General Directions: Today you will be assigned a poem and become an expert; you will study the poem on your own and multiple choice questions that go with it. Then, you will discuss and compare what you found with your assigned group (who will have studied the same poem as you). Finally, you and your group will separate and create a new group; you will teach your new group mates your poem and help them understand the multiple choice questions as well. We will work through first passage and poetry section—***Dante’s Inferno***—together as a model.

When we get done reviewing these poems in class together, you will pick one of the response prompt options and write a response in your writer’s notebook. You can pick any prompt and aren’t restricted to the poem you were an “expert on.”

OPENING: *Quick write—When I say the word “fly,” what do you think of? Respond below…*

*Background: Dante’s Inferno—one of the three books in his Divine Comedy—depicts the 9 levels of hell and the retribution each type of sinner must face. Dante enters the first circle of hell and the gates, and begins his journey with Virgil (Note: we will read this whole poem next semester!).*

Dante’s Divine Comedy

*Excerpt from Canto III*

"Through me the way is to the city dolent;  
Through me the way is to eternal dole;  
Through me the way among the people lost.  
Justice incited my sublime Creator;  
Created me divine Omnipotence,  
The highest Wisdom and the primal Love.  
Before me there were no created things,  
Only eterne, and I eternal last.  
All hope abandon, ye who enter in!"  
These words in sombre colour I beheld  
Written upon the summit of a gate;  
Whence I: "Their sense is, Master, hard to me!"  
And he to me, as one experienced:  
"Here all suspicion needs must be abandoned,  
All cowardice must needs be here extinct.  
We to the place have come, where I have told thee  
Thou shalt behold the people dolorous  
Who have foregone the good of intellect."  
And after he had laid his hand on mine  
With joyful mien, whence I was comforted,  
He led me in among the secret things.  
There sighs, complaints, and ululations loud  
Resounded through the air without a star,  
Whence I, at the beginning, wept thereat.  
Languages diverse, horrible dialects,  
Accents of anger, words of agony,  
And voices high and hoarse, with sound of hands,  
Made up a tumult that goes whirling on  
For ever in that air for ever black,  
Even as the sand doth, when the whirlwind breathes.  
And I, who had my head with horror bound,  
Said: "Master, what is this which now I hear?   
What folk is this, which seems by pain so vanquished?"  
And he to me: "This miserable mode  
Maintain the melancholy souls of those  
Who lived withouten infamy or praise.  
Commingled are they with that caitiff choir  
Of Angels, who have not rebellious been,

*My Observations/Expert Group Observations:*

Nor faithful were to God, but were for self.  
The heavens expelled them, not to be less fair;  
Nor them the nethermore abyss receives,  
For glory none the damned would have from them."  
And I: "O Master, what so grievous is  
To these, that maketh them lament so sore?"  
He answered: "I will tell thee very briefly.  
These have no longer any hope of death;  
And this blind life of theirs is so debased,  
They envious are of every other fate.  
No fame of them the world permits to be;  
Misericord and Justice both disdain them.  
Let us not speak of them, but look, and pass."  
And I, who looked again, beheld a banner,  
Which, whirling round, ran on so rapidly,  
That of all pause it seemed to me indignant;  
And after it there came so long a train  
Of people, that I ne'er would have believed  
That ever Death so many had undone.  
When some among them I had recognised,  
I looked, and I beheld the shade of him  
Who made through cowardice the great refusal.  
Forthwith I comprehended, and was certain,  
That this the sect was of the caitiff wretches  
Hateful to God and to his enemies.  
These miscreants, who never were alive,  
Were naked, and were stung exceedingly  
By gadflies and by hornets that were there.  
These did their faces irrigate with blood,  
Which, with their tears commingled, at their feet  
By the disgusting worms was gathered up.  
And when to gazing farther I betook me.  
People I saw on a great river's bank;  
Whence said I: "Master, now vouchsafe to me,  
That I may know who these are, and what law  
Makes them appear so ready to pass over,  
As I discern athwart the dusky light."  
And he to me: "These things shall all be known  
To thee, as soon as we our footsteps stay  
Upon the dismal shore of Acheron."  
Then with mine eyes ashamed and downward cast,  
Fearing my words might irksome be to him,  
From speech refrained I till we reached the river.

Dante’s Divine Comedy

The Inferno, Excerpt from Canto III

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Multiple Choice:

**1. What is the significance of the banner for the running souls?**

1. It serves as the futile retribution tool for the souls’ inability to take moral/religious action in the earthy realm.
2. It serves as a visual representation of the souls failing to take a stance on their religious/moral views in life.
3. It serves as a symbol for the spiritual crossing between the planes of heaven, earth, and hell, where the souls are confined.
4. It serves as a crossing point for the souls to move across the river into the Inferno.

**2. The depictions of the souls as “caitiff wretches,” “never alive,” and “irrigated with**

**blood” serve what specific function in this passage?**

I. Offers cacophonous diction

II. Offers violent imagery to illustrate the characters

III. Reveals the paradoxical existence of the souls on earth

*What I notice about the multiple choice (question types, format, structure, etc..*

1. I only
2. I and II only
3. I and III only
4. II and III only
5. I, II, and III

Interpretative Question: For your writer’s Notebooks…

* Why would Dante think the flies, wasps, worms, and banner would make a suitable punishment for the souls who never took moral or religious action on earth?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | I heard a Fly buzz (465) |  | | by [Emily Dickinson](http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/155) | | |  | | | I heard a Fly buzz – when I died –  The Stillness in the Room  Was like the Stillness in the Air –  Between the Heaves of Storm –  The Eyes around – had wrung them dry –  And Breaths were gathering firm  For that last Onset – when the King  Be witnessed – in the Room –  I willed my Keepsakes – Signed away  What portions of me be  Assignable – and then it was  There interposed a Fly –  With Blue – uncertain stumbling Buzz –  Between the light – and me –  And then the Windows failed – and then  I could not see to see – |  | | |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | |  |  | |  | | |  | | |  |  | | |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | |  |  | |  | | |  | | |  |  | |  |

*My Observations/Expert Group Observations:*

Poem

I heard a fly Buzz

Emily Dickinson

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Multiple Choice:

1. **All of the following are juxtaposed towards one another EXCEPT…**
2. “Stillness in the Room” and the “Stillness in the Air”
3. “willed my Keepsakes” and “interposed a Fly”
4. “Stillness in the Room” and “Heaves of the Storm”
5. “The Eyes around” and “I could not see to see”
6. **The tone throughout the poem is best described as one of**
7. Distracted Acceptance
8. Conflicted Morality
9. Cynical Reception
10. Ambivalent Resolve
11. Somber Understanding

*What I notice about the multiple choice (question types, format, structure, etc..*

|  |
| --- |
| **William Blake : The Fly** |
| Little fly,  Thy summer’s play  My thoughtless hand  Has brushed away.  Am not I  A fly like thee?  Or art not thou  A man like me?  For I dance  And drink and sing,  Till some blind hand  Shall brush my wing.  If thought is life  And strength and breath,  And the want  Of thought is death,  Then am I  A happy fly,  If I live,  Or if I die. |

*My Observations/Expert Group Observations:*

Poem

The Fly

William Blake

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Multiple Choice:

1. **The final stanza of the poem have all the following resolutions EXCEPT**
2. He will live life with oblivious content.

(B) He will live life without paranoia of death.

(C) He will avoid heedlessly killing flies.

(D) He will be happy with his existence, even if it is the simplicity analogous to a common

fly.

1. **In context of the poem, the expression “Till some blind hand, Shall brush my wing” is best interpreted to mean**
2. A future accident
3. Unforeseen death
4. God
5. Another human hand
6. Another predator

*What I notice about the multiple choice (question types, format, structure, etc..*

# Blackberrying

# [Blackberrying](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/178965)

## Blackberrying by Sylvia Plath

Nobody in the lane, and nothing, nothing but blackberries,  
Blackberries on either side, though on the right mainly,  
A blackberry alley, going down in hooks, and a sea  
Somewhere at the end of it, heaving. Blackberries  
Big as the ball of my thumb, and dumb as eyes 5  
Ebon in the hedges, fat  
With blue-red juices. These they squander on my fingers.  
I had not asked for such a blood sisterhood; they must love me.  
They accommodate themselves to my milkbottle, flattening their sides.

Overhead go the choughs in black, cacophonous flocks --- 10  
Bits of burnt paper wheeling in a blown sky.  
Theirs is the only voice, protesting, protesting.  
I do not think the sea will appear at all.  
The high, green meadows are glowing, as if lit from within.  
I come to one bush of berries so ripe it is a bush of flies, 15  
Hanging their bluegreen bellies and their wing panes in a Chinese screen.  
The honey-feast of the berries has stunned them; they believe in heaven.  
One more hook, and the berries and bushes end.

The only thing to come now is the sea.  
From between two hills a sudden wind funnels at me, 20  
Slapping its phantom laundry in my face.  
These hills are too green and sweet to have tasted salt.  
I follow the sheep path between them. A last hook brings me  
To the hills' northern face, and the face is orange rock  
That looks out on nothing, nothing but a great space 25  
Of white and pewter lights, and a din like silversmiths  
Beating and beating at an intractable metal.

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*My Observations/Expert Group Observations:*

Poem

Blackberrying

Sylvia Plath

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Multiple Choice:

1. **Which of the following is LEAST important to the theme of the poem?**

(A) “protesting” (line 12, second word)

(B) “burnt” (line 11)

(C) “pewter” (26)

(D) “phantom” (21)

(E) “berries” (18)

1. **Which of the following enjambments most STRONGLY presents the theme of the poem?**
2. Lines 1-2
3. Lines 11-12
4. Line 19-20
5. Line 25-27
6. Line 17

*What I notice about the multiple choice (question types, format, structure, etc..*

# 'To a Wasp'

# by Janice Townley Moore

You must have chortled

finding that tiny hole

in the kitchen screen. Right  
into my cheese cake batter  
you dived,  
no chance to swim ashore,  
no saving spoon,  
the mixture whirling  
your legs, wings, stinger,  
churning you into such  
delicious death.  
never mind the bright April day.  
Did you not see  
rising out of cumulus clouds  
that fist aimed at both of us?

*My Observations/Expert Group Observations:*

Poem

To a Wasp

Janice Townley Moore

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Multiple Choice:

1. **The word “chortled” (1) most closely means:**

(A) delighted

(B) snickered

(C) regretted

(D) guffawed

(E) hesitated

**2. The line “that fist” could be classified as:**

1. An overstatement of the narrative’s conclusion
2. Metaphor for the poem’s overall theme
3. Apostrophe to the poem’s main subject
4. I only
5. I and II only

*What I notice about the multiple choice (question types, format, structure, etc..*

1. I and III only
2. II and III only
3. I, II, and III

Writer’s notebook response paper

*Directions: Pick one of the following questions and write a response in your writer’s notebooks…*

Interpretative Questions:

* What does Plath’s descriptions of the flies reveal about her view of the world?
* Is Plath’s persona going to commit suicide at the end of the poem, “Blackberrying?”
* Why would Emily Dickinson chose a fly as the last observation upon death for her narrator?
* Is Dickinson’s persona accepting of their death?
* What does Blake think about the life of a fly?
* How does the image/presence of the “fly” or “flies” vary from each author’s work?
* Why would Dante think the flies, wasps, worms, and banner would make a suitable punishment for the souls who never took moral or religious action on earth?
* If Moore changed her poem from an apostrophe, what would it do to her poem’s message and meaning?