



YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2005 Volume I: The Uses of Poetry in the Classroom

Leaving, Longing, and Left Behind: Poems of Home

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The poems in this unit explore three aspects of home: leaving the familiar, remembering, and being the one left behind. The unit is especially suitable for high school students who have experienced disruption in their lives. Whether through divorce, immigration, or moving to follow a parent's job, most of our students have felt the emotions depicted by the poets. Seniors who anticipate the end of their high school careers may be captured by these poems. The unit also gives non-immigrant students the opportunity to share the emotions of leaving with fellow students who have left their homes thousands of miles behind.

In terms of poetic craft, this unit focuses on concreteness and metaphor. Poetic devices such as assonance, consonance, anaphora, end stopping, enjambment, meter and rhythm, and various forms are also introduced through the poems. Many poems center on objects, often described in concrete detail. Students see that poetry is grounded in the real; they also make the leap to metaphor that strong poems engender. Twin culminations of each section are an essay and a poem the student writes which illustrate her understanding both of the prominence of image, and of the depths to be gained through metaphor. Linking theme and craft through an experience that is central to their lives engages students' interest and encourages them to grow both intellectually and emotionally.

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