

Ground Rules for Discussions

The teacher should feel free to read portions of the following ground rules directly to the students. It may also help the students stick to the ground rules if the main points are posted on the blackboard or on a screen.

Poetry Discussion Ground Rules:

- ◆ Focus comments on the goals of the discussion
- ◆ Listen to one another
- ◆ Be sensitive
- ◆ Only one person should speak at a time
- ◆ Limit personal sharing
- ◆ Monitor your own participation

Ground Rules:

- ◆ **Focus comments on the goals of the discussion.** This discussion is supposed to explore the meaning of the assigned poems, the critical attributes of poetry, and the ways poetry communicates complex experiences and emotions. If the discussion is directed away from these goals, you will be reminded to refocus your comments on the discussion goals.
 - For example, it would be “off track” to make a comment on the “rightness” or “wrongness” of the actions explained in the poems. It would be “on track” to make a comment about how these actions affected the individuals who are described in the poems and how the specific language used in the poem communicated this more vividly. Shared web-based document - 5 laptops/tablets, an online shared document (Google Docs/Padlet.com space)
- ◆ **Be sensitive.** The poems we are discussing deal with difficult experiences and sensitive topics. Please realize that each member of our class has a differently life experience and may feel more or less comfortable discussing them. Be extra careful about your words and comments. One goal for this poetry unit is to develop greater compassion for other people. Start with those taking part in this discussion.
- ◆ **Limit personal sharing.** In this discussion, the only personal experience we will be discussing is your experience when reading the poem.
 - For example, it would be appropriate to share that you experienced a particular emotion or had a certain question while reading the poem. It would not be appropriate to share that you feel a particular way about the individuals who are depicted in the poem.
- ◆ **Listen to one another** -in this discussion you can learn a lot from others. Part of listening well is ensuring you understand what other people say.
- ◆ **Only one person should speak at a time.** Talking over someone else is not respectful and it affects how much learning can occur. If you want to comment, signal to your teacher and wait your turn.
- ◆ **Monitor your own participation.** Discussions are enriched with the participation of all members. Keep track of your participation and aim to comment neither too much nor too little.