

The Mississippi Poetry Podcast Supplement

Ep. 12: RaShell Smith-Spears

1. Listen (12 minutes). Play *The Mississippi Poetry Podcast w/ RaShell Smith-Spears*

2. Write (10-25 minutes, as time allows)

Materials Needed:

notebook, pen/pencil

Writing Exercise: Vivid Verbs

In her poem "A Writer Speaks of Lineage," RaShell Smith-Spears uses specific verbs like "squeezed," "rolled," and "poured." A strong verb, as Smith-Spears says in her interview, "describes the subject doing something in a certain way," so that a reader can clearly picture the action.

This exercise is designed to help writers get creative with their verbs. Invite participants to observe a simple action—you might drop a piece of chalk on the floor, or close a window, or stamp your foot. Now ask participants to describe that action in 5-10 different ways. As participants have to come up with more and more new ways to describe this action, their descriptions—and their verbs—will get increasingly surprising. Encourage participants to be playful with this, to use metaphor if they like, and to let their descriptions be as long or as short as they want.

Example:

The chalk fell to the floor.

The chalk dropped the floor.

The chalk plummeted to the floor.

The chalk torpedoed to the floor.

The chalk plunged to the floor like an unlucky skydiver.

3. Share (5-10 minutes)

If time and comfort levels allow, invite participants to share their work!

Related Materials:

"A Writer Speaks of Lineage," RaShell Smith-Spears: merliterary.com/2022/09/28/poem-of-the-month-october-2022/

Margaret Walker: poetryfoundation.org/poets/margaret-walker

Toni Morrison: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toni_Morrison

Octavia Butler: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Octavia_E._Butler

Gloria Naylor: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gloria_Naylor

Leslie Esdaile Banks: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leslie_Esdaile_Banks

Bebe Moore Campbell: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bebe_Moore_Campbell

