



POETRY COLLECTION

# Sonnet, With Bird

## Elliptical

## Fences

### Concept Vocabulary

As you perform your first read of these poems, you will encounter these words.

perspective    entitled    interactions

**Base Words** If these words are unfamiliar to you, analyze each one to see whether it contains a base word you know. Then, use your knowledge of the “inside” word, along with context, to determine the meaning.

**Unfamiliar Word:** *extrasensory*

**Familiar Base Word:** *sensory*, which means “of or relating to the senses”

**Context:** *I wrote down the address and took a taxi driven by one of those cabdrivers with **extrasensory** memory.*

**Conclusion:** Cabdrivers are known for their exceptional memories for directions. Perhaps *extrasensory* means “beyond the ordinary perception of the senses.”

Apply your knowledge of base words and other vocabulary strategies to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words you encounter during your first read.

### First Read POETRY

Apply these strategies as you conduct your first read. You will have the opportunity to complete a close read after your first read.

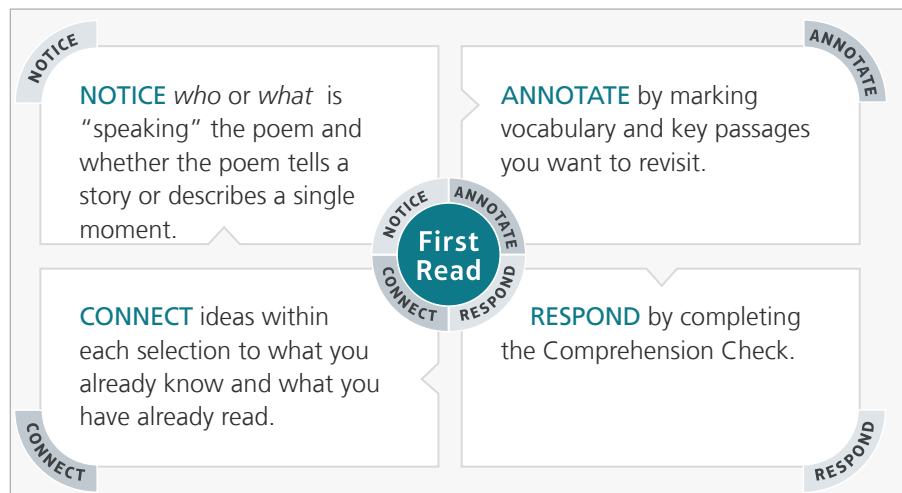
**STANDARDS**

**Reading Literature**

By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

**Language**

- Use context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech.



## About the Poets



**Sherman Alexie** (b. 1966) grew up on the Spokane Indian Reservation in Washington State. As a child, Alexie suffered from seizures and spent much of his time in bed reading. After college, his career as a writer took off. Since then, Alexie has won numerous awards for his novels, stories, screenplays, and poems, including a PEN/Hemingway Award and the National Book Award.



**Harryette Mullen** (b. 1953) grew up primarily in Texas and now teaches English at the University of California, Los Angeles. Mullen’s poetry has been described as “crossing lines” between the political and the personal. Mullen credits much of her success to attending poetry readings in which she realized that poetry is “not just something on the page” but instead something that has to be heard out loud to be fully appreciated.



**Pat Mora** (b. 1942) grew up in El Paso, Texas, and became a teacher, museum director, and university administrator before turning to writing. Mora writes poetry in both English and Spanish, often including Spanish words and phrases in her English-language poems. Her transcultural style gives a voice to her Mexican American heritage of the Southwest.

## Backgrounds

### Sonnet, With Bird

The sonnet form is one of the most enduring poetic forms, having survived five centuries essentially unchanged. A sonnet follows a strict fourteen-line arrangement in a specific rhyme scheme. The final two lines of a sonnet resolve or summarize the preceding lines. In this poem, Sherman Alexie reinvents the sonnet, presenting one of our most traditional forms in an entirely new way.

### Elliptical

Ellipsis—often represented with punctuation marks known as ellipsis points (. . .)—is the omission, often intentional, of a word or words that would be needed for a thought to be complete. Sometimes, the missing word or words are understood from context. Other times, they are left to the reader’s imagination. This poem, whose title means “involving ellipsis,” plays with both of these ideas.

### Fences

This poem was inspired by Puerto Vallarta, a beach resort city in Mexico. Many places, including Puerto Vallarta, rely on tourism as a major income source. This tourist economy, however, means that many locals must accommodate tourists who enjoy an affluent lifestyle that they themselves cannot afford.

# Sonnet, With Bird

Sherman Alexie



## NOTES

1. Seventeen months after I moved off the reservation, and on the second plane flight of my life, I traveled to London to promote my first internationally published book. 2. A Native American in England! I imagined the last Indian in England was Maria Tall Chief, the Osage<sup>1</sup> ballerina who was once married to Balanchine.<sup>2</sup> An Indian married to Balanchine! 3. My publishers put me in a quaint little hotel near the Tate Gallery. I didn't go into the Tate. Back then, I was afraid of paintings of and by white men. I think I'm still afraid of paintings of and by white men. 4. This was long before I had a cell phone, so I stopped at payphones to call my wife. I miss the intensity of a conversation measured by a dwindling stack of quarters. 5. No quarters in England, though, and I don't remember what the equivalent British coin was called. 6. As with every other country I've visited, nobody thought I was Indian. This made me lonely. 7. Lonely enough to cry in my hotel bed one night as I kept thinking, "I am the only Indian in this country right now. I'm the only Indian within a five-thousand-mile circle." 8. But I wasn't the only Indian;

1. **Osage** Native American tribe based in the Midwestern United States.

2. **Balanchine** George Balanchine (1904–1983), dance choreographer who founded the New York City Ballet and is considered the father of American ballet.

I wasn't even the only Spokane Indian.<sup>3</sup> 9. On the payphone, my mother told me that a childhood friend from the reservation was working at a London pub. So I wrote down the address and took a taxi driven by one of those cabdrivers with extrasensory memory. 10. When I entered the pub, I sat in a corner, and waited for my friend to discover me. When he saw me, he leapt over the bar and hugged me. "I thought I was the only Indian in England," he said. 11. His name was Aaron and he died of cancer last spring. I'd rushed to see him in his last moments, but he passed before I could reach him. Only minutes gone, his skin was still warm. I held his hand, kissed his forehead, and said, "England." 12. "England," in our tribal language, now means, "Aren't we a miracle?" and "Goodbye." 13. In my strange little hotel near the Tate, I had to wear my suit coat to eat breakfast in the lobby restaurant. Every morning, I ordered eggs and toast. Everywhere in the world, bread is bread, but my eggs were impossibly small. "What bird is this?" I asked the waiter. "That would be quail," he said. On the first morning, I could not eat the quail eggs. On the second morning, I only took a taste. On third day, I ate two and ordered two more. 14. A gathering of quail is called a bevy. A gathering of Indians is called a tribe. When quails speak, they call it a song. When Indians sing, the air is heavy with grief. When quails grieve, they lie down next to their dead. When Indians die, the quail speaks.

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3. **Spokane Indian** Native American from the northeastern part of Washington State.

POETRY

# Ellyptical

Harryette Mullen

They just can't seem to . . . They should try harder to . . . They ought to be more . . . We all wish they weren't so . . . They never . . . They always . . . Sometimes they . . . Once in a while they . . . However it is obvious that they . . . Their overall tendency has been . . . The consequences of which have been . . . They don't appear to understand that . . . If only they would make an effort to . . . But we know how difficult it is for them to . . . Many of them remain unaware of . . . Some who should know better simply refuse to . . . Of course, their **perspective** has been limited by . . . On the other hand, they obviously feel **entitled** to . . . Certainly we can't forget that they . . . Nor can it be denied that they . . . We know that this has had an enormous impact on their . . . Nevertheless their behavior strikes us as . . . Our **interactions** unfortunately have been . . .

#### NOTES

Mark base words or indicate another strategy you used that helped you determine meaning.

**perspective** (puhr SPEHK tihv)  
*n.*

MEANING:

**entitled** (ehn TY tuhld) *adj.*

MEANING:

**interactions** (ihn tuhr AK shuhnzh) *n.*

MEANING:

# Fences

Pat Mora

## NOTES

Mouths full of laughter,  
the *turistas* come to the tall hotel  
with suitcases full of dollars.

5 Every morning my brother makes  
the cool beach new for them.  
With a wooden board he smooths  
away all footprints.

10 I peek through the cactus fence  
and watch the women rub oil  
sweeter than honey into their arms and legs  
while their children jump waves  
or sip drinks from long straws,  
coconut white, mango yellow.

15 Once my little sister  
ran barefoot across the hot sand  
for a taste.

My mother roared like the ocean,  
“No. No. It’s their beach.  
It’s their beach.”

# Comprehension Check

Complete the following items after you finish your first read. Review and clarify details with your group.

## SONNET, WITH BIRD

1. Why does the speaker go to London?
2. Whom does the speaker meet in London?

## ELLIPTICAL

3. How does each sentence of “Elliptical” end?
4. What pronoun appears in the first nine sentences of the poem?

## FENCES

5. What does the speaker’s brother do each day?
6. What does the speaker’s little sister do that causes the mother to react?

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## RESEARCH

**Research to Clarify** Choose at least one unfamiliar detail from one of the poems. Briefly research that detail. In what way does the information you learned shed light on an aspect of the poem.





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TIP

GROUP DISCUSSION

Take turns reading portions of each poem aloud. Discuss how listening to a poem read aloud helps you hear rhythm, rhyme, and other sound devices. Discuss the connection between the sound of the poem and its meaning.

WORD NETWORK

Add words related to outsiders from the texts to your Word Network.

STANDARDS

Reading Literature

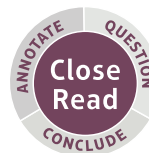
Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it, and manipulate time create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Language

- Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech.
- Consult general and specialized reference materials, both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, or its etymology.

## Close Read the Text

With your group, revisit sections of the text you marked during your first read. **Annotate** details that you notice. What **questions** do you have? What can you **conclude**?



## Analyze the Text

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE to support your answers.

**Notebook** Complete the activities.

- Review and Clarify** With your group, reread the lines of "Sonnet, With Bird" numbered 11 and 12. What point does the author make by defining England in two different ways? Explain.
- Present and Discuss** Now, work with your group to share other key lines from the poems. What made you choose these particular passages? Take turns presenting your choices. Discuss what you notice in the poem, what questions you asked, and what conclusions you reached.
- Essential Question: Do people need to belong?** What have these poems taught you about being an outsider? Discuss with your group.

## LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

## Concept Vocabulary

perspective    entitled    interactions

**Why These Words?** The three concept vocabulary words are related. With your group, identify the concept they have in common. How do these word choices enhance the text?

### Practice

**Notebook** Confirm your understanding of these words by using them in sentences. Include context clues that hint at their meanings.

## Word Study

**Notebook Latin Prefix: en-** The concept vocabulary word *entitled* begins with the Latin prefix *en-*, meaning "in," "into," or "on." Write the meanings of these other words beginning with the prefix *en*: *enamor*, *encapsulate*, *encipher*. Consult a college-level dictionary as needed.

## Analyze Craft and Structure

**Author's Choices: Poetic Form** Poems can be written in any number of different poetic forms. A **poetic form** is a set pattern of poetic elements. For example, a poetic form may call for a fixed number of lines, a particular pattern of rhyme or meter, or any combination of those elements. Some poems, however, avoid the use of fixed patterns altogether. For example, **free verse** poems do not follow any set patterns. Instead, they present carefully crafted lines that re-create the rhythms of natural speech or present unexpected combinations of language. To create these effects, free verse poets often play with line breaks, or the ways in which lines end.

- **End-stopped lines** are lines that complete a grammatical unit; they usually end with a punctuation mark, such as a comma or period.
- **Enjambed lines** do not end with a grammatical break and do not make full sense without the line that follows.

The **prose poem** is a poetic form that looks like prose, or a non-poetic work, but sounds like poetry. Prose poems lack the line breaks most often found in poetry, but they may contain other poetic techniques such as repetition or rhyme.

### Practice

**CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE**  
to support your answers.

Work together as a group to answer the following questions.

1. In "Fences," which lines are end-stopped and which are enjambed? Explain how the different types of lines emphasize meaning or affect how a reader hears and understands the poem.
2. (a) What type of poem is "Elliptical"? Explain. (b) In what ways does the choice of form affect how the reader experiences the poem? (c) Rewrite the poem, adding line breaks that make sense to you. Compare with the original. What is lost and what is gained by the poet's choice of form?
3. (a) What poetic techniques does "Sonnet, With Bird" use that make it a poem rather than prose? (b) How does the combination of poetic and prose-like elements affect its meaning?



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## Author's Style

**Author's Choices: Poetic Form** A traditional, Shakespearean **sonnet** is a fourteen-line poem that contains three four-line stanzas, or **quatrains**, and a final two-line stanza, or **couplet**. It has a regular meter and set pattern of rhyme, or **rhyme scheme**.

Shakespeare's "Sonnet 18" features three quatrains that develop a theme and follow an *abab, cdcd, efef* rhyme pattern. Here is the first quatrain.

*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? (a)*  
*Thou art more lovely and more temperate. (b)*  
*Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, (a)*  
*And summer's lease hath all too short a date. (b)*

The final two lines in the sonnet form a rhyming couplet.

*So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, (g)*  
*So long lives this and this gives life to thee. (g)*

Traditionally, the rhyming couplet that ends a sonnet dramatically redefines or twists the thematic ideas expressed in the earlier lines.

### Read It

In "Sonnet, With Bird," Sherman Alexie uses the sonnet form as a starting point, then changes it drastically. Work individually to reread the poem. Chart how Alexie's poem reimagines the Shakespearean sonnet.

SONNET CHARACTERISTIC	SONNET, WITH BIRD	COMMENT
number of lines		
rhyme scheme		
three quatrains that develop a theme		
final couplet that presents a twist		

### STANDARDS

#### Reading Literature

- Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it, and manipulate time create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

- Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work.

#### Speaking and Listening

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

### Write It

**Notebook** Write a paragraph in which you explain how Alexie experiments with the Shakespearean sonnet to create a prose poem. Use the information in your chart to cite examples from the poem.



## Speaking and Listening

### Assignment

As a group, rewrite one of the poems in this collection, altering a key aspect of its form or content. Then, deliver a **poetry reading** of the revised work. Afterward, take questions from listeners about the decisions you made as you created the revised poem. Choose from the following options:

- Complete each sentence in the poem “Elliptical.” Work together as a group. Write out the poem in its entirety.

Use questions such as the following to guide your work: *To whom does “they” refer in the original poem? How does completing the sentences change the meaning of the poem? Does the poem have greater impact with completed sentences or without them?*

- Change the structure of “Sonnet, With Bird” by rearranging line breaks and phrasing. Note that poets use line breaks and phrasing to group together discrete thoughts, images, and emotions.

Use questions such as the following to guide your work: *Which thoughts, feelings, images, or emotions does the restructuring affect? In what ways? How does the restructuring change the meaning of the poem?*

- Rewrite “Fences” as a prose poem. Include the same general information and images as the original, but change the line breaks and modify sentences so that they work as prose. Add more detail if necessary.

Use questions such as the following to guide your work: *How does the change in structure affect the meaning of the poem? Does the poem have a greater impact in its original form or as a prose poem?*

**Project Plan** Assign each member of the group a portion of the poem to memorize and read aloud as part of the recitation. Before you recite your poem to the class, practice it with your group several times. Provide helpful feedback on the tone, speed, and dramatic qualities of each reading.

**Present and Discuss** As you present your work to the class, make sure your delivery reflects the structural changes you introduced. Compare the poem your group wrote with those of the other small groups in the class.

### EVIDENCE LOG

Before moving on to a new selection, go to your Evidence Log and record what you learned from “Sonnet, With Bird,” “Elliptical,” and “Fences.”