

Poetry of the World

Week 1

Week 1:

- Ancient Greek Poetry: The Origins of Western Literature
- Native American Poetry

Week 2:

- Eastern Culture: The Poetry of Asia
- African Poetry

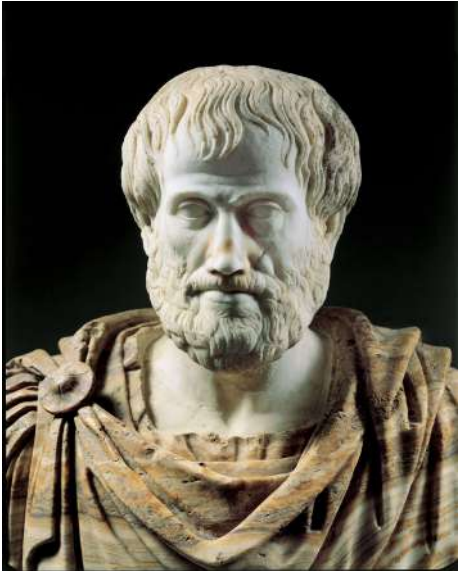
Warm-Up Exercise

- Think about where you're from, where you call home.
- This could be the place you were born, spent most of your life, where you're family or people originated from, or even where you are now.
- How does this place make you feel? What are the people like? How does it feel going back there, or how would it feel if you could? Do you miss it? Is that place still home to you?
- Write a short poem exploring these possible ideas. You have **5 minutes**.

Ancient Greece: The Origin of Literature

- Ancient Greece is the earliest recorded, and therefore considered the origin of, poetry and literature in the western world. For the Greeks, poetry and literature were one and the same, as despite not having the word for it, nearly every Greek story was told through prose.
- Epic poetry: Poetry that focused on a great narrative. (Beowulf, Oedipus)
- Lyric poetry: Poetry that was sung and accompanied by instruments.
- Drama: What we still attribute as drama today, Greek drama was the first inclusion of actors and other performers apart from the writer.

Aristotle & Plato: The Big Daddies of Poetry



Aristotle & Plato are perhaps two of the most famous Greek philosophers & writers, however they disagreed with each other on what makes good literature.

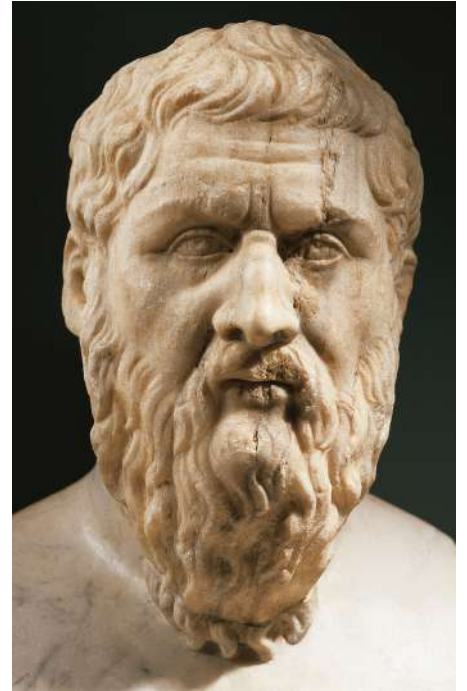
Aristotle believed that the most important part of a story is the audience – plot, characters and content come secondary.

Your audience must feel sympathy, pity, fear, or relatability for the character in order to achieve a catharsis (emotional satisfaction).

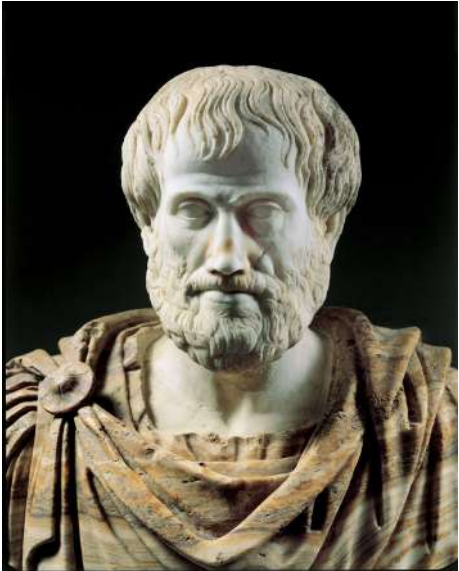
A poem is not a good poem if the audience cannot feel something while hearing it.

Plato disagreed with this idea. To him, poetry and literature were forms of memory – preserving the experiences of the writer by putting it into words.

To Plato, poetry was a form of communication. The audience does necessarily need to have personal investment in the story because the author does.



Aristotle & Plato: The Big Daddies of Poetry



Aristotle & Plato also disagreed on what we call 'Form'. Everything we see has a 'form' to it. The chairs we sit on have a form. The light coming from the sun has a form. Put simply, a 'form' is just what something is.

Aristotle countered this. He claimed that every thing that exists is in correlation to something else.

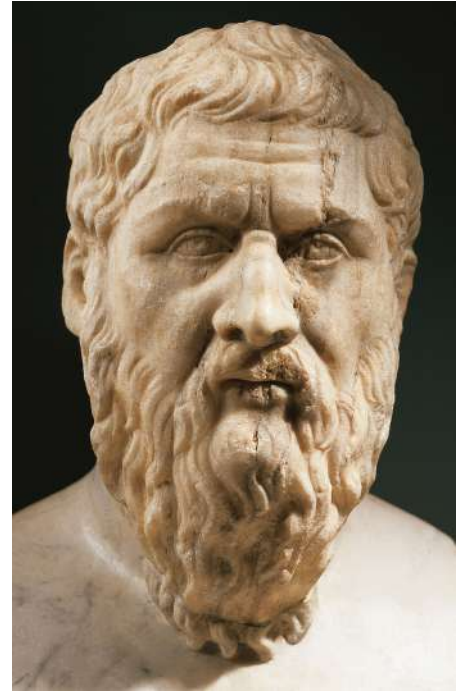
'It was a black starry night'

The blackness, the stars, and the night in this sentence can all exist without the other, and by taking any of these words away, it does not change the definition.

Plato invented the idea of forms: that every aspect of something exists independently.

'It was a black starry night'

If you were to take the word night away from this sentence, then by its nature it is no longer night. In the context of the sentence, night is defined by the word night itself.



Exercise 1: Aristotle vs Plato

- You are now going to write a short poem – twice.
- One time focus on Plato's idea of poetry. The most important thing is that the poem you are writing is true to you, even if no one else here can relate or understand. When describing something, do not miss detail – by Plato's logic, this is the only way to truly communicate what you're talking about.
- Write the same poem but this time in Aristotle's idea of poetry. The most important thing is that your audience should be able to relate too, or feel a personal connection to the poem. Experiment with taking away and adding certain words when you're describing something – by Aristotle's logic, the thing in question you're describing should not change.
- These two poems can be about anything, but if you're stuck for ideas, use what you wrote in the warm-up as a base. You have **10 minutes, 5 for your first poem, and 5 for your second.**

Native American Poetry

- Poetry for the Native Americans was tied to their culture and religion.
- What is understood in some cultures and groups today as cosmic energy, mother nature, and even God in some teachings of Christianity can be traced back to the idea of 'The Great Spirit'
- In native beliefs, The Great Spirit (also known as Wakan Tanka) is responsible for the creation of all life on Earth, and because of this flows through all life:

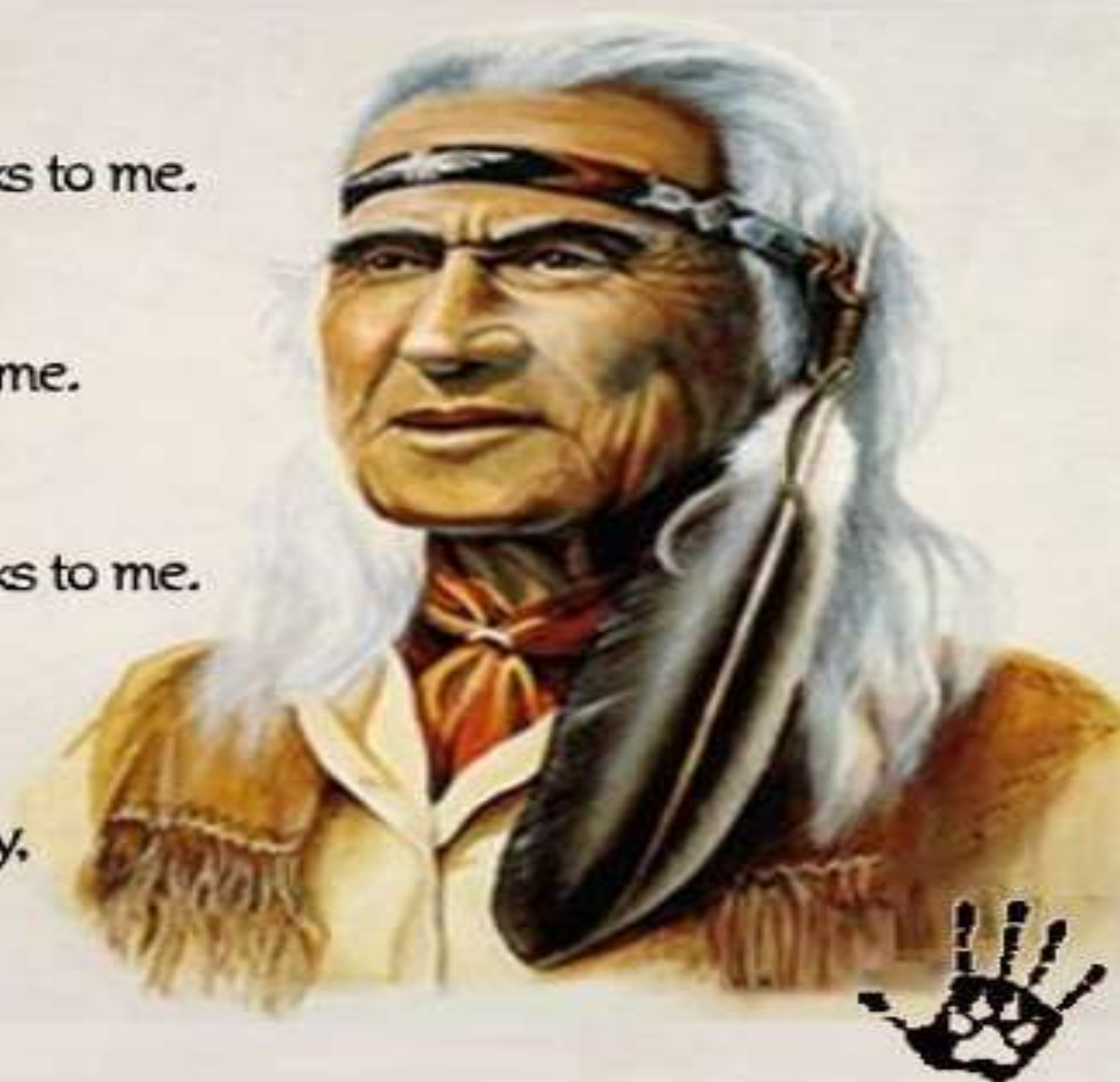
“From Wakan Tanka, the Great Spirit, there came a great unifying life force that flowed in and through all things - the flowers of the plains, blowing winds, rocks, trees, birds, animals - and was the same force that had been breathed into the first man. Thus all things were kindred, and were brought together by the same Great Mystery.”

- Chief Luther Standing Bear of the Lakota Nation.

For the Native Americans, commune with nature, animals, and with their own community were all forms of commune with The Great Spirit. Their poetry, as a form of story telling and communication, was no exception. It was tied to nature and the beauty of life.

The beauty of the trees,
the softness of the air,
the fragrance of the grass speaks to me.
The summit of the mountain,
the thunder of the sky,
the rhythm of the sea, speaks to me.
The faintness of the stars,
the freshness of the morning,
the dewdrop on the flower, speaks to me.
The strength of the fire,
the taste of salmon,
the trail of the sun,
and the life that never goes away,
they speak to me
And my heart soars.

- Chief Dan George



CALLING MY NAME

I walk with Earth under my feet
I walk with visions in my eyes
I walk with fire inside me
I walk with Spirits as my guides
When I feel like I can't breathe
I take a walk and I am healed
I'm walking back to the center
I'm walking through the sacred field
I'm walking deeper and deeper
Learning the secrets to the night
I'm looking into the fire
I'm looking past the light
When I feel like I can't breathe
I take a walk and I am healed
I'm walking back to the center
I'm running through the sacred field
I hear them calling my name -Jim Beer



Jim Beer / The Sacred Field

The effect colonization has had on the arts

- Because of the colonization efforts of the British who became the American people as we know them today, a great deal of Native American culture has been lost.
- During these times, cultural idols such as art created by the Native Americans was destroyed – and most of the cultural knowledge we still have about the Native Americans only exists because of the passing on of words from Native elders to youth.
- Many Native Americans today do not know a great deal about their own culture. Culture differed tribe to tribe, and stories recognisable to one tribe may not have been recognisable to another. The passing on of stories and poetry is one form of how the Native American people preserve their culture – and every culture is similar. The passing on of stories informs what we know about and value as a society.

Exercise 2: Passing on your own culture through art.

- Think about what you believe, what group you belong too, what culture is your culture?
- Do you consider yourself English, Irish, Native? Who are your people – are they the people you were born into or is it a group you have found and formed yourself? Are we, the groups at Core Arts your people?
- Do you have a belief system? Do you believe in a higher power? What are the morals you live your life by?
- Think as if you are passing this knowledge on to the next generation. What makes you you, and what makes your people your people? Using poetry, create a piece that both explores this and informs the listener as well.
- You have **10 minutes**.