

1. Capturing Animals: Created by Ted Hughes

First, have a group discussion/lecture with the students about the nature of writing poems about animals—i.e., the pitfalls of personification, the importance of inhabiting the animal's mind so that writer and animal are one, the importance of placing the animal in scene, and finally that this exercise requires keen observation and imagining skills. In addition, remind the students that the animal they choose should be very close to them—i.e., an animal they identify, love, and have a connection to, or even an animal they fear or respect. Then, show the students the poem "The Thought Fox" by Ted Hughes. Also, play a recording of Ted Hughes reading the poem and have the students discuss the difference between the way they read the poem and the way Hughes reads the poem.

Here is the poem:

The Thought Fox by Ted Hughes

I imagine this midnight moment's forest:
Something else is alive
Beside the clock's loneliness
And this blank page where my fingers move,

Through the window I see no star:
Something more near
Though deeper within darkness
Is entering the loneliness:

Cold, delicately as the dark snow,
A fox's nose touches twig, leaf;
Two eyes serve a movement, that now
And again now, and now, and now

Sets neat prints into the snow
Between trees, and warily a lame
Shadow lags by stump and in hollow
Of a body that is bold to come

Across clearings, an eye,
A widening deepening greenness,
Brilliantly, concentratedly,
Coming about its own business

Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox
It enters the dark hole of the head.
The window is starless still; the clock ticks,
The page is printed.

This all should take 15-20 minutes.

Next, have the student pair up with a Butler tutor and brainstorm what animal to use and why. The tutor and student should discuss questions like: “What is your favorite animal?” “Why is this animal so dear to you?” “Have you seen this animal in real life before?” “Where were you?” “How did the animal move?” “What do you think the animal was thinking while it was moving?” “Do you dream about this animal?” “What occurs in your dream while the animal is in your dream?” “What are the ways you identify with the animal?” “What are the best and worst aspects of being this animal?” “What do you think the animal dreams about?” “Why do you fear this animal?” “Have you ever been attacked by this animal?” “Why do you respect this animal?” “What encounters have you had with this animal that made you respect it?” Tell the tutors to think about these questions themselves and to use their own answers to help the students get into the writing process. **This should take about 20-30 minutes.**

Then, have the students use the answers from these questions to write a poem that works like the Ted Hughes poem. Have the students write as long as they need to.

Total Time: About 1 hour

This is an individual project that will include tutor and student discussion/interaction.