

Grade 5 Reading & Writing

Unit 7: Poetry

13 lessons (the last is the Pausing Point review) and a words quiz. Use this pack with the unit's (download them once from the course) to teach the whole unit without the internet.

For parents: Some poems and stories in this unit belong to other publishers and are printed in the Teacher Guide by their permission, so the guide is not copied here. Each lesson links to the free Teacher Guide on the Core Knowledge site.

What is in this pack

- A plan for each lesson: the Teacher Guide pages to follow, words to know, what to read, questions to talk over and the Activity Book pages to print.
- The words quiz, ready to print.
- Answers for the teacher at the back: every discussion question and the quiz key.

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Lesson schedule

One lesson a school day, about 60-90 minutes; split long lessons over two days. Tick each one off as you go.

	Lesson	Reader pages	Activity Book
☐	Lesson 1: Reading “To the Snake”	see lesson	—
☐	Lesson 2: Reading “This Is Just To Say”, “Variations On A Theme By William Carlos Williams” and “This Is Just to Say”	see lesson	—
☐	Lesson 3: Reading “When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer”	see lesson	—
☐	Lesson 4: Reading “The Copper Beech”, “My Father and the Figtree” and “When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer”	see lesson	—
☐	Lesson 5: Reading “Snow Dust” and “Dust of Snow”	see lesson	—
☐	Lesson 6: Reading “A Bird, came down the Walk—”	see lesson	—
☐	Lesson 7: Reading “Advice”	see lesson	—
☐	Lesson 8: Reading “Travelling”	see lesson	—
☐	Lesson 9: Reading “One Art”	see lesson	—
☐	Lesson 10: Reading “Strange Patterns”	see lesson	—
☐	Lesson 11: Reading “Isla”	see lesson	—
☐	Lesson 12: Reading “Constantly Risking Absurdity (#15)”	see lesson	—
☐	Pausing Point: Review, extra practice and answer keys	see lesson	—
☐	Words quiz	—	—

Page numbers are the PDF page numbers of the Student Reader file, so they match what your PDF reader shows.

Lesson 1: Reading “To the Snake”

Read

Read “To the Snake”. The texts for this lesson and the teacher’s plan are in the Teacher Guide (free from Core Knowledge), starting on page 16.

Talk it over

1. Have you read poetry before? If so, when or where?
2. Can you name any poems or poets you particularly like?
3. What words, ideas, or feelings come to mind when you hear the word poetry?
4. Who or what is being addressed in the poem’s title?
5. How does the speaker describe the green snake in stanza 1?
6. According to stanza 2, what did the speaker tell her friends she believes about the snake?
7. The speaker then tells the snake, “But truly I had no certainty.” What did the speaker really believe about the snake?
8. Why did the speaker decide to hold the snake?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

Lesson 2: Reading “This Is Just To Say”, “Variations On A Theme By William Carlos Williams” and “This Is Just to Say”

Read

Read “This Is Just To Say”, “Variations On A Theme By William Carlos Williams” and “This Is Just to Say”. The texts for this lesson and the teacher’s plan are in the Teacher Guide (free from Core Knowledge), starting on page 26.

Talk it over

1. What is happening in stanza 1?
2. Based on stanza 2, what does the speaker think the “you” was going to do with the plums?
3. How does the speaker describe the plums in the poem’s last three lines?
4. Based on his description of the plums, does the speaker seem to have enjoyed eating them?
5. In this poem the speaker knew that the plums belonged to someone else, but he ate them anyway. Does his description of the plums make him sound sorry for what he did?
6. When the speaker asks for forgiveness, does his tone sound sincere or insincere?
7. What is the speaker of the poem apologizing for?
8. What reasons does the speaker give for doing this?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

Lesson 3: Reading “When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer”

Read

Read “When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer”. The texts for this lesson and the teacher’s plan are in the Teacher Guide (free from Core Knowledge), starting on page 38.

Talk it over

1. What things did you see in the video?
2. What is taking place between the speaker and the astronomer?
3. What words appear in this line that did not appear in the poem’s first line?
4. What word appears in the first line of the poem that is left out here?
5. Whitman repeats the word when here a great deal. Where does when appear in these lines?
6. How do the images show what the speaker describes?
7. How do these opening words differ from the opening words of lines 1–4?
8. In line 5, the speaker describes his feelings at the lecture. What words does he use to describe how he started to feel?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

Lesson 4: Reading “The Copper Beech”, “My Father and the Figtree” and “When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer”

Read

Read “The Copper Beech”, “My Father and the Figtree” and “When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer”. The texts for this lesson and the teacher’s plan are in the Teacher Guide (free from Core Knowledge), starting on page 50.

Talk it over

1. In line 5, the speaker mentions what she did in the tree. What words does she use to describe what she did in the tree?
2. In stanza 1, the father tells three different tales about Joha. What happens in each one?
3. Later in stanza 2, Nye’s father describes a different kind of fig than the one she has eaten. What words does her father use to describe his fig?
4. Based on the way Nye’s father describes the figs in stanza 2, how does he seem to feel about figs?
5. What do these characters have in common?
6. What differences exist between the way Nye’s father feels about nature and the way Howe feels about it?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

Lesson 5: Reading “Snow Dust” and “Dust of Snow”

Read

Read “Snow Dust” and “Dust of Snow”. The texts for this lesson and the teacher’s plan are in the Teacher Guide (free from Core Knowledge), starting on page 62.

Talk it over

1. What action does the speaker describe in the first stanza?
2. What happens to the speaker in the first two lines of the second stanza?
3. What does the speaker say was “saved”?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

Lesson 6: Reading “A Bird, came down the Walk—”

Read

Read “A Bird, came down the Walk—”. The texts for this lesson and the teacher’s plan are in the Teacher Guide (free from Core Knowledge), starting on page 72.

Talk it over

1. How many stanzas does the poem have?
2. How many lines are in each stanza?
3. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem’s first two stanzas?
4. What does the bird do in the first line of the stanza?
5. Using context clues from the other words in the first two lines of the stanza, try to infer the meaning of the word abroad. What does it mean in this stanza?
6. What is the simile describing?
7. Who is “like one in danger”?
8. What does the speaker do in stanza 4, line 2?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

Lesson 7: Reading “Advice”

Read

Read “Advice”. The texts for this lesson and the teacher’s plan are in the Teacher Guide (free from Core Knowledge), starting on page 84.

Talk it over

1. What problem does the speaker have?
2. The speaker tells us that he had trouble with his friend’s words. Based on that, how do you think the speaker felt about what happened?
3. In stanza 1, the father describes a scene involving worms. What do the worms do, and how do the people in this stanza react to them?
4. What does the father believe happens if people step on the worms in stanza 1?
5. What does the father say will happen to the worms if people act the way he recommends in the second stanza?
6. We know that the father is comparing the situation between the people and the worms to the speaker’s situation with his best friend. How could the speaker respond to his best friend in a way that is like a person stepping on the worms?
7. Unless they are sick, which the father in this poem does not seem to be, people usually clear their throats when they feel “choked up” or emotional. Why might the father become emotional in this poem as he gives his son advice?
8. What differences exist between the way the speaker initially reacts to the situation and the way his father tells him he should react?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

Lesson 8: Reading “Travelling”

Read

Read “Travelling”. The texts for this lesson and the teacher’s plan are in the Teacher Guide (free from Core Knowledge), starting on page 94.

Talk it over

1. What does the man put on his list?
2. What place names does he find?
3. Now that we have identified all these places, we can tell a little more about where the man wants to travel. Does he want to travel to one part of the world or to many parts of the world?
4. Based on how far he wants to travel, what sort of personality do you imagine the man has?
5. Where does this poem take place?
6. How does the man seem to feel when he learns that one of the books he wants is checked out?
7. Why might the man feel hurt by this?
8. We know that the man has been in the hospital library for a very long time. Why might someone who is in a hospital be particularly excited about going to new places?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

Lesson 9: Reading “One Art”

Read

Read “One Art”. The texts for this lesson and the teacher’s plan are in the Teacher Guide (free from Core Knowledge), starting on page 104.

Talk it over

1. What rhyming words did you notice in the poem?
2. Where does a variant of that line appear in the poem?
3. The speaker discusses objects that are not necessarily things someone can misplace, like names and ideas. How do people lose names or ideas?
4. The poem lists more and more lost things, from the watch to a house. Which of these is bigger?
5. Stanza 5 says the speaker lost two cities and a continent. Which of these things is bigger?
6. The arrangement of items in each stanza seems to follow a pattern. For example, the watch appears before the house, and the cities appear before the continent. What pattern seems to exist here?
7. Based on the pattern you see elsewhere in the poem, why do you think the speaker listed “losing you” last in the poem?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

Lesson 10: Reading “Strange Patterns”

Read

Read “Strange Patterns”. The texts for this lesson and the teacher’s plan are in the Teacher Guide (free from Core Knowledge), starting on page 112.

Talk it over

1. What effect does this parallel structure have on the way you think about these two scenes?
2. How does the description of Virginia resemble the description of New Jersey?
3. How do the trolley systems in these two states differ from each other?
4. How are the neighbors in Virginia and New Jersey different from each other in their treatment of McCray?
5. McCray describes sitting next to her white neighbor in Virginia. Based on the words she uses here, how does she seem to feel around this neighbor?
6. McCray mentions her house being separated from the house of her white neighbor in New Jersey. Based on the words she uses here, how does she seem to feel around this neighbor?
7. How does the title relate to or explain the content of the poem?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

Lesson 11: Reading “Isla”

Read

Read “Isla”. The texts for this lesson and the teacher’s plan are in the Teacher Guide (free from Core Knowledge), starting on page 122.

Talk it over

1. Where is the speaker?
2. What does the poem tell us about the speaker’s home country?
3. What television shows and movies does the speaker like to watch?
4. According to the poem, why does the speaker feel isolated in his new country?
5. What does the speaker of the poem do to express his emotions?
6. How do Godzilla’s circumstances resemble the speaker’s circumstances?
7. Two of the other programs the speaker watches show characters who are young boys like him. Why might the speaker identify more with the character of Godzilla, the monster, than with the characters who are human boys?
8. How does the speaker’s mother react to his actions?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

Lesson 12: Reading “Constantly Risking Absurdity (#15)”

Read

Read “Constantly Risking Absurdity (#15)”. The texts for this lesson and the teacher’s plan are in the Teacher Guide (free from Core Knowledge), starting on page 130.

Talk it over

1. What do tightrope walkers do as their most basic task?
2. What skills do performers on a high wire need to succeed?
3. What does Ferlinghetti say the poet risks?
4. In what ways might poets literally risk these things?
5. In what ways might Ferlinghetti be using absurdity and death as metaphors?
6. Ferlinghetti writes that a poet “performs above the heads of his audience.” What might this mean figuratively?
7. Reread stanza 2. How would you put the message of the first four lines of stanza 2 into your own words?
8. According to stanza 2, who waits for the poet?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

Pausing Point: Review, extra practice and answer keys

Read

The texts for this lesson and the teacher's plan are in the Teacher Guide (free from Core Knowledge), starting on page 146.

Check for understanding

Answers

Lesson 1: Reading “To the Snake”

1. **Have you read poetry before? If so, when or where?**
Students’ experiences with poetry will vary.
2. **Can you name any poems or poets you particularly like?**
Students’ experiences with poetry will vary.
3. **What words, ideas, or feelings come to mind when you hear the word poetry?**
Answers will vary.
4. **Who or what is being addressed in the poem’s title?**
The green snake is being addressed.
5. **How does the speaker describe the green snake in stanza 1?**
Answers will vary, but any words drawn from the poem itself and describing the snake are acceptable here. Note: Possible answers include green, hissing, glinting, dry. Students may infer that the snake is heavy; they may also extrapolate from the description of the throat that the snake is cold.
6. **According to stanza 2, what did the speaker tell her friends she believes about the snake?**
She believed the snake was “harmless.”
7. **The speaker then tells the snake, “But truly I had no certainty.” What did the speaker really believe about the snake?**
She did not know if it would hurt her or not.
8. **Why did the speaker decide to hold the snake?**
She thought it would make her happy.

Lesson 2: Reading “This Is Just To Say”, “Variations On A Theme By William Carlos Williams” and “This Is Just to Say”

1. **What is happening in stanza 1?**
The speaker ate fruit from the refrigerator.
2. **Based on stanza 2, what does the speaker think the “you” was going to do with the plums?**
He believes the other person planned to eat the plums for breakfast.
3. **How does the speaker describe the plums in the poem’s last three lines?**
He says they were delicious, sweet, and cold.
4. **Based on his description of the plums, does the speaker seem to have enjoyed eating them?**
The speaker did enjoy eating the plums. Note: Have students focus on “sweet” and “delicious,” as those words have a positive connotation and reveal the speaker’s sentiments: he enjoyed eating the plums.

5. **In this poem the speaker knew that the plums belonged to someone else, but he ate them anyway. Does his description of the plums make him sound sorry for what he did?**

Answers will vary, but the key is that the speaker's sense of enjoyment seems to be greater than his sorrow. He clearly knew the plums belonged to someone else, but he focuses on how nice they were in the last stanza.

6. **When the speaker asks for forgiveness, does his tone sound sincere or insincere?**

Answers will vary, but they should be linked to the context of the poem.

7. **What is the speaker of the poem apologizing for?**

He apologizes for chopping down the house.

8. **What reasons does the speaker give for doing this?**

It was morning, he had nothing to do, and the beams were inviting.

Lesson 3: Reading "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer"

1. **What things did you see in the video?**

Student answers will vary, but they should notice the central image depicting the sun and several planets. They should also notice the numerous equations in the background, though they are not likely to use the word equations.

2. **What is taking place between the speaker and the astronomer?**

The astronomer is speaking in a lecture room. The speaker of the poem hears the astronomer, as stated in the title.

3. **What words appear in this line that did not appear in the poem's first line?**

The new words are "sitting," "where he lectured with much applause in the lecture room."

4. **What word appears in the first line of the poem that is left out here?**

The missing word is "learn'd."

5. **Whitman repeats the word when here a great deal. Where does when appear in these lines?**

When appears at the start of each line.

6. **How do the images show what the speaker describes?**

Answers will vary, but the goal is for students to link the images and the words. They may identify the hand as that of the astronomer, or they may recognize that the images filling the screen are the astronomer's proofs and figures.

7. **How do these opening words differ from the opening words of lines 1-4?**

Answers will vary, but possibilities include that the words are not "when" and that these words differ, whereas the words opening lines of 1-4 were all the same. Correct answers should acknowledge that a shift of some sort is taking place here, that the new words introduce variety to the poem

8. **In line 5, the speaker describes his feelings at the lecture. What words does he use to describe how he started to feel?**

He uses the words "tired" and "sick."

Lesson 4: Reading “The Copper Beech”, “My Father and the Figtree” and “When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer”

1. **In line 5, the speaker mentions what she did in the tree. What words does she use to describe what she did in the tree?**

She practiced being alone.

2. **In stanza 1, the father tells three different tales about Joha. What happens in each one?**

Answers are provided based on the poem’s text; it is also acceptable for students to paraphrase. 2a. In the first tale, he sees a fig tree while he is on a walk. 2b. In the second tale, he falls asleep near a fig tree. 2c. In the third tale, he is found carrying several figs.

3. **Later in stanza 2, Nye’s father describes a different kind of fig than the one she has eaten. What words does her father use to describe his fig?**

Answers may vary but should reference language from the text.

4. **Based on the way Nye’s father describes the figs in stanza 2, how does he seem to feel about figs?**

Answers should acknowledge that he likes figs.

5. **What do these characters have in common?**

Answers in this section will vary, but the goal is that students are looking to the text to substantiate their response.

6. **What differences exist between the way Nye’s father feels about nature and the way Howe feels about it?**

Answers in this section will vary, but the goal is that students are looking to the text to substantiate their response.

Lesson 5: Reading “Snow Dust” and “Dust of Snow”

1. **What action does the speaker describe in the first stanza?**

A crow in a tree shakes snow on the speaker.

2. **What happens to the speaker in the first two lines of the second stanza?**

His heart changes mood.

3. **What does the speaker say was “saved”?**

He says that “part of his day” was saved. Working together with your group, answer question 3. You may consult the poem as you work on your answer, but you should not look the word up in a glossary or dictionary.

Lesson 6: Reading “A Bird, came down the Walk—”

1. **How many stanzas does the poem have?**

The poem has five stanzas

2. **How many lines are in each stanza?**

Each stanza has four lines

3. **What is the rhyme scheme of the poem’s first two stanzas?**

The second and fourth lines in each stanza rhyme, so the rhyme scheme for the first

two stanzas is ABCB DEFE.

4. **What does the bird do in the first line of the stanza?**

He looks around.

5. **Using context clues from the other words in the first two lines of the stanza, try to infer the meaning of the word abroad. What does it mean in this stanza?**

In this context the word abroad means all over or in lots of different directions; students may infer from the rapid and hurrying eyes that the bird is looking in many places.

6. **What is the simile describing?**

The simile describes the bird's eyes.

7. **Who is "like one in danger?"**

The speaker is "like one in danger." Dickinson revised this poem several times, changing the meaning of this line through several revisions. The period after "Velvet Head" indicates that the following line begins a new sentence in which the "I" is the subject and thus the one in danger.

8. **What does the speaker do in stanza 4, line 2?**

She tries to feed the bird ("offered him a Crumb").

Lesson 7: Reading "Advice"

1. **What problem does the speaker have?**

His best friend said something hurtful.

2. **The speaker tells us that he had trouble with his friend's words. Based on that, how do you think the speaker felt about what happened?**

Answers will vary, but students should recognize that the speaker felt hurt or upset. They may also understand that he was not sure what to do about it, which is why he was struggling.

3. **In stanza 1, the father describes a scene involving worms. What do the worms do, and how do the people in this stanza react to them?**

The worms come out after rain. People step on them.

4. **What does the father believe happens if people step on the worms in stanza 1?**

Answers may vary but should include language from the text.

5. **What does the father say will happen to the worms if people act the way he recommends in the second stanza?**

They will return to the ground.

6. **We know that the father is comparing the situation between the people and the worms to the speaker's situation with his best friend. How could the speaker respond to his best friend in a way that is like a person stepping on the worms?**

Answers will vary, but students should understand that this response contrasts with the advice the father gives later. Therefore, this response would be reacting

dramatically in some way to the best friend's words.

7. **Unless they are sick, which the father in this poem does not seem to be, people usually clear their throats when they feel “choked up” or emotional. Why might the father become emotional in this poem as he gives his son advice?**

Answers will vary, but it's likely that the father is realizing that his son is maturing or that he is distressed that his son is facing difficulty.

8. **What differences exist between the way the speaker initially reacts to the situation and the way his father tells him he should react?**

Answers will vary, but students should see that the father essentially tells the speaker to let the situation go, while the speaker reacts initially with much more investment in the situation.

Lesson 8: Reading “Travelling”

1. **What does the man put on his list?**

The man's list includes the names of places. If you are doing the optional locating activity, you may wish to distribute globes and atlases at this point, and then ask students to locate each place as they list it in response to question 2.

2. **What place names does he find?**

He finds Acapulco, the Bay of Bengal, Antarctica, Madagascar, Rome, Luxembourg, Yokohama, the Aleutian Islands, and Cape Cod.

3. **Now that we have identified all these places, we can tell a little more about where the man wants to travel. Does he want to travel to one part of the world or to many parts of the world?**

He wants to travel to many parts of the world.

4. **Based on how far he wants to travel, what sort of personality do you imagine the man has?**

Answers will vary, but students will likely imagine that the man is adventurous or curious based on the many places he selects.

5. **Where does this poem take place?**

It takes place in the library at the veterans hospital.

6. **How does the man seem to feel when he learns that one of the books he wants is checked out?**

“He looks hurt.”

7. **Why might the man feel hurt by this?**

Answers will vary, but students should recognize that he cares a great deal about the information and the list he is making.

8. **We know that the man has been in the hospital library for a very long time. Why might someone who is in a hospital be particularly excited about going to new places?**

Answers may vary, but students will likely infer that he is ready to go someplace new or that he feels bored or trapped.

Lesson 9: Reading “One Art”

1. **What rhyming words did you notice in the poem?**

Answers may vary, but students should note that there are two basic rhyme sounds in the poem’s end words.

2. **Where does a variant of that line appear in the poem?**

Line 1 is repeated, twice with different punctuation, once with different wording with slight variation, in the final line of the second and fourth stanzas and the next-to-last line of the final stanza.

3. **The speaker discusses objects that are not necessarily things someone can misplace, like names and ideas. How do people lose names or ideas?**

People can lose these things by forgetting them.

4. **The poem lists more and more lost things, from the watch to a house. Which of these is bigger?**

A house is bigger than a watch.

5. **Stanza 5 says the speaker lost two cities and a continent. Which of these things is bigger?**

A continent is bigger than a city.

6. **The arrangement of items in each stanza seems to follow a pattern. For example, the watch appears before the house, and the cities appear before the continent. What pattern seems to exist here?**

The biggest item appears last.

7. **Based on the pattern you see elsewhere in the poem, why do you think the speaker listed “losing you” last in the poem?**

The you is the most important thing she has lost. Note: If students wonder who the you is, you may wish to point out that the speaker doesn’t give any real clues as to the person’s identity. It seems to be someone she cares about and knew well, as evidenced by how well she knows the person’s voice, but we aren’t told much more by the poem.

Lesson 10: Reading “Strange Patterns”

1. **What effect does this parallel structure have on the way you think about these two scenes?**

Answers will vary, though many students may find that by making most aspects of the lines the same, the parallel structure makes the differences that do exist stand out more.

2. **How does the description of Virginia resemble the description of New Jersey?**

Answers will vary as students select different details, but they should note that both include the trolley car, and in both McCray’s family had a white neighbor.

3. **How do the trolley systems in these two states differ from each other?**

In Virginia the trolley is segregated. In New Jersey people of different races can sit next to each other.

4. **How are the neighbors in Virginia and New Jersey different from each other in their treatment of McCray?**

Although students may focus on different details in constructing their answers, they should understand that the Virginia neighbor is more open and friendly than the New Jersey neighbor.

5. **McCray describes sitting next to her white neighbor in Virginia. Based on the words she uses here, how does she seem to feel around this neighbor?**

The words suggest she feels safe and comfortable with the neighbor.

6. **McCray mentions her house being separated from the house of her white neighbor in New Jersey. Based on the words she uses here, how does she seem to feel around this neighbor?**

The words suggest she feels separated or isolated from the neighbor. It does not sound like a comfortable situation.

7. **How does the title relate to or explain the content of the poem?**

Answers will vary, but it's likely that students will see the link between the parallel structure and the word patterns.

Lesson 11: Reading "Isla"

1. **Where is the speaker?**

He is in Los Angeles.

2. **What does the poem tell us about the speaker's home country?**

It is an island in the Caribbean.

3. **What television shows and movies does the speaker like to watch?**

He likes to watch The Three Stooges, The Little Rascals, Speed Racer, and the Godzilla movies.

4. **According to the poem, why does the speaker feel isolated in his new country?**

Nobody wants him; nobody knows him; he does not yet speak English. You may wish to allow students to share what they know of the Godzilla movies; they may not realize that though there have been more recent films featuring Godzilla, Suárez is referring to the original Japanese films from the 1950s and '60s. In some of these films Godzilla even helps humans by protecting them from other giant monsters.

5. **What does the speaker of the poem do to express his emotions?**

He throws a pillow and screams.

6. **How do Godzilla's circumstances resemble the speaker's circumstances?**

Students may cite different evidence, but they should recognize that both Godzilla and the speaker are unlike the creatures around them; they both are unwanted.

7. **Two of the other programs the speaker watches show characters who are young boys like him. Why might the speaker identify more with the character of Godzilla, the monster, than with the characters who are human boys?**

Students should recognize that because he does not fit in, the speaker feels like a

monster rather than like a boy.

8. **How does the speaker's mother react to his actions?**

She storms into the room and asks why he throws things at the walls.

Lesson 12: Reading “Constantly Risking Absurdity (#15)”

1. **What do tightrope walkers do as their most basic task?**

They walk across ropes high in the air. As experiential learning, before asking the next question, you may wish to allow students to stand up and practice walking in a very straight, narrow line to see how challenging it can be to keep their balance. Then remind them that tightrope walkers do that very high in the air on a tiny rope!

2. **What skills do performers on a high wire need to succeed?**

Answers will vary, but students should recognize the importance of balance. You may wish to ask them to reflect or comment on the challenges of this task.

3. **What does Ferlinghetti say the poet risks?**

He risks absurdity and death.

4. **In what ways might poets literally risk these things?**

Answers will vary, though students might understand that it can be scary to read or share your writing with the world, so poets risk feeling foolish or absurd in that regard. Students may struggle to understand how a poet could risk death. You might remind them that throughout history, many writers have been threatened, imprisoned, or otherwise punished for sharing their ideas and thoughts, particularly when those thoughts disagreed with the government.

5. **In what ways might Ferlinghetti be using absurdity and death as metaphors?**

Answers will vary, but some students may associate creative pursuits and risk; others may evoke the hyperbolic expression “I died of embarrassment.”

6. **Ferlinghetti writes that a poet “performs above the heads of his audience.” What might this mean figuratively?**

One meaning is that some poets think about complicated things that not everyone can understand. If students struggle, you might remind them of the expression that something very complex is “over my head.”

7. **Reread stanza 2. How would you put the message of the first four lines of stanza 2 into your own words?**

Poets have to understand the truth before they move forward.

8. **According to stanza 2, who waits for the poet?**

Beauty waits for him.