

Westerly Teaching Resource—Poetry: Reading and Form

All tasks in this unit of work are intended for formative purposes only. They are designed to monitor learning and provide feedback, and to support teachers to inform their teaching and for students to inform their learning. All tasks can be adapted and expanded to become summative assessments but should not be used as summative assessments in their current format.

Rationale:

Using old and new texts from *Westerly* magazine, this lesson has been prepared for students in Year 11. The scope of activities is easily customisable to suit group and individual skill levels. This lesson aims to develop students' analytical reading skills through creative engagement with poetic form.

It is important to note that some texts in the magazine are not appropriate for students and all works should be reviewed by teachers prior to dissemination to ensure they are appropriate for the intended student group.

What will the materials cover?

All materials have been mapped to the WA English curriculum. The lesson focuses on students comprehending and responding to the ideas and information presented in texts.

The following texts have been selected from *Westerly*:

- ['Into White Darkness' by Misaki Takako](#) (from *Westerly* 62.2)
- ['Women Talk' by Elly McDonald](#) (from *Westerly* 28.2)

Curriculum Links:

This lesson has been linked to the Year 11 syllabus. Specific concepts have been highlighted.

Compare texts in a variety of contexts, media and modes by:

- explaining the relationship between purpose and context
- analysing the style and structure of texts
- evaluating the construction of hybrid texts.

Investigate the representation of ideas, attitudes and voices in texts, including:

- analysing the ways language features, text structures and stylistic choices shape perspectives and interpretations
- evaluating the effects of rhetorical devices
- analysing the effects of using multimodal and digital features
- analysing how attitude and mood are shaped.

Analyse and evaluate how and why responses to texts vary through:

- the impact of language and structural choices on shaping own and others' interpretations
- the ways ideas, attitudes and voices are represented

- the interplay between imaginative, interpretive and persuasive techniques
- analysing changing responses to texts over time and in different cultural contexts.

Reflect on their own and others' texts by:

- analysing the values and attitudes expressed in texts
- evaluating the effectiveness of texts in representing ideas, attitudes and voices
- critically examining how and why texts position readers and viewers.

Teaching Sequence

1. Establishing Prior Knowledge

Students brainstorm their understanding of poetry: poetic devices and the ways that those devices effect reading. Students should recall some of the features of poetic form: lineation, enjambment, stanza structure.

2. Text Exploration

['Into White Darkness' by Misaki Takako \(62.2\)](#)

['Women Talk' by Elly McDonald \(28.2\)](#)

Students should have access to printed copies of the poems. Read the poems aloud while students refer to their copies. Initial discussion of 'Into White Darkness' should explore its structure: Concrete elements of poetic arrangement, Enjambment, Delineation, Arrangement. Class discussion: How can darkness be white? What might that mean and what predictions can you make about the poem based on the title? Discuss the use of colour (in symbolic terms).

3. Exploring Form in 'Into White Darkness'

Misaki Takako uses space on the page to control the structure and rhythm of 'Into White Darkness'. Consider this and how it helps to make meaning in the poem.

Choose one stanza from the poem and discuss with a partner how the structure helps a reader understand the text.

Using the same stanza of the poem, cut out the words and restructure the spaces on a blank piece of paper. Play around with the spacing on the page and the colour of the background. How does this change its meaning? What effect does the colour of the page have on the meaning of the poem? When you are happy with the new arrangement, glue the words to the page and write a short explanation of your choices.

Take the same stanza and transform it: re-write this as a short prose paragraph. What do you need to add to change this to a story rather than a poem? How does the change in form influence your response?

4. Exploring Perspective in ‘Women Talk’

On a poster, write ‘Values’, ‘Ideas’ and ‘Attitudes’ in big circles. Write your own definition under each and then use the syllabus document to check your definitions, adding anything you missed. You have to understand the definitions so write them in your own words. Identify the values, ideas and attitudes in the text with the people in your group. How does Elly McDonald’s use of parenthesis help an audience understand the values, ideas and attitudes of the text?

On your poster, add a paragraph explaining how your interpretation of the poem would change without the words in parenthesis. How so?

Further activities:

Creative writing exercise: Text in parenthesis generally implies two perspectives, different meanings, or different interpretations. Construct a piece of writing which represents two voices from one character, using this same structure. For example, a monologue which shifts between what a character says and what they actually think.