

Please address the following prompts in a Word or PDF document. Submit your completed materials (your five prompt responses plus your writing sample referenced in the fourth bullet point) to Director Dr. Joy Ladin at joyladin@gmail.com and Coordinator Gina Grimaldi at GinaMGrimaldi@gmail.com.

- **Tutoring in the Beren Writing Center involves active listening, when a tutor listens to her client and reflects back to the client her understanding of what the client has said. Describe a situation in which you've practiced active listening.**
- **Think about how it felt to be tutored during a past Beren Writing Center session. What do you remember? What was productive about your session? What do you wish happened that didn't happen? Based on your experience, what do you think is the most important quality in a writing tutor?**
- **Describe the process that you go through when you revise an academic essay. What are the questions you ask yourself? What are the kinds of things you find yourself working on as you move from one draft to another?**
- **Submit an example of your own academic writing, along with a statement of what you would want to revise.**
- **Respond to the below Sample Student Essay, considering the following: based on what you see in the draft, describe the stage that the writer is at in her process (i.e., is she brainstorming or pre-writing? Is this a final draft? Something in between?) What is something this writer has done well? What are the 2 most important things to work on in this paper and why? How would you go about talking about these issues with a student?**

Sample Student Essay

Dickinson, Frost: Creating America

America was established as a democratic nation in the late eighteenth century long before both Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost were even born. Yet, the idea of a democracy was new, and it was a term that required and continues to require further exploration. What is an individual? What is a democracy? What, in fact, is America,

which seems to allow for both to exist? Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost helped create America by writing poetry that depicts this struggle of an individual living in a democracy. Dickinson's poem, "The Brain" and Frost's poem, "Neither Out Far nor In Deep" tend to the struggle that both poets found in their observations of Americans.

Dickinson writes, "The Brain is wider than the Sky...The Brain is deeper than the sea...The Brain is just the Weight of God." To which brain does Dickinson refer? Perhaps, "The Brain" belongs to the "you" that Dickinson addresses in the poem. "With ease- and you- beside." However, why would Dickinson universalize the brain? Why would she not have written "Your Brain?" The poem is actually written in command form. "Put them side for side" (of the brain and the sky), "hold them blue to blue" (of the brain and the sea), and "heft them pound for pound" (of the brain and God.) The commands make the "you" more prominent, as if speaker is instructing the "you" to take action. And still the question exists. Why would Dickinson universalize "The brain?" If the brain does belong to the "you" in the poem, then Dickinson is really universalizing the "you." The pronoun, 'you' can either be singular or plural. In "The Brain" the "you" must be a plural you, referring to more than one person or maybe even a large group of people. (Dickinson is playing with language very interestingly. She is universalizing the word 'brain' by preceding it with the word "The." However, she writes "Brain" in singular form, which makes it seem as if there is just one brain. And, though she uses the word "you," she does not personalize the brain. Yet, the poem is written in command form, and so it is clear that the "you" must be the owner or owners of the brain.) Of course, it seems as if Dickinson is not referring to a literal brain, as she compares it to the sky and the sea (which would make for a not-so-pretty mental image, if she were

referring to a literal brain.) And so, perhaps Dickinson is referring to the human *mind*, or intellectual capacity. For, she states that “[the brain] will absorb [the sea] as sponges buckets do.” The imagery of absorption of water by the brain seems to imply an absorption of knowledge. So, why does Dickinson use the scientific word, “brain?” Perhaps she is suggesting that the society that she sees, which must be American society, are eager to learn information, yet humans are constrained to the biology that they are created with. Perhaps, Americans, living in a democracy, would like to be the individual that a democracy would allow for. Or, perhaps they would like to exercise the freedoms that they feel are given to them in their constitution. But maybe, as Dickinson is suggesting, it is purely impossible to exercise the greatest freedom, which is the freedom of individualized thought. For all humans, including Americans can only think as freely, or as much, as “The Brain” will allow them to.

Frost, like Dickinson, directs an ambiguous audience in the poem, “Neither Out Far nor In Deep.” He writes, “The People along the sand...” Who are “The people?” It would seem the most sensible to assume that Frost is addressing Americans, just because those are the people that he observes. Maybe, the reason that he addresses Americans as “The people,” is because he is conveying the fact the Americans belong to a group. He, like Dickinson, is addressing a plural audience, not an individual. He is clumping Americans together into group, as opposed to addressing the individual American. Frost continues, “All turn and look one way/ They turn their back on the land/ They look at the sea all day.” The speaker is implying that “The people” are doing something wrong by “turning their back on the land.” Because the words “land” and “sea” do not have any positive or negative connotations, it is plausible to assume that the speaker does not

believe that it is bad for “the people” to look at the sea, and that it would be better for them to look at the land. But, rather, the speaker seems to be saying that it is bad for the people to only look at the sea and ignore the land. Also, the speaker uses the word “back” as opposed to “backs,” which is strange because people is plural. Though, this could further the idea that Frost is trying to unite “the people” or Americans into a category. Frost continues, “They cannot look out far/ They cannot look in deep.” (the speaker is referring to the sea- out far into the sea, in deep into the depths of the sea) Again, the speaker seems to have a negative attitude towards “The people.” However, the word “cannot” seems to imply it is impossible for them to do otherwise, given the situation that they are in. This is similar to Dickinson’s view that it is impossible for the individual American to think beyond the constraints of “the brain.” However, the negative tone that Frost presents seems to imply that if “the people” do look at the land, they will maybe be able to “look out far [and] in deep.” That is, that perhaps of the individual American can look at a variety of things, if the individual can break away from the group that they place themselves in, they will be able to reach a higher level of thought or understanding that Dickinson seems to imply is impossible for any human to reach. Frost concludes the poem, “But when was that ever a bar/ To any watch they keep?” Again, there is the singularity of watch (it could have been written “any of the watches”) Also, the question seems to be rhetorical. For, it keeps the negative tone that exists throughout the poem. The word, “that”, is very negative. For it implies a grouping of everything in the poem that lead “the people” to not being able to “look out far” or “look in deep.”

Frost has ended the poem in a very different way than Dickinson. Dickinson ended by suggesting that the human brain may be equivocal to God, which is divine and

great. She writes, “They will differ- if they do- as syllable from sound.” “If they do” implies that it is not definite that the two will differ and if they do, it will be a very slight distinction “as syllable from sound.” Dickinson is perhaps suggesting that although humans, America, are constrained by their brains and their thoughts, it may not be all that bad, because the brain is a pretty great thing. Frost, on the other hand seems to be suggesting throughout the poem that it is the American’s fault that he and the society as a whole do not see beyond “the waster that comes ashore.” The ending is very negative and suggests that there is room for improvement, which Dickinson seems to believe is not an option.

Both Dickinson and Frost are acknowledging that it must be acknowledged that there are constraints within a democracy, namely America, before the beauty of the democracy is mentioned. Both poets relay the struggle that the individual might feel within the society. Although they differ in their opinions about why such restraints exist, they both agree that the uniting of thoughts and opinions exist in a society, whether it is a democracy or not. And so, what is America? It is not purely a democracy. It is not purely about the individual. Maybe the better question is not what is America. But, rather how does America exist? Both Dickinson and Frost acknowledge that this is a question worth pondering. And maybe attaining this dual awareness of how something is, or how it is set up, and then the beauty or the ugliness of what that thing is, allows for its creation. Dickinson and Frost are not merely describing America. They are not merely painting a realistic picture of America. But, they are creating America with their words. They are creating the democracy, the individual through their poetry.