



He was only just a cowboy,
But his heart was kind and true;
He'd won the heart of a maiden
With eyes of heaven's own blue.

They'd learned to love each other;
They'd named their wedding day,
When trouble came between them,
And the cowboy rode away.

Understanding American Poetry

— アメリカ詩から学ぶアメリカ文化 —

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This is my letter to the World
That never wrote to Me —
The simple News that Nature told —
With tender Majesty

Her Message is committed
To Hands I cannot see —
For love of Her — Sweet — countrymen —
Judge tenderly — of Me



EIHOŠHA

はしがき

この教科書はアメリカ詩の理解を通してアメリカ文化を学ぶことを目的につくられました。同時に、詩を理解するための幾つかの設問に答えたのち、詩の内容についての考察を短い英文で書く訓練を通じて、物事を多角的・多面的に考える能力、いわゆるクリティカル・シンキングの力を身につけられるようにしています。どうぞ詩の内容を楽しみながら、世界を様々な視点から見る力を身につけてください。

アメリカの詩をあまりよく知らなくても、まずは、この教科書に収められた詩を幾つか読んでみてください。かならず自分なりに理解できる詩に出会うことができると思います。また、詩は、それぞれが小さいながらも独自の世界をもった文学作品です。その内容をいくつかの視点から検討してみることは、クリティカル・シンキングの実践的な訓練になるでしょう。

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Lesson 1

American Lives and Loves



W o r d P o w e r

Find the word's best definition and connect it to the word with a line.

- | | | |
|------------|---|--|
| mythic | • | • tough |
| rugged | • | • legendary |
| countless | • | • young girl or woman |
| maiden | • | • large area of flat, grassy land in North America |
| prairie | • | • many |
| | | |
| commence | • | • requested (request) |
| mound | • | • a poem or song narrating a story in short groups of lines called stanzas |
| bade (bid) | • | • uncertain |
| obscure | • | • large rounded pile of soil at a grave |
| ballad | • | • begin |
| | | |
| court | • | • feeling depressed |
| slight | • | • declare the punishment decided for |
| oppressed | • | • weapon like a knife with two sharp edges |
| dagger | • | • pursue someone you hope to marry |
| sentence | • | • insult |
| | | |
| woe | • | • having saved money by not wasting it |
| gaily | • | • great sadness |
| villain | • | • kill |
| thrifty | • | • bad guy |
| slay | • | • in a happy way |

Poem Reading 1

Cowboys have become mythic figures in American culture; they are portrayed as brave heroes of Western movies and emblems of rugged individualism. Cowboys have, in fact, become stereotypical representatives of the United States to other countries. Through the years, countless "cowboy songs" have been composed, sung, and recorded. Typically, these songs narrate the adventures of the men who drove cattle from the prairie lands to the markets. First recorded in 1929, "Cowboy Jack" was already a popular song among southern singers, but its true origin is lost in time. In any case, this sentimental song shares a universal theme of lost love.

Cowboy Jack

Anonymous



He was only just a cowboy,
But his heart was kind and true;
He'd won the heart of a maiden
With eyes of heaven's own blue.

They'd learned to love each other;
They'd named their wedding day,
When trouble came between them,
And the cowboy rode away.

He joined a band of cowboys,
To forget he tried to learn;
While out on the rolling prairie,
She waited for his return.

"Your sweetheart still waits for you, Jack,
Your sweetheart still waits for you
Way out on the rolling prairie,
Where the skies are always blue."

It was in a lonely cow camp,
Just at the close of day,
Someone said, "Sing a song, Jim,
That will drive all sorrows away."

When Jim commenced singing
Poor Jack's mind wandered back,
For the song told of a brave, true girl,
Who waited at home for Jack.

Poor Jack left the camp next morning,
Breathing his sweetheart's name,
"I'll go and beg forgiveness,
For I know that I was to blame."

When he reached the rolling prairie,
He found a new-made mound.
The people kindly told him
They had laid his loved one down.

"In dying she spoke of you, Jack,
In dying she breathed your name.
She bade us with her last breath
To tell you when you came.

"With a heart that's breaking for you, Jack,
Your sweetheart still waits for you,
Way out on the rolling prairie
Where the skies are always blue."

Warm-up Activity

After you read the poem, choose the best words to fill in the blanks to complete the sentences.



Your sweetheart still _____ for you, Jack.

I'll go and _____ forgiveness, because I know that I was _____
blame.



Jack, your sweetheart still waits _____ you on the prairie where
the _____ are always blue.

for skies beg to waits

Questions

1. Do you think that this song describes a real cowboy's life? Or do you think this song describes a cowboy in an idealized or unrealistic fashion? Why?

2. When people say, "Your sweetheart still waits for you," where is the sweetheart actually waiting? Can you name the place "Where the skies are always blue"?

Poem Reading 2

"Lily of the West" is based on a traditional Irish folk song. Its origins are obscure, but it has enjoyed popularity over the years, with versions recorded by Bob Dylan, Roseanne Cash, and the Chieftains, among many others. The story repeats a common theme in ballads: the main character commits a crime out of passion for his loved one.

The Lily of the West

Anonymous



I just came down from Louisville, some pleasure for to find;
A handsome girl from Michigan, so pleasing to my mind;
Her rosy cheeks and rolling eyes, like arrows, pierced my breast;
They call her handsome Mary—the Lily of the West.

I courted her for many a day, her love I thought to gain;
Too soon, too soon she slighted me: which caused me grief and pain.
She robbed me of my liberty—deprived me of my rest;
They call her handsome Mary—the Lily of the West.

One evening, as I rambled down by yon shady grove,
I met a Lord of high degree, conversing with my love;
He sang, he sang so merrily, whilst I was sore oppressed,
He sang for handsome Mary—the Lily of the West.

I rushed up to my rival, a dagger in my hand,
I tore him from my true love, and boldly bade him stand;
Being mad to desperation, my dagger pierced his breast,
I was betrayed by Mary—the Lily of the West.

Now my trial has come on, and sentenced soon I'll be;
They put me in the criminal box, and there convicted me.
She so deceived the Jury, so modestly did dress,
She far outshine bright Venus—the Lily of the West.

Since then I've gained my liberty, I'll rove the country through;
I'll travel the city over, to find my loved one true;
Although she stole my liberty, and deprived me of my rest,
Still I love my Mary—the Lily of the West.

Warm-up Activity

After you read the poem, choose the best words to fill in the blanks to complete the sentences.

I met a _____ girl from Michigan. I courted her for a long time and I thought I gained her _____. However, I heard a man of high social position _____ with my love. I _____ up to my rival with a _____ in my hand. My dagger _____ his chest. People _____ me in the criminal box, but she deceived the _____ to make herself look innocent, and to make me alone seem guilty. After serving time in prison, I've gained my _____, but I cannot _____ her.



rushed put handsome jury forget dagger liberty conversing pierced love



Questions

1. How does the narrator show his strong love for the girl?

2. Why is Mary attractive to the narrator? Choose three of Mary's characteristics that the narrator loves.

Poem Reading 3

"The Yellow Rose of Texas" is one of the most popular traditional American folk songs. Other folk songs have shared the term "rose" as a reference to a beloved woman. The earliest known publication of the song's lyrics in 1853 tells the story of an African American narrator who longs for his lover; "yellow" in this case refers to a mixed-race woman. Since the 1930s, the song's lyrics have been "racially neutral," rather than specifically referring to African American characters (Texas State Historical Association tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/xey01)

The Yellow Rose of Texas

Anonymous



There's a yellow rose of Texas that I am going to see,
No other fellow knows her, nobody else but me;
She cried so when I left her, it like to broke my heart,
And if I ever find her we never more will part.

Where the Rio Grande is flowing, and the starry skies are bright,
She walks along the river in the quiet summer night;
She thinks if I remember, when we parted long ago,
I promised to come back again, and not to leave her so.

Oh! Now I'm going to find her, for my heart is full of woe,
And we'll sing the song together, that we sung so long ago;
We'll play the banjo gaily, and we'll sing the songs of yore,
And the yellow rose of Texas shall be mine for evermore.

Warm-up Activity

After you read the poem, choose the best words to fill in the blanks to complete the sentences.

I am going to see a yellow rose _____ Texas. When I _____ her, she cried. I promised to come _____ again. Now I'm going _____ find her, and we'll _____ the song together.



sing to back of left

Questions

1. The narrator says the lovers will sing “the song of yore” when they meet again. Why will they sing an old song? What does the narrator imply with this hope?

2. Why does the narrator describe the separated condition of the lovers? Does the narrator really want to meet his love again? Is it truly possible for the narrator to possess the yellow rose of Texas forever?

Reading Challenge

Ellis Parker Butler (1869-1937) was a popular humorist who wrote many books and hundreds of stories for magazines. His fall from great popularity at the turn of the 20th century to near obscurity today shows that while his work entertained the readers of his day it has not endured the test of time. Parker's "Western" is a humorous ballad that parodies the sensationalized western stories that were popular with readers in the early 1900s.

Western

Ellis Parker Butler



The Cowboy had a sterling heart,
The Maiden was from Boston,
The Rancher saw his wealth depart—
The Steers were what he lost on.

The Villain was a banker's limb,
His spats and cane were nifty;
The Maiden needs must marry him—
Her father was not thrifty.

The Sheepmen were as foul as pitch,
The Cowboy was a hero,

The gold mine made the hero rich,
The Villain's score was zero.

The Sheepmen tried to steal the maid,
The Villain sought the attic,
The Hero fifteen bad men slayed
With his blue automatic.

The Hero kissed the willing lass,
The final scene was snappy;
The Villain went to Boston, Mass.,
And everyone was happy.

*needs must [=must needs] *do*: must do ぜひともしなければならない

Questions

1. The poem's situation is intentionally obscure. How many characters appear in this poem?

2. Create your own story from this poem. What happened in this poem? Why does the narrator present the story in this way?
