Follow Up Lesson - Pioneer Poems

Poems are written during or near the actual time of an event, or they are written after, looking back at the event from historical perspective. In today's collection of poetry, which are all about the pioneer experience and westward migration, both kinds of poetry are represented. You and your partner will pick just one of the poems to read and respond to.

Here are the poems included in the packet:

1. "Migration" by Deborah Miranda, a modern poem, about driving north along the Pacific coast.

2. An excerpt from "I Am Not a Witness" by Deborah Miranda, a modern poem, about the Native American experience in the former Spanish colonial areas of North America.

3. An excerpt from "Prairie" by Carl Sandburg, written in 1918, about the pioneer experience in America.

4. "The Pioneers" by Charles Mackay, a Scottish poet, written in the 1850s, about the pioneer experience in America.

5. "The Graves of the Emigrants" by Catherine Parr Traill, a Canadian poet, written in 1860, about the deaths of pioneers in North America.

6. "O Nicodemus" by Sunni Patterson, a modern poem about the town of Nicodemus, Kansas, founded by former slaves in the 1870s.

7. "The Other Pioneers" by Roberto Felix Salazar, written in 1939, about the Spanish settlers in the American southwest who were pioneers in North America long before the other Americans moved west.

8. "Peace Path" by Heid E. Erdrich, a modern poem, about the migration of Ojibwe Indians from Minnesota to North Dakota in 1870.

You and your partner must decide if you want to respond to the poem either as literary critics or historians.

**Option 1: Literary Critic** –

As a literary critic, you concern yourself with the meaning of the poem, as well as how the poem is written and how it functions to make its message understood. This means you need to look back to the O Pioneers! lesson from yesterday to review the poetry terms. Figure out which terms apply to the poem you chose (not all terms apply to every poem). Fill out the chart below. Hint: If a poet seems to be using a technique but you don’t see that technique repeated, try finding different techniques to highlight. Try to have at least two examples for every poetry term you identify.

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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Example from the poem (COPY THE LINE)</th>
<th>How is this significant in the poem?</th>
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Digital Interactive Notebook Lesson created by Ruth Baxter, Amy Kiszka, and Genna Rooke
COMPARING IDEAS ACROSS TEXTS:

Go back to your personal vision of pioneers from the preview question in Lesson 41: O Pioneers. Are your images/words/quotations about pioneers aligned with the vision in today's poem? YES/NO

- **If you answered yes**, find ONE more quotation, TWO more adjectives and ONE more image that illustrates/elaborates the vision you share with the poem you read today. Paste them here.

- **If you answered no**, go find a NEW quotation, a NEW image and five new adjectives that align more closely with the vision in today's poem. Paste them here.

Now, compare the vision of pioneers in today's poem with Whitman's vision in "O, Pioneers." Is Whitman's attitude toward pioneers aligned with the vision in today's poem? YES/NO

- **If you answered yes**, locate lines from both poems to demonstrate how the visions are similar. Paste them here.

- **If you answered no**, locate lines from both poems to demonstrate how the visions are different. Paste them here.

THEME STATEMENT:

"Theme" is a universal statement that can be true of many poems, not just this one. Therefore, when you are stating the theme, you should NOT include specific details from this poem.

One example of a theme statement is: Man rebels when his freedom is threatened. Another example: The identity of a human being is determined by his experiences in life.

Theme statements *are* universal, but they are not so vague as to be meaningless. A poor example of a theme statement would be, "People die." Another poor example would be, "People explore because they want to."

- State what you consider to be the theme of this poem, in one sentence:

TOUGH QUESTION OF THE DAY:

How do the techniques of the poet help him or her convey the theme of his poem? (Respond with several sentences, using specific examples from the poem. Do not forget to actually answer the question!)
Option 2: Historian –
As a historian, you concern yourself with the meaning of the poem and how it aligns with the historical record.

Naturally, as soon as you start thinking about "historical record," you should start to think critically about who writes, revises, refines and communicates a "historical record" in the first place. Does this poem’s theme reflect the generally accepted historical record, such as is presented in your textbook, or indeed the theme from Whitman’s O Pioneers! -- or does this poem challenge the historical record?

Here’s how to connect with these poems as a historian would. Stanford History Education Group identifies four types of historical thinking that students should engage in: sourcing, contextualization, corroboration, and close reading. More information about these four types of thinking can be found in the SHEG Historical Thinking Chart attachment.

**SOURCING:** These are questions the Library of Congress recommends students use when they are encountering primary source documents -- in this exercise, "the document" or "the primary source" is the poem. The biographical information and photos can be used to help answer some of the context questions.

- Who created this primary source? (Who is the author?)
- When was it created?
- What do you see (in this poem) that you didn’t expect?
- What powerful words and ideas are expressed?
- What feelings and thoughts does the primary source trigger in you?
- What questions does it raise?

**CONTEXTUALIZATION:** These questions are from the Library of Congress as well.

- What was happening during this time period?
- What was the creator’s purpose in making this primary source?
- What does the creator do to get his or her point across?
- What was this primary source’s audience?
- What biases or stereotypes do you see?

**CLOSE READING:**

- What does this poem reveal about "the pioneer experience" that is not told in your textbook? Or on History.com? (you may compare/contrast with your book or history.com to answer this question.)
- What does this poem reveal about "the pioneer experience" that is not told in the Whitman poem?
- What language (words, phrases, images, symbols) does the author use when writing about the pioneer experience?
- How does the document’s language indicate the author’s perspective toward the pioneers?
CORROBORATION: Test your assumptions about the past. See if different documents support or contradict your assumptions and the content of the poem.

- Can you find a single primary source (letter, diary, poster, photograph, etc.) that seems to align with the poem's theme? Copy the link to that primary source and describe it.
- Can you find a single primary source that seems to contradict the poem's theme? Copy the link to that primary source and describe it.
- What kind of documents or records would a historian need to discover in order to help him or her understand whether this poem is an accurate representation of the pioneer experience?

TOUGH QUESTION OF THE DAY:
If someone were compiling a book of poetry for the purpose of better understanding pioneers in history, evaluate whether the poem you selected today would be worthy of being included. (Respond with several sentences, using specific examples from the poem. Do not forget to actually answer the question!)
OPTIONAL BONUS ASSIGNMENT: Knowledge into Action
For up to 105 on a daily grade in language arts AND social studies.

The 8th Grade TEKS for social studies include:
(10C) Geography. The student is expected to analyze the effects of physical and human geographic factors such as weather, landforms, waterways, transportation, and communication on major historical events in the United States.
(23A) Culture. The student is expected to identify selected racial, ethnic, and religious groups that settled in the United States and explain their reasons for immigration.
(29D and E) Social studies skills. The student is expected to identify bias and points of view created by the historical context surrounding an event and support a point of view on a social studies issue or event.
(30B and C) Social studies skills. The student is expected to use effective written communication skills, including proper citations and avoiding plagiarism, and create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information.
(31) Social studies skills. The student is expected to use problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others. The student is expected to use problem-solving and decision-making processes to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution.

EVALUATE A MUSEUM’S PRESENTATION OF WESTWARD MIGRATION AND PROPOSE CHANGES

- Research the “public history” about American westward migration in the 19th century.
- Assess whether the public history encompasses multiple viewpoints and experiences.
- Communicate with the “public historians” about what you recommend they should add or change to present a fuller, more nuanced representation in their museum. If you judge that their presentation includes a full representation of the history, you may communicate your appreciation to the historian.

1. **Research the public history.** Go to one of these museum websites, or a similar museum that has online materials (get approval from your teacher.) Look at the online exhibits and materials. Read articles, assess primary sources. Look at photos of artifacts, photos of people, maps, illustrations. You may have to click past the landing page. Look for “about,” “education,” or “exhibits” tabs.

   The Alamo in San Antonio, Texas

   Homestead Monument in Beatrice, Nebraska
   [https://www.nps.gov/home/index.htm](https://www.nps.gov/home/index.htm)

   Gateway to the West, Gateway Arch in St. Louis, Missouri
   [https://www.nps.gov/jeff/index.htm](https://www.nps.gov/jeff/index.htm)

   Bent’s Old Fort in southeastern Colorado
   [https://www.nps.gov/beol/index.htm](https://www.nps.gov/beol/index.htm)

   California Trail Interpretive Center in Elko, Nevada
   [https://www.californiatrailcenter.org/](https://www.californiatrailcenter.org/)

   Pioneer Memorial Museum in Salt Lake City, Utah

   National Oregon/California Trail Center at Montpelier, Idaho
   [https://oregontrailcenter.org/index](https://oregontrailcenter.org/index)

   Museum of the Mountain Man at Pinedale, Wyoming
   [https://museumofthemountainman.com/](https://museumofthemountainman.com/)
2. **Assess whether the museum includes multiple viewpoints and experiences.**
   Formulate questions that will help you make the evaluation.

   - Consider the quantity and quality of the information provided.
   - Think about the groups of people involved in the westward migration of the 19th century.
     - Remember the context and the beliefs of the groups of people who migrated – or who were being affected by the migration.
     - Are multiple groups included at this museum, at least in the online materials?
     - Who was left in, and who was left out?
     - What kinds of exhibits shows the experiences of the people or groups of people?
   - The exhibits likely demonstrate a point of view – a thesis. What do you think the theses are in these exhibits?
   - If the museum or interpretive center had an overall thesis, what would it be? Does it seem fair? Does it seem complete?

3. **Take action. Communicate with the “public historian” in charge of this museum.**
   A public historian is a museum director, a curator, an on-site historical consultant, an archivist, an interpreter, or other professional who works presenting history to the public. (Read more about public history here: [https://ncph.org/what-is-public-history/about-the-field/](https://ncph.org/what-is-public-history/about-the-field/).) After you complete your assessment, decide whether you should recommend changes or say “good job” to the public historian(s) at that museum.

   To recommend changes:

   **Write a letter**
   - Include a paragraph about your encounter with their online materials.
   - Give a brief, specific comment about something that you saw that the museum presented well.
   - Give a short commentary about the assessment you did about whether the museum included multiple viewpoints and experiences.
   - Suggest two or three specific changes the museum should make to improve its depiction of the event.

   To say “good job”:

   **Write a letter**
   - Include a paragraph about your encounter with their online materials.
   - Provide specific commentary about the assessment you did that found the museum offered a full, nuanced view of the westward migration of the 19th century. Detail which exhibits you thought were especially useful to creating a complete picture.
   - Include your views about why you think the museum cares and why people should care about presenting history from multiple viewpoints.
   - Offer one brief suggestion about something the museum could do to make the presentation even more layered.

After you write your first draft of the letter, letter formatting will be available along with assistance by an expert proofreader, should you decide to actually send the letter. To get a full 105, you must actually format and send the letter! If you choose not to do that, you can still get 100 points.