OISE, University of Toronto

Hosted by: Ben Gallagher & Ashleigh Allen

**Odes**

**Workshop description:**

Our 90-minute creative writing workshop explores the (irregular) **ode** as we read contemporary poets exploring the possibilities this form offers.

The purpose of this workshop is to expose participants to different ways of reading and writing poetry as a community, and to think about the possibilities for poetry in our lives and classrooms. Today we specifically want to focus on the various ways contemporary poets **Sharon Olds** and **Dean Young** have tackled the ode in their recent poems, and what considerations and possibilities this poetic form offers our own writing practices.

We are grateful to be a part of a community that values engagement with writing and reading.

**Workshop outline:**

*(5 minutes)*

**Welcome participants & introductions / check-ins**

Names, pronouns, a word to describe how each person is feeling today

*(5 minutes)*

**Share the purpose of this workshop**: **To explore the poetic form of irregular ODES**

-   *Offer a definition of the ode: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/ode*

-   What does this form – the (irregular) ode—and these poems look and sound like? What do they feel like to read and write?

- An ode is often directly addressed to the event, person, or thing it is about, and draws some of its power from its use of the word “you”. There is a rise and fall of emotional intensity and its dedication to one subject. It is spontaneous, expansive, and has an openness to a wide range of emotions…

-   What are the implications for our own writing when we employ a traditional form to explore a subject/ person/ place? What happens when we elevate subjects that are not traditionally addressed in poetry?

*(15 minutes)*

Read **Sharon Olds** poems from her book *Odes* (2016) and **Dean Young** odes online and from his book *Embryoyo* (2007):

Here are some Dean Young odes online:

https://poets.org/poem/ash-ode

https://poets.org/poem/unknown-ode

https://aprweb.org/poems/disorder-ode

http://thepoemoftheweek.blogspot.com/2012/06/poem-of-week-6272012-sneeze-ode.html

https://www.thesmartset.com/article09201001/

**Dean Young ANTI-ODE:**

*What is an anti-ode? + an example of an anti-ode:* https://www.pw.org/content/antiode ;

https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/48664/sean-penn-anti-ode

*(30-45 minutes)*

**Writing from prompts for an ode and/or “anti-ode”:**

***Prompts from Sharon Olds’ poem “Legs Ode”:***

* write about a body part that has undergone a change (surgery or pain) that has asked you pay attention to it, describe your relationship to this body part, what it does, what you enjoy doing with it, what dreams you have (or have had) for this body part…
* ask a question that begins “What is…” and change the story of this body part after the question as Olds does; she writes “The last time my mother beat me…”

***Prompts from Sharon Olds’ poem “Wild Ode”:***

* introduce a silly pondering and follow its associations to family, history, and beyond (legal system?). Here Olds wonders about what belongs to a woman or a person and then wonders about her mother, gender, cigarettes, the things woman used to do and still do, and ends on the justice system in the US and beyond

***Prompts from Sharon Olds’ poem “Douche-Bag Ode”:***

* Take a phrase or word you’ve heard someone of a different generation use that makes you think of something they definitely don’t mean (it’s lit, turnt, salty, bye Felicia,…) and explain what it makes you think of;
* what’s your relationship with this word and what does it actually for instance, “salty” could turn into a poem about salt
* what could this word be a metaphor for?
* See if you can come full circle and use the word as younger kids or older folks use the word now. (The meaning you disregarded at the beginning.)

***General prompts from Olds’ odes:***

* Many of Sharon Olds poems mention or are wholly about her mother and more her mothers relationship to things, perhaps you focus your writing on someone you’ve been thinking about or a parent or guardian from when you were younger
* Use the word abracadabra or write an ode that considers a word that could be used to conjure a spell like “hocus pocus” or “open sesame” or “mumbo jumbo” – you can include the definition or history of the word or your history using/hearing the word…

***Prompts from Dean Young’s “No self-control Ode”:***

* Make a list of what happens around you, to the people around you, your environment when you lose control
* What would you do in haste? Throw something out, take specific care of a pet or loved one
* What happens to specific sense?
* Who is to blame?

***Prompts from Dean Young’s*** “***Sneeze Ode”***:

* make a list of 5 word pairs that differ by only a single letter (ie; gog/cog, demon/lemon)
* make a list of things that might co- (ie: co-pilot, co-parent) and separate the two terms
* make a list of ten rhyming words, and then bury them inside the same line or across two lines (ie: come/hum-drum, coup/woo/do)

***Prompts from Dean Young’s “Disorder Ode”:***

* include the sentence “Sometimes when its \_\_\_\_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_\_\_”
* hear someone you know do something and react
* crave 2 specific books you need or could use today and mention them

***Prompts from Dean Young’s “Sean Penn Anti-Ode”***:

* include an unflattering description of a celebrity
* label something as “ordinary crap”
* Tell your reader “Don’t ask” about something

*(5 minutes)*

**Ideas for exit conversation**. **Participants invited to discuss:**

* What did you notice as you read and wrote? Were you surprised by anything? Comfortable or uncomfortable with the ideas/ experiences expressed?
* Benefits / uses of reading and writing odes?
* Do you think you will use this or a version of this in your own classrooms? How? In conjunction with what texts/ ideas/ questions?

**Other possibilities for odes**:

**Glossary of odes**:

<https://poets.org/glossary/ode>

**Ode for Mrs. William Settle, Phillip Levine**

<https://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/unbound/poetry/antholog/levine/settle.htm>

**Pablo Neruda, “Ode to my socks” + lesson**:

https://poets.org/poem/ode-my-socks

https://poets.org/lesson-plan/teach-poem-ode-my-socks-pablo-neruda

**Pablo Neruda, “Ode to the present”**:

<http://www.phys.unm.edu/~tw/fas/yits/archive/neruda_odetothepresent.html>

**Pablo Neruda, “Ode to a Large Tuna in the Market”**:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/49322/ode-to-a-large-tuna-in-the-market>

**Pablo Neruda, “Ode to the book”**

<https://www.brainpickings.org/2013/04/09/ode-to-the-book-pablo-neruda-tom-obedlam/>

**Pablo Neruda, “Ode to the Book 2”**

<https://academic.oup.com/litimag/article-abstract/5/1/165/1051595?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

**Pablo Neruda, “Ode to the onion”**:

<http://famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/pablo_neruda/poems/15730>

**John Keats, “Ode to a Nightingale”**

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44479/ode-to-a-nightingale>

**John Keats, “Ode on a Grecian Urn”**

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44477/ode-on-a-grecian-urn>