

WRITING YOUR AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND POEM

What are poems about?

Yesterday in class, we talked about why you liked the Langston Hughes poem that you chose. The answers to that question may help you to choose the kind of poem you want to write. Here are *some* of the things that poems do:

1. A poem may get you to think about something you already know about in a new way.
2. A poem may have a "charismatic" flow of words.
3. The actual sound(s) of the words the poet chooses contribute to the poem's effectiveness.
4. A poem may have some figurative language in it, like a metaphor, which enables you to see the topic differently.
5. A poem may be about an important or *deep* topic that you don't usually think or talk about.
6. A poem may give you a feeling, like sadness, or sympathy. It may make you laugh. It may inspire you to action.

Where Do You Begin?

1. Start with the topic: Write a poem for, about, or by one of the people buried in the African Burial Ground.
2. Then think: What do I know about this?
3. Think about what you learned from reading the chapters in *Breaking Ground*, *Breaking Silence*. Consider what you learned from the two parts of the video we watched. Check your notes about the Christopher Moore interview. Think about the posters you examined of the burials.
4. Now, with which one of these would you like to begin? Which one had something that made you think, that made you angry, that made you sad? Make some notes on a scratch paper, and list your ideas.
5. Start writing your poem. If you like rhyme, you can try to make it rhyme. But meaning is more important than meter. One way to try to write the poem is an ordinary paragraph. Then, after the words seem right, decide where the line breaks should be. Write it out as a poem. Does it seem right? Need a little polish? Make the changes. Then copy it over and you're ready.