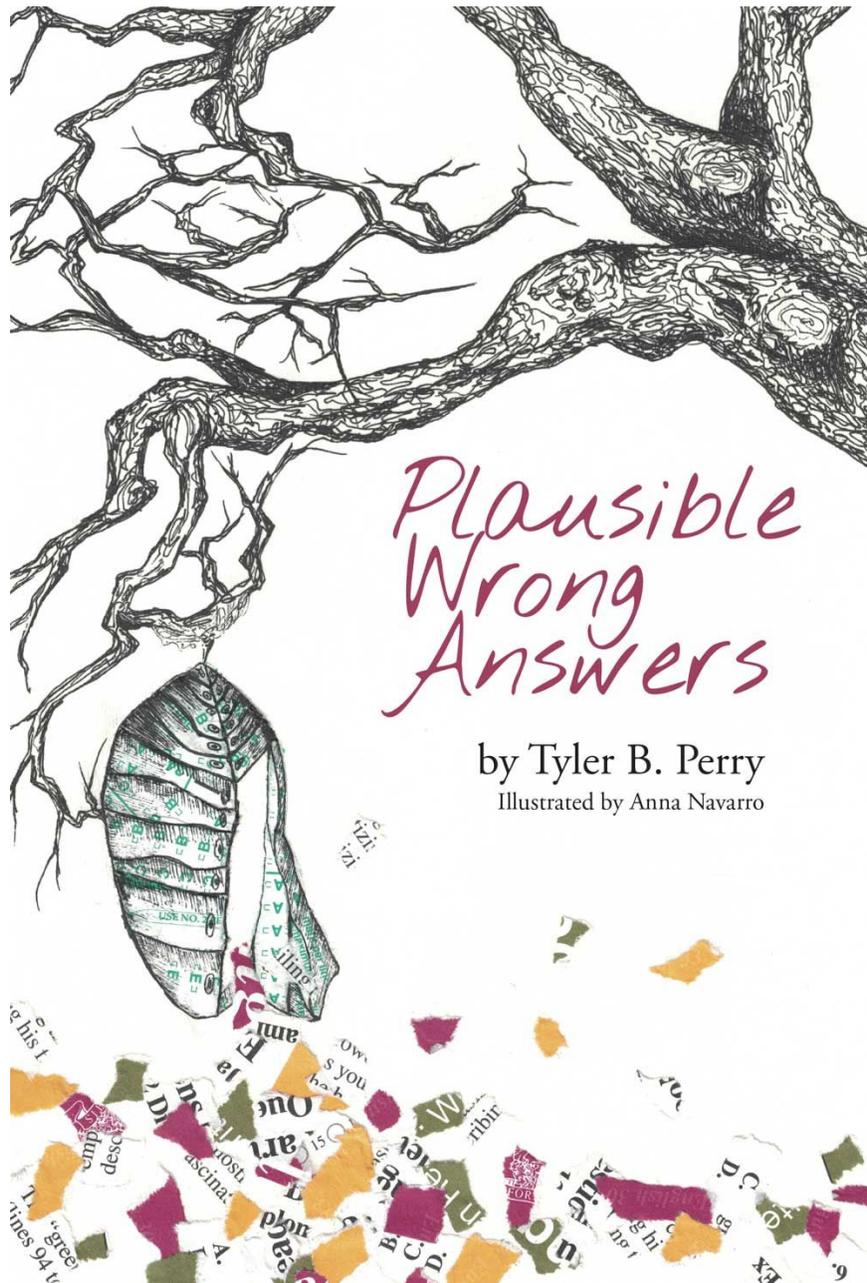


**SECONDARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS:
POETRY UNIT FOR GRADES 9-12**

3 TYPES OF RESPONSE POEMS



Response Poem 1: Glosa

Originating in the late fourteenth to early fifteenth century Spanish courts, the glosa is a delightful way for poetry to exchange or build upon one another's ideas in a structured poetic form. A glosa normally has four ten-line stanzas preceded by four lines quoted from another poet (this quatrain acts as a kind of epigraph to the poem). Each stanza ends with a line taken sequentially from the borrowed quatrain. Lines 6, 9, and 10 of each stanza are end-rhymed.

The glosa picks up on the concept of glossing--that is, elaborating or commenting on a text. Canadian poet, P. K. Page notes that the glosa is "a way of paying homage to those poets whose work [she] fell in love with in [her] formative years." One of the greatest challenges and joys of writing a glosa is writing towards the borrowed lines, and the intrinsic dialogue that occurs between the two poets. The result is a sort of marriage of ideas, or an entanglement of the two poets' sensibilities.

CONSTRAINTS OF THE GLOSA

- A glosa is comprised of an opening quatrain (four-line stanza) from another poet, followed by 4 10-line stanzas.
- Lines 6, 9, and 10 are end-rhymed.
- Each of the borrowed lines reappears once, in order, as the tenth line of each of the four stanzas (i.e. line 1 of the quatrain is also line 10 of the first stanza, line 2 of the quatrain is also line 10 of the second stanza, and so on)

ACTIVITIES

STEP ONE: READ

Read Emily Dickinson's poem, "[I felt a funeral, in my brain](#)", and then read Tyler B. Perry's glosa, "The Funeral in Her Brain" (attached, p. 8-9).

STEP TWO: REFLECT

1. How does Perry's piece expand upon Dickinson's lines in a way that elaborates on the themes and motifs present in the original work?
2. What new themes or motifs have been brought to the surface of the language through Perry's words?
3. Has reading Perry's poem impacted your understanding or interpretation of Dickinson's poem?
4. Would your interpretation of Perry's poem be different had you *not* read Dickinson's poem first?

STEP THREE: RESPOND

1. Return to a poem you've read that resonates with you on some level, and re-read it carefully, noting themes and motifs in the writing that you admire. Or, if such a poem doesn't exist yet, search through the [Poetry In Voice](#) online anthology for a poem you connect with and save it or print it.
2. Select four consecutive lines from the poem. They should be lines that inspire you to write towards them, and to expand upon.
3. Follow the steps of the glosa above to write your own glosa using the four lines borrowed from your selected poem. Challenge yourself to incorporate the borrowed lines seamlessly into your own piece, using [enjambment](#) where appropriate. Enrich your writing with poetic devices and imagery that build on those found in the original poem.

ACTIVITY FOR FURTHER ENRICHMENT:

- View this video of Tyler B. Perry reading his poem, “The Funeral in Her Brain” on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/fnbipG-ULUc> . Does seeing a reading by the poet influence your own interpretation of the poem?

SOURCES:

- *In Fine Form: The Canadian Book of Form Poetry* by Kate Braid & Sandy Shreve, ed. Raincoast Books, 2005.
- *Plausible Wrong Answers* by Tyler B. Perry. Frontenac House Poetry, 2020.
- Poetry In Voice website: <https://www.poetryinvoice.com/>

Response Poem 2: Distractor

A distractor is a form of poetry created by Canadian poet, Tyler B. Perry, who is also a high school English teacher. He created the form as a response to his frustration in the tendency for standardized reading comprehension tests to “completely change our purpose for reading a poem. The moment we read a poem in search of the right answer, we stop reading a poem and start reading a test.” Distractors are a method of “turn[ing] the test back on itself in a way that, rather than shutting down possibilities, allow[s] new ones to blossom.” A distractors use questions from multiple choice tests as springboards for poetic creation, rather than critical analysis.

CONSTRAINTS OF THE DISTRACTOR

1. A distractor uses an actual found multiple choice question from a standardized test as an epigraph to the poem.
2. A distractor is written as a response to the question/epigraph in a way that the plausibility of each answer is somehow entertained.
3. Any direct quotations taken from the poem that the question was originally written for are woven into the distractor poem, as directed by the question. For example, if the question refers to “the image of ‘his glistening back / In the bath’ (lines 2 to 3),” then “his glistening back / In the bath” will appear on lines 2 and 3 of the distractor poem, with the indicated line break.
4. Any other poetic devices or forms referred to in the question (such as alliteration, repetition, rhyme, sonnet, etc.) are also adhered to in the distractor.
5. In test-maker lingo, the (plausible) wrong answers in a multiple-choice test are called “distractors” because they are meant to distract uncertain students from the right answer. Thus, in a distractor poem, all answers are wrong, but plausible.
6. No familiarity with the original poem is required (or even recommended) for the poet of a distractor poem during the writing process.

ACTIVITIES

STEP ONE: READ

Read the poems “How to Bathe a Child” (p. 10) and “Long Answer” by Tyler B. Perry (p. 11).

STEP TWO: REFLECT

1. How does the multiple-choice-question-epigraph influence your interpretation of the rest of the poem?
2. Does the poem entertain the plausibility of each of the possible responses to the question?
3. How does the poem respond ironically to the intention of the question? What type(s) of irony are at work in the poem?

STEP THREE: WRITE

1. look back at a multiple choice reading comprehension test you’ve written recently, or find a reading comprehension test online, such as this one from a past [Alberta Education grade 9 achievement test](#) (the questions start on page 23).
2. Pick a question that seems to have the most potential for poetic response. Copy and paste the question to the top of a new document.
3. Follow the constraints of the distractor form as outlined above. Use your frustrations from writing these exams in the past to fuel your creative energy, and do your best to create a rich poem that entertains as many potential “plausible wrong answers” as possible. Consider how your own poem is an ironic response to the question, and to the absurdity of the multiple choice format for reading poetry.

sources:

- [*Plausible Wrong Answers*](#) by Tyler B. Perry. Frontenac House Poetry, 2020.
- Alberta Education website:
https://education.alberta.ca/media/3739984/08-ela9-2016-released_20180508.pdf

Response Poem 3: MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTION

The multiple choice question is a way for readers and writers of poetry to delve deeper into the meanings of a poem, whether it's their own poem or another poet's. In contrast to an actually multiple choice *test*, in which the objective is to narrow the answer down to a single correct answer, the objective of the multiple choice question response is to entertain multiple possible interpretations.

CONSTRAINTS OF THE MC QUESTION

1. Take an already existing poem. This can be one you wrote, or one written by another poet.
2. Brainstorm a list of plausible interpretations of the poem. For example, consider possible symbolic interpretation of a particular image, or the significance of a specific metaphor or word choice. Essentially, any aspect of the poem (line breaks, punctuation, title, alliteration) can be interpreted through a multiple choice question. [Optional brainstorming template](#).
3. Create a multiple choice question with at least four plausible answers. For tips on writing good multiple choice questions, [click here](#).
4. Play with the form of the question to make it its own poem. For example, use line breaks, white space, imagery and metaphor in your questions so that they themselves have a poetic effect on a reader.

ACTIVITIES

STEP ONE: READ

Read the poems "Magpie" (p. 12-13) and "#cyberspacepoets" (p. 14-15) by Tyler B. Perry.

STEP TWO: REFLECT

1. With classmates, discuss the multiple choice questions that follow the poems and see which answer best fits your own interpretation of the poem.
2. Consider the plausibility of each answer, and see how arguments could be made for each as being correct.
3. Look for ways that the questions mirror the poetic techniques of the poem they refer to. Do the questions enhance your understanding of the poem, or do they restrict your interpretation?

STEP THREE: WRITE

1. Look back at some of the poems you've written, and consider how you would like your poem to be interpreted by a reader. Are there any intentional ambiguities in the writing whose multiple meanings could be explored through multiple plausible answers? Are there any implications that you would like your reader to pick up on? Could any of your images be interpreted symbolically?
2. Once you've reflected on your poem, follow the constraints of the form on the previous page and create a multiple choice question, or a series of questions, to go with the poem.

ACTIVITY FOR FURTHER ENRICHMENT:

- View this video of Tyler B. Perry reading his poem, "Magpie" on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/IEEFo3VBooU>. Does seeing a reading by the poet influence your own interpretation of the poem? Does his tone change when he switches from reading the poem to reading the questions?

SOURCES:

- Brigham Young University's "14 Rules for Writing Multiple Choice Questions" <https://testing.byu.edu/handbooks/14%20Rules%20for%20Writing%20Multiple-Choice%20Questions.pdf>
- *Plausible Wrong Answers* by Tyler B. Perry. Frontenac House Poetry, 2020.

EXPLORE:

- Watch the book trailer for *Plausible Wrong Answers* on YouTube, and create a trailer for your own poem or suite of poems, or for a book you've read recently that you would like to promote to your peers. https://youtu.be/_CzdQk0QfLs.
- Submit one of your polished poems to the Poetry In Voice journal, *Voices/Voix* using their online submission form. Select "poet's visit," and refer to Tyler B. Perry as the visiting poet <https://www.poetryinvoic.com/poems/poets/tyler-b-perry>
- Visit the Poetry In Voice website <https://www.poetryinvoic.com/> and select a poem to memorize and recite, and enter the recitation competition.
- More writing prompts from PIV: <https://www.poetryinvoic.com/write/writing-prompts>

The Funeral in Her Brain

*I felt a funeral, in my Brain,
And Mourners to and fro
Kept treading—treading—till it seemed
That sense was breaking through—*
- Emily Dickinson, “340”

I make my students recite poetry.
And they hate me for it. They stand up
in front of the class and with their voices—
scratched like well-loved vinyl—they run
the needle of their insight along the fine
groove of the long-dead poet’s vein
and amplify a meaning that’s
been liquefied, warped and reshaped
into their version of that poet’s pain.
I felt a funeral, in my Brain,

when I heard Emily Dickinson’s words
scraped through the weariness of a nineteen-
year-old girl whose father was killed
two years ago, and whose mother alternates
between getting dressed up for an evening
at the VLTs or balled on the couch in the glow
of infomercials, picking scabs on her forearms
and plucking out the hairs from her scalp one
piece at a time—brushing over to let it grow—
And Mourners to and fro

walk up and down the front steps bringing
beer and bourbon, wanting to break her mother
out of that funk, but always leaving before
it’s time to dump the ashes down the sink
and press wadded paper towels on the soggy
drink-soaked carpet. The friends—who teemed
in the night before—all sifted themselves into
the early morning drift of rumpled walkers, while
the daughter—cleaning—tired—steamed—
Kept treading—treading—till it seemed

that her mother was just another stained blanket
draped over the side of the couch, and that lunch
would be stale bread and jam, and that the only
sleep she might get would be on the C-Train ride
into school—that morning—on her way to English class.
The poem crumpled in her hand, she proceeded to chew
the skin around her nail until it bled, pressed
the side of her face against the cool winter glass, and
muttered Emily's lines methodically until she knew
That sense was breaking through—

Tyler B. Perry, "The Funeral in Her Brain" from *Plausible Wrong Answers*. Copyright © 2020 by Tyler B. Perry. Published by Frontenac House Poetry as part of the 2020 Quartet series.

How to Bathe a Child

28. In Seamus Heaney's poem, "Mother of the Groom," The image of "his glistening back / In the bath" (lines 2 to 3) reveals the
- A. depth of the mother's emotion
 - B. son's innocent view of the world
 - C. son's contentment during childhood
 - D. vividness of the mother's recollections

5 Mother rarely recalls things vividly anymore. Images splash across the fogged glass of her memory—his glistening back in the bath—the sopping washcloth in her curled fingers—the steady trickle of a leaking toilet tank. The depth of the well in which her memories stir together like milky bathwater is unknown.

10 Confusion pools the rims of her eyes, clings to each lash like hoarfrost. *He* bathes *her* now—now that she knows him again—dabs at bedsores with the sponge, views the world through the rippled scars left by last winter's case of shingles—not that she remembers. She is innocent of the pain and the howls that rang from her body back then. She hums her contentment, a child again.

15 When she is dried off and tucked into bed he drops a kiss on each closed eyelid, two rocks into a bottomless pond.

Long Answer

25. In Suzanne Gardenier's poem, "Stones," the speaker's sense of the futility of the wish or longing is **best** conveyed in
- A. "there was no sign of the human" (line 9)
 - B. "forms you couldn't make resemble faces" (line 13)
 - C. "How could they be persuaded / to accept you" (lines 17-18)
 - D. "The fog blew higher and withdrew" (line 22)

The school was a vacant yawn, its jaws
an aching creak. The test exploded. Only the questions
remained, feral dogs scavenging for scraps of literature,
furred skin shrink-wrapping ribs and knobbed joints.
5 The whine of rotted breath steamed the room. The desks,
overturned, were carcasses curled on charred linoleum,
pencils shrapnel lodged into the drywall and ceiling.
Answers longed to be chosen, to have their bubbles
shaded, but there was no sign of the human machines
10 to deem them right or wrong. People faded
into smoking ashes, piles of autumn leaves and curled
pages. Crippled veins and brittle skin flaked away
leaving lumped forms you couldn't make resemble faces
with a pencil or a putty knife. Everything disintegrated,
15 a mist of wishes stuck, tea leaves caked,
gaping eye sockets, bone china, glazed porcelain powdered
into chalk, and the question: *How could they be persuaded
to accept you* scrawled on the board over the whitewash
of erasure was left without punctuation. And then the dogs
20 turned on each other: Bared-tooth questions questioned
each other in ferocious futility. The school rumbled
its inhale. The fog blew higher and withdrew
through the glassless windows. Yelps echoed the hallways.

Tyler B. Perry, "Long Answer" from *Plausible Wrong Answers*. Copyright © 2020 by Tyler B. Perry. Published by Frontenac House Poetry as part of the 2020 Quartet series.

Magpie

Take a lesson from the magpie
who, in January, rips breakfast
from ice and asphalt, tempting

traffic to crush its hollow bones
while its beak scrapes clean eye sockets
of a flattened squirrel. The blind anger

of winter punishes these birds,
coal-feathered fighters who would claw
at a car tire before surrendering a meal.

I've heard that magpies remember faces,
are known to take revenge. Even while blood

recoils in their empty bellies,
you'll hear them screeching at the dawn,
their pointed beaks daring winter
to look them in the eye.

15. In the poem “Magpie”, the squirrel is employed by the poet as a symbol of
- A. an obsolete public school curriculum:
Flat, dry, but still useful to the student

who is determined to learn
 - B. a sightless ideology turned carrion,
flattened and decimated
by pedagogical
opportunists
 - C. the desperation of humans
to find meaning and contentment in the chaotic brutality
of the winter
of our times
 - D. casualties claimed by industry and progress
 - E. the hopes and dreams of the poet.
Not the speaker.

The poet.

#CYBERSPACEPOETS

We thumb our clip-winged cherub dreams
into screens cracked as the palms
that hold them. Words pressed

from tapping fingertips slide along
stained glass minds while we spy
through tiny windows, deep into a world

cradling bruised thoughts. Rubbed raw
by caffeine, minds bleed images while eyes
sop up the heartaches of others. Poems

float through nights slinging shrapnel
and severed feathers. We lose sleep listening
to the thrum of wings beating at the glass.

16. In “#cyberspace poets,” “we” refers to
- A. students locked into a meaningless cyberexistence
 - B. all writers of poetry who believe in wide and unlimited readership as the ultimate form of success
 - C. readers of poetry, experiencing life through the words of poets, fully inhabiting but not understanding the world of the poem
 - D. anyone desperate for a voice
 - E. students in classrooms all over the world, worn to the point of mental exhaustion, unable to focus on anything besides

the ponytail of the girl sitting
directly in front of them.

House Poetry as part of the 2020 Quartet series.

Dear Teacher:

Thank you for using this resource with your students. The activities in this packet are stand-alone (in that they require no purchased resources), and are free for use in your classroom. The three lesson plans in this booklet can be used together or alone. Please pass this around to colleagues, and feel free to adapt them to your purposes.

The poems enclosed are all from my new book of poetry, *Plausible Wrong Answers*, published by Frontenac House Poetry in fall 2020. If you would like to purchase a copy of the book, you can find it at your local bookstore, or order it directly from the publisher with free shipping (in Canada, or 50% off shipping to the US) at this link: <https://www.frontenachouse.com/product/plausible-wrong-answers/>

Signed, personalized copies can be purchased directly from the author with the same shipping deal by emailing Tyler at tyler.perry@shaw.ca (these make great holiday gifts for your teacher-or-poetry-loving friends!). I am also a member of the Poetry In Voice poet network, and might be available for a free virtual visit to your classroom, depending on the time of your class meetings (I am a full-time teacher), or to do a Q & A with your students.

Tyler B. Perry

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ALPINE BOOK PEDDLERS
Book distribution in the Canadian Rockies and beyond

Publisher:

Neil Petrunia
Publisher, Frontenac House Ltd.
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Calgary, AB T2N 3J9
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