

## **Ghazal lesson plan by Kathleen Shull (Part II)**

### **Standards:**

12.Reading.Reading Literature.02 I can find and analyze the development and interactions of multiple themes or central ideas in a text. I can objectively summarize a text.

12.R.RL.04 I can determine the literal and figurative meanings of words and analyze the impact of the author's word choice on the meaning and tone of a text.

12.R.RL.06 I can analyze how a narrative point of view impacts implicit and explicit meanings in multiple works.

12.R.RL.03 I can analyze how the impact of an author's choices develop and connect elements of a story or drama.

12.R.RL.05 I can analyze how an author's choices impact the structure of a text.

12.R.RL.09 I can analyze and compare similar themes and topics found in varying works throughout history.

### **Objectives:**

Students will become familiar with ghazal poetry, its background, origin, etymology, pronunciation, history and many examples, from earlier centuries and contemporary ones.



Paul Klee. *Persian Nightingales* [*Persische Nachtigallen*] (1917). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. gouache, watercolor, and pen and ink over graphite on laid paper, mounted on cardboard; the sheet bordered at the top with yellow paper strip mounted to support (In the special book collections) 22.8 x 18.1 cm (9 x 7 1/8 inches)

## Overview from the National Gallery of Art:

Literary references permeate the works of Swiss artist Paul Klee, whose *Persische Nachtigallen* (*Persian Nightingales*) most likely alludes to the verses of the fourteenth-century poet Hafiz.

*Mortal never won to view thee, Yet a thousand lovers woo thee; Not a nightingale but knows In the rose-bud sleeps the rose.*

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe introduced the Persian writer to German-speaking audiences in his *West-östlicher Divan*, and it was probably here that Klee first learned of Hafiz's work. In sensuous poetic images, the Persian master celebrates the joys of love, wine, and the natural world. Two of his recurring motifs are the nightingale and the rose, the former symbolizing earthly yearning, and the latter divine beauty and glory.

A pink rose appears in the lower left quadrant of Klee's watercolor, cradled by two sharply pointed leaves whose forms mirror the nightingales' heads. Above and to the left of the flower is the letter *R* (presumably for Rose). Three nightingales occupy center stage, and one of them is inverted and drunk with desire, its beak pointing toward the letter *N* (presumably for *Nachtigallen*). Celestial bodies float across the sheet, enlivening it with circles, half-moons, and stars, while on the *N*'s right stem Klee hoists a bright red pennant.

Klee further alludes to Persian miniature painting in the drawing's gemlike delicacy, ornamentation, and lustrous color, as well as its disregard for scale and perspective. Even the structure of the composition, which one seems to enter through an arched niche or parted curtains, recalls the format of many Persian miniatures. While Klee was living in Germany, from 1898 to 1933, he would have had ample opportunity to see Persian art in public collections, such as the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum in Berlin (now Bode Museum), as well as the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum and the Staatsbibliothek in Munich. He no doubt also saw an important 1910 exhibition of Islamic art in Munich that featured more than 3,500 objects, including, as Klee's friend and colleague Wassily Kandinsky wrote in a published review, "carpets, majolica, weapons, ceramics, textiles, and finally most arresting and closest to us today Persian miniatures."

This radiant watercolor reflects in miniature a wondrous, microcosmic universe, one that even grants status to lowly consonants. Indeed, the letters *R* and *N* are fully integrated within the composition; they are scaled to the size of the nightingales and juxtaposed in the same indeterminate space. As is often the case in Persian art and particularly in Hafiz's poetry, the earthly and the divine are poised in a delicate and ambiguous balance. Individual shapes shift one against the other, each within the confines of Klee's wiry line and each flooded with thin washes of color. Although perfectly balanced for the moment, one senses that a tiny slip of a line in one direction or another might set the whole creation tumbling. (<https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.71551.html>)

“On the Table” by Maxine Kumin published in the *New Yorker* magazine.

**Annotations:**

*I was taught to smooth the aura at the end,*  
said my masseuse, hands hovering at the **end**.

Inches above my placid pummeled self  
did I feel something floating at the **end**?

Or is my naked body merely prone  
to ectoplasmic vapors to no **end**?

Many other arthritics have lain here  
seeking to roll pain’s boulder end on **end**.

Herbal oils, a CD playing soft  
loon calls, wave laps, bird trills now must **end**.

I rise and dress, restored to lift and bend,  
my ethereal wisp invisible at the **end**.

**Process and Procedures:**

**Guiding questions:**

What do you notice about the poems?

What ghazal qualities do you locate in the ghazals?

**Day 1 Building Background:**

Students will learn the introduction, what the qualities and attributes of a ghazal are, its history as a type of Middle Eastern poetry, read the poems by Hafiz, Ali, Kumin, Adrienne Rich, Nezhukumatathi, and the others.

I Annotate at least **2 to 3** of the poems: 1 with the instructor to model, 2nd with a partner (if extra practice needed), and 3rd on your own. What do you notice?

**Exit Ticket:**

See/Think/Wonder exit with the Paul Klee gouache and watercolor

<b>See</b> (what do you see 5 to 10 things)	<b>Think</b> (what do you think based on evidence; at least 5 things that might relate to ghazals)	<b>Wonder</b> (What do you want to know? What questions do you have? If you were to draw a ghazal illustration what might you want to include?)
A bird	The bird is a songbird of love.	Why is there a letter R in the work?
1	1	1
2	2	2
3		3
4	3	4
5		5
6	4	
7	5	
8		
9		
10		

**Warm-up Day 2 Activity** (which can be repeated) with various ghazals to familiarize students with a wide variety of ghazals esp. if the teacher notices more practice is needed)

What do you notice about the endings of the couplets (two lines set off by spaces in this poem) in this ghazal “On the Table” written by Maxine Kumin?

**I “On the Table” by Maxine Kumin [a poem about massage]**

**I do:**

1 I notice that in the first couplet the *end* word is the same.

2 I notice that in the second through sixth couplet that ONLY the second line’s end word is the same (here highlighted in **red**).

3 I notice \_\_\_\_\_.

**What do you notice about each couplet’s meaning?**

**We do:**

1 I notice that the couplets relate to each other in this modern Ghazal about going to a masseuse but in traditional Ghazals that is NOT the case. Each couplet can stand alone in its meaning and does not need to be RELATED and that is part of the appeal of the couplets being set together like a puzzle. The couplets do not need to be related but often have an epiphany or insight in the end couplet.

**You do with a partner:**

2 I further notice \_\_\_\_\_.

**You do on your own:**

Choose *another* (perhaps more traditional) ghazal and follow the “I notice” from above but applied to the poem of your choice.

**II. Create a word bank from this Kumin poem (or students can collect particular words that resonate with them and then try and create a found poem with those words) in Surrealist style or save the words to use for writing your own ghazals tomorrow:**

ethereal

placid

ectoplasmic

vapors

wisp - a small thin or twisted bunch, piece, or amount of something.

"wisps of smoke rose into the air"

**Or search for synonyms or similar:**

strand, tendril, lock, piece, scrap, shred, thread

- a small bunch of hay or straw used for drying or grooming a horse.
- a small thin person, typically a child.
- "a fourteen-year-old wisp of a girl"

### **Day 3:**

**Adrienne Rich in this contemporary ghazal uses the image of water of which she identifies herself:**

The **dew** is beaded like mercury on the coarsened grass,  
the web of the spider is heavy as if with **sweat**.

An Ashanti woman tilts the flattened **basin** on her head  
to let the **water** slide downward: I am the woman and that **water**.

Rich uses the quality or attribute of dissonance or disassociation but still **unifies** the couplets with the connections between water images (dew, water, sweat, basin) from from Adrienne Rich's *Ghazals and the Persian Poetic Tradition: A Study of Ambiguity and the Quest for a Common Language*.

### **Culminating Class Activity and Task, Reflection:**

1 Write a ghazal with four to six couplets, using the traditional model or a more modern one. (10-15 mins.)

2 Trade your poem with a partner in the class whom has longer hair than you or bigger feet than you. (i.e., someone you haven't worked with before) (2 mins.)

3 Give your partner one thorn (improvement criticism) and one rose (praise) comment. (5 mins. Be thoughtful and specific)

4 Have fun and add pictures to illustrate your ghazal (10 mins.) Hang in the carousel gallery.

Peruse the other students' ghazals. Put a post-it comment with a plus and a minus idea about the poem. (8 mins.)

5 In the class discussion board, explain two things you learned about the ghazal form and this class. (5 mins.)

**Success criteria (rubric):**

\_\_\_\_\_ I have 8 to 14 lines (or four to six couplets) modeled after other ghazals.

\_\_\_\_\_ I traded my ghazal for a partner's (with longer hair or bigger feet than me).

\_\_\_\_\_ I commented on the partner's poem with a thorn and a praise response.

\_\_\_\_\_ I added a picture to illustrate my ghazal.

\_\_\_\_\_ I displayed my ghazal in the class gallery.

\_\_\_\_\_ I added two specific learning experiences about the ghazal that I understand now better than when I began this lesson.

\_\_\_\_\_ original ghazal = 20 points

\_\_\_\_\_ five criteria x five points each = 30 points

/50

**Alternative:**

Create a chain of couplets with the same word (Japanese renga style with haiku), so the teacher can first choose the **word that is repeated** until the students learn the form and then different students could decide on the repeated word for the repeating couplets.

**Further Sources:**

James R. Newell. "The Poetry of Hafiz of Shiraz"

<https://www.thesongsofhafiz.com/hafizpoetry.htm> (accessed July 15, 2023)

Gray, Elizabeth. *The Green Sea of Heaven*. Ashland, Oregon: White Cloud Press: 1995. (accessed July 17, 2023)