

GROUP ASSIGNMENT:

ELEGY

An elegy is a lament, a poem of loss. In literary history, the elegy stands as possibly the most ancient and prevalent form of writing. Loss, simply, is almost unbearable for all of us. What is it about loss, then, that humans have tried to address through art, particularly through writing? Why has the urge to write about a loss been shared across the world, across recorded history? What do elegies try to do with the experience of loss? How do they do it? To answer this question, we will closely examine an elegiac series of poems by Jane Gentry. Then, you will use your understanding of the elegy to write your own elegy.

To analyze the poem you are assigned, please do the following:

1. Look up and prepare to explain to the class any words that you don't know or that seem to be used in confusing ways.
2. Describe the setting of the poem—be as specific as possible in terms of place and time (season, time of day, weather, etc).
3. Find one particularly effective line break. Describe how it works.
4. Explain one clear example of sound play or sound effects (alliteration, assonance, consonance).
5. Select one line as the group's favorite. Explain what makes it powerful or effective.
6. Explain the significance of the title. What does it contribute to the poem?
7. Try to articulate what your poem contributes to the series. "Tantalus," for instance, recreates a scene before the loss, but looking backward with the knowledge of the loss. Each of these poems offers a slightly different perspective. What "angle" does your group's poem add to the series?

You will need a scribe to record your answers on paper, a reader to read the poem aloud to the class, and a presenter to lead a discussion of the poem and present your answers to the questions above. Be sure to turn in your written work with each member's contributions highlighted. If some members served mainly as "thinkers" who provided ideas, indicate that, as well.

Group A: "The Blessing"

Group B: "Intensive Care, Oncology"

Group C: "The Lamp"

Group D: "The Berry Bowls"

Group E: "Crossing from Providence to Newport"