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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2018 Volume II: Poems about Works of Art, Featuring Women and Other Marginalized Writers

The Poetics of Truth and Beauty: A Practical Approach to Reading and Understanding Ekphrastic Poetry

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Poetry has a way of speaking to our souls and encouraging us to connect to the world on a personal level that gives us a sense of solidarity and oftentimes relief. A great poem can remind students that the world is a big, interesting place full of opportunities and adventures. To make the most of these illuminations, we must be able to effectively read and understand poetry. This unit aims to introduce new and reluctant readers of poetry to a practical and reliable approach to poetry, with a special emphasis on the ekphrastic poem. The unit content includes a poetry “tool kit” that serves as a fundamentals resource, with strategies for how to read poetry, use poetic devices, and interpret ekphrastic poetry. Further, the unit proposes two forms of assessment: a critical analysis essay and an original ekphrastic composition. There are suggestions for physical and virtual field experiences and a culminating activity. One of the primary goals of this unit is to get students to understand that poetry can help us to release a range of emotions and make sense of them in a way that others can appreciate and relate to.

(Developed for English/Language Arts and Humanities, grades 9-11; recommended for English/Language Arts and Humanities, grades 9-11)

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