

- Do you agree, disagree, or differ from the poet's perspective? How do you interpret this piece of writing?
- What did the poem make you think about in your own life and experience?
- What is the main image of the poem? What do you see?
- What physically do you feel? What verbs would you associate with this bit of text? What actions take place in the writing?
- Psychologically, what is the poet's perspective on success and failure? What is their relationship to it like? (Healthy, complicated, etc.)
- What would you write as the next few lines of this poem? If there was a sequel to this poem what would it contain as far as content, mood, vibe?
- Each group, following analysis and chatting about their poem, is to create a three-minute long performance piece that features the following:
 - The performance piece begins with at least one person stating the group's title of their piece. (*The title of the piece cannot be the same as the title of your assigned poem.*)
 - All members of your group must be involved in the live performance piece in some capacity. (Spoken or otherwise, each person must be a physical presence on stage at some point.)
 - At least three members of your group must be on stage at all times. (Keep in mind you have the whole classroom to play with, so closeness / proximity can always be played with for dramatic effect.)
 - There must be at least three moments where everyone on stage does the same physical action at the same time.
 - The objective of performing this piece should be "What does success and/or failure look like and feel like to you as a group? How do we respond and push through, or past, failures and successes that come into our lives?" Your assigned poem and the associated group discussion must be an influence on the work.
- Students are given sufficient time to work on these with the instructor rotating to help them and offer insight. (If space allows, send them away to different rooms to work.)
- Have students return and present work when ready.

Discussion:

- What similarities of perspectives did we see across the pieces as they were presented? What differences did we note?
- Are we a hopeful people in 2025? Are we not? Somewhere in between or one that depends on time and place? Based on the pieces presented today, what is our collective definition of success? Of failure?
- How can we be kinder, more productive to ourselves when we confront failure or success in our own lives moving forward? How can we do the same to others who are dealing with failure and success?