

TEACHER'S & DISCUSSION GUIDE

OCTOBER MOURNING: *A Song for Matthew Shepard*

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

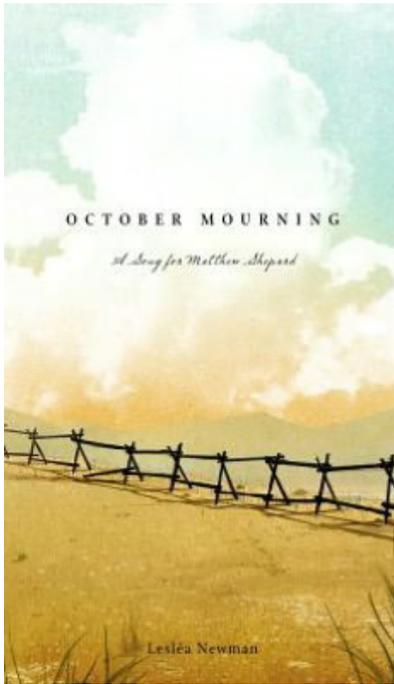
On the night of October 6, 1998, a gay twenty-one-year-old University of Wyoming student named Matthew Shepard was lured from a bar by two young men, then savagely beaten, tied to a fence on the outskirts of Laramie, and left to die. Five days later, Lesléa Newman arrived on campus to give the keynote speech for the University of Wyoming's Gay Awareness Week.

October Mourning is Newman's deeply personal response to the events of that tragic day and its brutal aftermath. This work of poetic imagination explores the impact of the vicious crime through fictitious monologues from various points of view, including the fence to which Matthew was tied, the deer that kept watch beside him, and even Matthew himself.

This stunning cycle of sixty-eight poems serves as an illumination for readers too young to remember and as a powerful, enduring tribute to Matthew Shepard's life and legacy.

ABOUT THIS AUTHOR

Lesléa Newman is the author of more than sixty books for readers of all ages, including the children's classic *Heather Has Two Mommies*. She has been awarded poetry fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Massachusetts Artists Foundation. From January 2008 through April 2010, she served as the poet laureate of Northampton, Massachusetts. Lesléa Newman is a faculty member of Spalding University's brief-residency MFA in Writing program. She lives in Holyoke, Massachusetts. For more about her, visit www.lesleakids.com.



FROM LESLÉA NEWMAN'S INTRODUCTION:

While the poems in this book are inspired by actual events, they do not in any way represent the statements, thoughts, feelings, opinions, and attitudes of any actual persons. The statements, thoughts, feelings, opinions, and attitudes conveyed belong to me. All monologues contained within the poems are figments of my imagination; no actual person spoke any of the words contained in the body of any poem. Those words are mine and mine alone. The poems, which are meant to be read in sequential order as one whole work, are a work of poetic invention and imagination: a historical novel in verse.

The poems are not an objective reporting of Matthew Shepard's murder and its aftermath; rather they are my own poetic interpretation of them.¹

FOR TEACHERS WORKING WITH COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

October Mourning is a unique text in that its creative approach to a historical event allows for students to analyze literature but also consider the implications of the narrative with respect to its historical and cultural impacts. Because *October Mourning* can be used so diversely in the classroom, teachers can meet a number of the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for English Language Arts. The activities in this guide ask students to perform critical thinking tasks required by the grades 8-12 Reading Standards for **both** Literature and Informational Texts. Most of the questions below can be used to fulfill the "Key Ideas and Details," "Craft and Structure," and/or "Integration of Knowledge and Ideas" standards for reading.

¹ Excerpt from Introduction from *October Mourning: A SONG FOR MATTHEW SHEPARD*. Copyright ©2012 by Lesléa Newman. Reproduced by permission of the publisher, Candlewick Press.

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Furthermore, if students are expected to write answers and submit them for review, they can also fulfill standards for Writing and Language for grades 8-12, especially if these activities are used to inspire larger research projects. *October Mourning* could then be used to meet “Text Types and Purposes,” “Production and Distribution of Writing,” and “Research to Build and Present Knowledge” Writing standards, as well as “Convention of Standard English,” “Knowledge of Language,” and “Vocabulary Acquisition and Use” Language standards.

Lastly, with some adjustment, such as asking students to discuss their responses in groups, or staging debates in class, teachers can modify these activities to fulfill requirements for Speaking and Listening. Students could then meet “Comprehension and Collaboration,” and “Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas” Speaking and Listening standards.

October Mourning is a rich text that can inspire various and thoughtful readings and responses. It allows for methods to fulfill the Common Core Standards that engage both student and teacher.

ISSUES OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY, AND SENSITIVITY/SAFE SPACE

Before your discussions, remind students that you will be discussing some sensitive topics. In order to create a safe space for discussion in your classroom, everyone (teachers included) needs to be respectful of each other's experiences.

If you have not discussed issues of gender and sexuality in the classroom before, try practicing the terminology ahead of time, so that you do not get tripped up. That said, it is all right to be honest with students, and acknowledge that these might not be topics usually discussed in your classroom/school. While it is important for your students to see that you are comfortable discussing gender and sexuality, it is also important that they see that you are honest and open about these topics. This can include being willing to research answers to questions and getting back to them. A safe space is one in which everyone, teachers included, can discuss and explore issues. You can model this process for them. The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Educational Network (GLSEN) has many resources for

creating a safe space for gender and sexuality inclusion. (<http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/home/index.html>). Remember to make distinctions between gender and sexuality. Gender has to do with how someone expresses masculinity, femininity, and everything in between and beyond. Sexuality has to do with desire. People who express conventional genders can be gay; people who express unconventional genders can be straight.

Gay: Can be used as both an umbrella term for “homosexual,” as well as a term to describe a man who is attracted to men.

Lesbian: A woman who is attracted to other women.

Bisexual: A person who is attracted to men and women.

Queer: Can be used as an umbrella term for the entire LGBTQIA (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer/Questioning Intersex Asexual/Ally) community, as well as anyone who challenges conventions of gender and sexuality.

Transgender: An adjective meaning “cross-gendered.” Can refer to anything challenging conventional gender expression, and is culturally-and historically-dependent. There are a range of identities that fall under the umbrella category of transgender, including both people who wear the clothes of another gender and people who physically transition to another gender.

Intersex: A person who identifies as intersex was born with ambiguous genitalia, that is genitalia that does not conform to “masculine” or “feminine” categories. “Intersex” replaces the outdated term of “hermaphrodite.”

Asexual: Someone who identifies as having no sexual desire.

Ally: Someone who does not necessarily identify as LGBT or Q, but actively accepts and supports them. An ally is interested in combating homophobia and heterosexism, and furthering the social and political equality of the queer community.

Homophobia: The irrational fear of gay people and homosexuality.

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Heterosexism: While not necessarily homophobic, an engrained series of assumptions, practices, and laws that privilege the heterosexual. In other words, the assumption that all people are straight.

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

(many of these questions may be returned to as a post-reading activity)

- Visit www.leselakids.com to read about the author's background and other books she's written.
- Visit www.matthewshepard.org and www.matthewsplace.org.
- Watch a performance of or the film version of *The Laramie Project*.
- Research the facts of Matthew Shepard's murder and the trials of his assailants.
- Do you think that Matthew Shepard's attackers received a fair sentence? Why or why not?
- Does your school have a Gay-Straight Alliance? Why or why not? Why is it important for allies to be involved in working for LGBTQIA rights?
- Why do people bully others? Have you ever been bullied? What did it feel like? Did you tell anyone? Why or why not?
- Have you ever bullied anyone? What did it feel like during the incident? After the incident?
- Have you ever witnessed someone being bullied? Did you intervene? Why or why not?
- What can you do to stop bullying at your school? Does your school have an anti-bullying policy?
- Research the origins of the word "fag/faggot." How did these words come to be anti-gay slurs?
- Do you think that being gay is a choice? Do you think that being straight is a choice?
- Do you believe in the death penalty? Why or why not?
- What is the definition of premeditated murder? Felony murder? What would a juror have to determine in order to support convictions for these charges?
- What is the value of a life? Is the life of a killer worth the same amount as the life of a victim?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WITH THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

Suggested themes (issues of historical narrative, issues of community, issues of parenthood and family relationships, and issues of justice) are marked in bold next to the question.

*Note that Newman includes context for specific references in "Notes" (93-103).

OVERALL QUESTIONS

Which of these poems do you find the most powerful? Why?

Some poems begin with epigraphs that are quotations from people who were actually involved in the events. What role do these quotations play? How do they affect your reading of the poems? What is it like to read real peoples' responses to the event? (**Historical, Community**)

In her introduction, Newman writes that the bench dedicated to Matthew is inscribed with the words "'He continues to make a difference'" (xi). How might this book contribute to making a difference? How has it made a difference with you? How might it make a difference with others?

Newman explores the impact of Matthew Shepard's murder via inanimate objects. Why might she have included these fictitious poetic monologues? How do poems like "The Truck" and "Road Rage" affect how you view the world of inanimate objects? What stories might your objects tell about you?

In her introduction, Newman writes that she began writing this book "in order to gain a better understanding of [the events of Matthew Shepard's murder]'s impact on myself and the world" (x). What are their impacts upon you and your world? Which poems in this cycle have affected your understanding, and how? (**Community**)

What roles do nature and the natural world play in these poems?

Where do we see issues of community in this poem cycle? Who forms a community? What kinds of communities do we see? What are the concerns of the various communities? (**Community**)

If you had been a juror, how would you have decided your verdict and what would it be? Is this a comfortable or uncomfortable position for you to take on as a reader? What is at stake for Matthew Shepard's family? For Matthew Shepard's murderers? For the gay community? For our nation? For the world? (**Historical, Justice**)

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Why are there so many apologies in this poem cycle? Who apologizes, and to whom?

In her afterword, Newman notes that she speaks on “how education can end prejudice and hatred” (88). How can *October Mourning* be part of this? How can you be part of this? (**Community, Justice**)

In her afterword, Newman writes that a woman she met shortly after speaking at the University of Wyoming said regarding Matthew Shepard’s murder, “I can’t imagine” (90). Newman says that “we must imagine.” Why must this be our response, as survivors? Who needs to imagine? How can we reach people who need to imagine? (**Justice**)

FORM/STRUCTURE

Note that Newman includes notes on her poetic forms in “Explanation of Poetic Forms” (105-8).

Newman writes, “The poems are not an objective reporting of Matthew Shepard’s murder and its aftermath; rather they are my own personal interpretation of them” (xi). What do we get from “objective reporting,” like a newspaper article? What do we get from Newman’s imaginative poem cycle? What are the differences between this imaginative poetic narrative and “objective reporting”?

In her introduction, Newman calls this book her “side of the story” (xi). How would you describe/characterize her side? How many perspectives are there to her side?

We can call Newman’s poem cycle polyvocal, or consisting of many voices. What are the effects of having multiple fictitious voices comment on the impact of Matthew Shepard’s murder? (**Community, Historical**)

What distinctions does Newman make between Part I and Part II? What purposes do the Prologue and Epilogue serve?

What does the introduction offer you as a reader? What questions might you have for the author? Are they answered by the introduction?

Newman calls this collection of poems “a historical novel in verse” (xi). What expectations do we bring to historical novels? What expectations do we bring to poems? A poem cycle? What does Newman’s work do to your expectations? (**Historical**)

Newman models “A Sorry State” and other poems after William Carlos Williams’ poem “This is Just to Say.” Why might she have done this? What does the original poem sound like? How does Newman transform the original poem to fit this situation? Look at “Lame Excuse,” “Heartfelt

Apology,” and “Sorry Boy.” Who is apologizing, and for what?

Newman is very careful about marking her sources and contexts for her material. She also offers a list of resources. What does this indicate about her approach to the events of Matthew Shepard’s murder? (**Historical**)

Newman uses a variety of approaches in her poem cycle, including various poetic forms. How would you describe her approach? What are the effects? How would you describe her project?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS LANGUAGE ARTS

Choose a poem and read it aloud. How did you decide to read it? What is your pacing like? Your tone? Why?

Write letters to Matthew Shepard, and/or his parents.

Write a poem in the voice of someone who has been bullied. Write a poem in the voice of a bully.

Think about an important event in your life that was witnessed by inanimate objects. Write a poem in which that object (i.e. a chair, a bed, a car) speaks.

Research the various poetic forms in the book (haiku, found poem, acrostic, villanelle, etc.). Write your own poems in these forms.

Write a poem in free verse that uses poetic techniques such as alliteration, repetition, etc.

Newman writes imitations of “This is Just to Say” by William Carlos Williams, and “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird” by Wallace Stevens. Find a poem that you admire and write an imitation of it.

Find a quotation that inspires you in the newspaper or on a website and write a poem that uses that line as an epigraph.

ART, MUSIC

The fence has become a recognizable symbol of the events that took place during the night of October 6-7, 1998. Draw, paint, or create a sculpture of the fence that expresses your feelings about Matthew Shepard’s murder.

Create a collage or poster in memory of Matthew Shepard and/or other victims of hate crimes.

Design an armband for Matthew Shepard. Or, an anti-hate-crime armband.

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Create a soundtrack for the poem cycle. Make one consisting of popular songs, and then another one consisting of instrumentals only.

SOCIAL STUDIES

How would you define a hate crime? How does the FBI define a hate crime? How does your state define a hate crime? Does your state have hate crime legislation, and if so, whom does it protect? Who should be protected?

Research the Matthew Shepard Act. Who was James Byrd, Jr., and why is his name associated with the Act? What do he and Matthew Shepard have in common?

Newman pays close attention to the role of the fence in Matthew's memorialization. Research other historic tragedies. How have they been publicly memorialized? What are some factors that must be considered when creating a memorial to someone or an event? In what ways can this be a sensitive subject?

Newman considers place in her poetry. Create a map or some other form of visual representation of place to accompany this poem cycle.

MATH

Some of the poems demonstrate ways in which Newman approaches the subject matter of Matthew's murder via numbers. Try your own hand at this. Write a poem in which you use numbers or mathematics to explore the impact of Matthew Shepard's murder.

BEYOND THE BOOK ACTIVITIES

Start a GSA at your school.

Research and observe the Day of Silence (usually in April).

Research and observe National Coming Out Day (October 11).

Newman challenges each of us to, "think of one thing to do to help end homophobia and do it this week" (90). What will you do?

RESOURCES

(In addition to the resources listed in the book)

The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN): www.glsen.org

American Library Association (ALA): www.ala.org (for resources on how to proceed when a book is challenged, as well as the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Round Table (a special division of the ALA devoted to LGBTQ issues), which has a mailing list.

The Rainbow Project Blog (part of ALA): <http://rainbowlist.wordpress.com>

Gay Straight Alliance Network: www.gsanetwork.org

National Education Association (NEA): www.nea.org (has a Bully Free Schools page)

GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation): www.glaad.org

GLAAD's guide to terminology: <http://www.glaad.org/files/allys-guide-to-terminology.pdf>

Lambda Legal: www.lambdalegal.org

American Civil Liberties Union: www.aclu.org

Southern Poverty Law Center: www.splcenter.org

FBI Hate Crime page: http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/investigate/civilrights/hate_crimes/

The Leadership Conference: <http://www.civilrights.org/hatecrimes/>

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services site on bullying: <http://www.stopbullying.gov/index.html>

Hill, Robert J., ed. *Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Issues*. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education Series. Jossey-Bass, 2007.

hooks, bell. *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Sears, James T. *Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Issues in Education: Programs, Policies, and Practice*. New York: Haworth Press, 2005.

Wallowitz, Laraine, ed. *Critical Literacy as Resistance: Teaching for Social Justice Across the Secondary Curriculum*. New York: Peter Lang, 2008.

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SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDE TO INDIVIDUAL POEMS

There are four poems that focus on the fence to which Matthew Shepard was tied. Why so many? What does the fence have to tell us? Why might Newman have returned to the fence to punctuate her poem cycle?

In the Prologue, “The Fence (before),” the second half of the poem is italicized. Why? What do these lines anticipate?

How does Newman use numbers in “Outnumbered”? Which adverbs are vague? Which are precise? When do they become precise, and why? What is the effect of repetition? Where do you fit in her numbers? (**Historical**)

The second poem in Part I is titled “Recipe for Disaster.” What do we expect in a recipe? What is the job of a recipe? What argument does Newman make here regarding the cause of this disaster? (**Bullying**)

Look at “Something Snapped.” Which words are words of hatred? Which words describe gender? Which words describe sexuality? Which words, if any, make you, the reader, uncomfortable? What is the catalyst according to this poem? (**Bullying**)

Look at “Raising Awareness.” How do you read this poem: across or down the page? Try both ways. What are the different effects? What do the two columns demonstrate? What kinds of awarenesses are raised here, and for whom? What are the ironies involved in the last lines? (**Bullying, Community**)

In “Every Mother’s Plea” What kinds of advice is given? What connections does this advice have to the larger events of the poem cycle? (**Parenthood**)

How does “The Truck” compare to the poems in the cycle that offer an apology? Does the use of language pertaining to vehicles and driving have a deeper meaning? (**Bullying**)

Which words in “Road Rage” have double meanings? What does it mean to be “tough as time”?

Who is the “you” in “A Sorry State”? What is the significance of the knowledge that the state wishes it had imparted? The epigraph comes from the sign on the border of Wyoming. How do you read this slogan now? (**Community**)

“Signs of Trouble,” like “Now Showing: Matthew’s Story,” is a found poem. Where do these lines come from? What makes the road signs especially appropriate? (**Bullying**)

Read “The Clothesline.” What is the effect of the repeated “They/I”? (**Bullying**)

“The Pistol” consists of only twelve words. What is the effect of these one-word lines? Do the adjectives in this poem describe anything or anyone other than the pistol? (**Bullying**)

Read “Witness.” What if someone had witnessed the attack? What is it had been you? What might you have done? (**Community**)

Read “The Fence (That Night).” How does the comparison of the fence cradling Matthew Shepard “just like a mother” make you feel? How does it relate to the other fictitious mothers mentioned throughout the book? (**Parenthood**)

How does Newman measure time in “What You Can Do in Eighteen Hours”? What kinds of activities does she include? What is the effect of her inclusion of both ordinary and extraordinary activities?

Who is the “you” in the title of “What You Can Do in Eighteen Hours”? What does it mean for you as the reader to be included in this narrative? Is this a comfortable or uncomfortable position for you to be in, and why? (**Community**)

How would you describe the form of “Stars”? How does it affect your reading experience?

What is the role of nature and the natural world in the poem “The Wind”? What other natural elements bore witness to Matthew Shepard’s murder? What might they say in an imagined poetic monologue?

What is the role of alliteration, or the repetition of a consonant sound, in “The Doe”? What, specifically, does it emphasize?

A line in “The Doe” reads, “I felt the two fawns in my belly curl into a ball.” What other kinds of mothers and mother figures does Newman include in the poem cycle? Why might there be so many? (**Parenthood**)

Read “Where is My Boy?” What do pets know about us? This poem is written in rhymed couplets. What does it sound like to you? What other kinds of poetry uses this kind of rhyming?

Read “The Biker.” Newman refers to Shepard as a “smashed shattered pumpkin of a boy” (23). What does the word “pumpkin” imply?

What role do colors play in “The Patrol Officer’s Report”? Why is the last line in italics?

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How is contrast used in “The Doctor”? What is being contrasted, and what does this tell you about people who work in the medical profession? (**Community**)

In “The Housekeeper, ICU” Newman uses a refrain (“I see them come/I see them go”). What effect does this create? Does the word “straight” at the end of the poem have more than one meaning?

Read “Lame Excuse.” Whose excuse is this? How does Newman use the word “lame”?

Read “How to Have the Worst Day of Your Life.” What do we expect from “How to” guides or instruction manuals? Who is the “you” in the titular “your”? Might it be anyone who has loved anyone who has survived an “incident”? How would you write a poem with this title? (**Parenthood**)

Read “The Journalist.” How do you feel about the fictitious “newscaster” described by the speaker? What kind of impression does she make? How do you feel about the advice being given at the beginning of the poem? (**Community**)

What does “Vigil: Candles in the Wind” look like? Sound like? How do you read it? How does Newman play with words in the last stanza? (**Community**)

Read “The Armbands.” Who or what besides the armbands is being described? (**Community**)

Discuss the role of fear in “Scared to Death.” (**Bullying**)

Look carefully at the line breaks in “Heartfelt Apology.” Do any of them imply double meanings? How do the line breaks affect your reading of this poem?

In “October 12, 1998,” why might Newman use the word “somebody” in both lines? Why doesn’t she refer to Matthew Shepard by name in this poem?

Read “Now Showing: Matthew’s Story.” How has Newman used each of these other narratives to compose Matthew’s own story? What story do they tell? (**Historical**)

In the poem “Tree,” what effect does the use of repetition create? What is the effect of the use of ordinary objects made of wood in the poem as compared to the extraordinary image of a “small oak chest filled to the brim/with ashes that once were a boy”?

In “Class Photo” why is the word “martyr” in italics? Why isn’t it capitalized? Why isn’t it followed by an exclamation mark?

Read “Then and Now.” What are some of the differences between then and now? What has happened in the space between?

Read “Thirteen Ways of Looking at Matthew.” This poem, as Newman notes, is based on Wallace Stevens’ “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird.” What does Newman offer us here? What kinds of ways of looking at Matthew does she provide? Whose points of view are used? Why might this poem be the last of Part I?

Part II

What has the fence become in “The Fence (one week later)”?

What does the title “Stand by your Man” allude to? What is the role of repetition in this poem? What would you do if someone you loved came home with something to hide? (**Justice, Community**)

In the poem “Accessory,” both the words “accessory” and “sorry” have more than one meaning. What are they? What is Newman saying with the way she uses these two words?

Read “Officer of the Court.” What are the differences between the italicized and the non-italicized lines? What does the phrase “this courtroom feels so cold” mean? (**Justice, Community**)

Read “His Shoes.” Which words indicate that Matthew’s shoes are valued? Which words indicated that they are disvalued? What is “irreplaceable”?

Read “The Frat Boys.” How do the words “homo,” “queer,” and “freakin’ fairy” make you feel when you read this poem? What does the last line mean? Why do we tell/perform jokes? What do jokes have the power to do? What do they indicate about us? How might someone who is gay have felt when seeing this homecoming parade float? (**Bullying, Community**)

What is the job of “The Songwriter” and other artists, including poets?

Why is the line “into the closet” repeated in “The Drag Queen”? What different kinds of people are facing consequences after Matthew Shepard’s murder? How can we use this to talk about power dynamics? In a situation like this, what happens when someone belongs to a minority group? How can we confront this? (**Historical, Community, Bullying**)

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In “The Cop” what kinds of words are these, and what do they have the potential to do? What happens when we hear them? What kind of message does it send out when a person in a position of authority, uses these words? Have you ever heard anyone use these words? Have you ever used these words? **(Bullying, Community)**

What role does retrospect play in “The Bartender”? **(Community)**

Read “Let’s Say.” The line “let’s say” is repeated throughout the poem, and yet the “you” in the poem chooses not to speak. What keeps the “you” from speaking? What are the risks of speaking? Why is it important to speak up? What are the consequences of silence? In her essay “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action,” Audre Lorde writes that “your silences will not protect you.”² What are you afraid of speaking up for? How might you overcome this fear? What role does visibility play in the gay community? Why does it matter that Newman went to the University of Wyoming as “an out, proud lesbian, right before their very eyes” (89)? **(Community, Bullying, Justice)**

What role does fear play in “The Student”? What happens at the end of the poem? Why is this so important? What is at stake? **(Community)**

“A Father” and “A Mother” appear on pages that face each other. What is the effect of having these two poems so close together? What are the concerns of parents of gay sons and daughters? How universal might these concerns be? What is a parent’s role? **(Parenthood, Community)**

Read the epigraph to “A Mother.” If this had happened in your hometown, how would you feel about your community? About how the world would view your community? What could you do to change that? **(Historical, Community)**

These two poems are followed by “A Chorus of Parents.” The fictitious sons mentioned in the poem are all different sons. What does this indicate about parents and their relationships with their children? What effects does Matthew Shepard’s story have on parents and children? **(Parenthood, Community)**

Look at the last lines of “The Church Lady.” How might Matthew Shepard’s murder affect a religious person’s faith? **(Community)**

What is the effect of placing “A Protestor” and “An Angel” on facing pages? What visual images do they suggest? **(Community, Justice)**

Read “A Protestor.” What does it mean to include this voice? In a case so charged with silences, and so much is at stake in speaking out, why might Newman have included the voices of hate? Read the last stanza of this poem. What portrait of parenthood does this offer? It follows a series of poems focusing on parents. Can we consider this a parent poem, too? **(Community, Bullying, Parenthood)**

Where does the phrase “where angels fear to tread” come from? How are prayers used in both “A Protestor” and “An Angel”? How is religion invoked in both? Where do you see biblical traces in both? What does it mean to have these two positions so structurally ordered in a villanelle? What is the history of Angel Action? **(Community)**

Discuss the role of shape in the poem “Jury Selection.” Potential jurors are usually asked a series of questions in order to determine if they will be suitable to participate in a given trial. Based on their responses, what is the one question asked here? Why is this significant? **(Justice)**

Compare and contrast the jobs of “The Prosecutor” and “The Defense.” How would you argue your case if you were the prosecutor? The defense? What is at stake? **(Justice)**

Read “Don’t Flatter Yourself.” What is behind this fear that a gay person might be coming on to someone else? Where is the misunderstanding? **(Bullying)**

Read “Sorry Boy.” What is meant by a “gay panic” defense? How does Newman play with the language of “gay panic”? **(Justice, Bullying)**

Read “Logic Problem.” How does Newman use numbers and statistics here? Connect these to the title and epigraph. What is Newman implying? How would you define a hate crime? How does the FBI define a hate crime? How does your state? Does your state have hate crime legislation, and if so, whom does it protect? Who should be protected? **(Historical, Bullying, Justice)**

What is the role of the boldface type in “Verdict”? **(Justice)**

“Mercy” offers us yet another parental voice. What is significant about what Dennis Shepard says here? What does it mean to offer mercy? Who is “the boy” in the last line? Again, what is at stake? “Mercy” is a haiku, as is “Every Mother’s Plea.” Their form is the same; what is the connection in their content? **(Parenthood, Justice)**

² Lorde, Audre. “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action.” *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* by Audre Lorde. Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 2007. 40-44.

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Again, Newman uses listing in “What Twenty Bucks Could Get you in 1998.” What point is she making with all of these numbers and items? How much is a life worth? (**Justice, Historical**)

Who is wounded in the poem “Wounded”? What comparisons can be made between the first and last stanzas? Why are identical lines used in both of these stanzas? What is the effect of having the poem broken up with the isolated line “heard his own mama”? What role do the natural elements play in this poem?

In “This is the Hand,” Newman describes the hand as though it is an entity in and of itself, and not attached to a body. Why might Newman have described it in such a way? What is the effect of this? What is the effect of the alliteration that appears throughout the poem? Have you ever committed a hurtful act that you later regretted? (**Bullying**)

“Once upon a time” is a phrase commonly used to begin a children’s story, notably a fairy tale. Why might Newman have used it as the title of this poem? What is the effect of starting the first line of each stanza with the word “once,” and the second line of each stanza with the word “now”? What is the effect of the use of repetition throughout the poem?

The last poem of Part II is “The Fence (after).” What progression have you seen in the fence poems?

The epilogue is entitled “Pilgrimage.” What does it mean to make a pilgrimage? Who makes pilgrimages? What do they seek and hope to find? Whose pilgrimage is this? What role does Newman, the poet, place herself in? Is she someone other than the poet in this poem? What traditions does she draw upon? Why use phrases from more than one religious/spiritual tradition? Why have multiple traditions in one poem? Why the refrain of beauty? (**Community, Justice**)

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