

***Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings* by Joy Harjo—A summer reading guide**

Rising Form II Team!

You are, of course, encouraged to read the entirety of Joy Harjo's *Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings*, our community read, over the summer. We ask, however, that you focus on the following poems in preparation for our discussions in the fall. Below the list of poems you will find both hints for reading poetry in general and specific guidance "through" each poem.

Poems on which to focus:

"For Calling the Spirit back from Wandering the Earth in Its Human Feet" (4-6)

"Rabbit is Up to Tricks" (8-9)

"Talking with the Sun" (31-32)

"Walk" (40)

"In Mystic" (62-63)

"Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings" (77-84)

"Speaking Tree" (118-119)

Thoughts for approaching poetry in general:

Ask yourself the key questions as you read!

Who: Who is the speaker? (Remember: the speaker is not necessarily the poet/author!)

What: What is happening? At the most basic level? On a deeper level?

Where: Where is the setting? Why is it important? (Think, for instance, of an indigenous person on once-native lands . . . lands now "owned" by others . . .)

When: Is this poem set in the past? The present? The future? One or more of these?

Does it make use of myth or folklore?

Why: What is the significance of this poem? What meanings can we draw from it?

How: What literary elements are utilized in order to communicate this poem's message effectively? (Imagery? Metaphor? Word choice? Rhyme? Syntax? Etc.?)

Thoughts for approaching Harjo's poems:

"Calling the Spirit"

Consider: What is this poem asking? Of whom? What types of imagery does it use to ask it?

Do: Set down your snack and your controller. Step outside. Inhale deeply. Exhale with gratitude.

"Rabbit is Up to Tricks"

Consider: What is the role of repetition in this poem? What is the role of irony?

Do: Investigate creation myths. How does the narrative of Rabbit and his "tricks," for instance, compare to the story of man's creation—and disobedience—in the book of Genesis from the Hebrew Bible?

“Talking with the Sun”

Consider: In what ways is all life interconnected? What on earth is Walmart doing in this poem? Does the line “Animals are confused” refer to human animals as well?

Do: Consider our impact on the environment as humans. Bring your thoughts to Form II Environmental Science class.

“Walk”

Consider: How many images are incorporated into this relatively short poem? How is it that one can walk for a long time . . . yet at the same time not walk very far at all?

Do: Take a walk. Look for litter. Ponder it. Look for signs of hope. Ponder them, too.

“In Mystic”

Consider: In what ways does this poem speak to your study of early America in Form I history class? What does it mean, do you think, to be a “visitor to history”?

Do: Look for images of some of those “ancient European maps” with “monsters beyond imagination” online. What *are* monsters? Why are people often afraid of the unknown? What is the cost of this fear—the fear of things that we see as existing outside of our *selves*?

“Conflict Resolution”

This is a long one! Think, as you read, about the speaker’s use of irony and the speaker’s use of setting. (Washington, DC features here!) Think, too, on this line from p.80: “White House, or *Chogo Hvtke*, means the house of the peacekeeper, the keepers of justice.”

“Speaking Tree”

Consider: Can you “hear” trees “speaking”? What might they be saying? To us? To each other?

Do: Read one of the following!

“The Social Life of Forests”

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/12/02/magazine/tree-communication-mycorrhiza.html>

“Do Trees Talk to Each Other?”

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/the-whispering-trees-180968084/>

“Trees Talk to Each Other. ‘Mother Tree’ Ecologist Hears Lessons for People, Too.”

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2021/05/04/993430007/trees-talk-to-each-other-mother-tree-ecologist-hears-lessons-for-people-too>