**Lesson Plan #1:  “Dreamscape with Embryo” and The Art of Apostrophe**

Talk about the poetic device called “apostrophe,” which is defined as “an impassioned address to something abstract or inanimate, or to someone (usually absent) as if he/she were present. This technique is often used to create a powerful emotional effect, and consequently is often used in oratory. A direct address of an inanimate object, abstract qualities, or a person not living or present. A figure of speech in which an address is made to an absent or deceased person or a personified thing rhetorically.”

According to the Poetry Foundation, in his Holy Sonnet [“Death, be not proud,”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=173363) John Donne denies death’s power by directly admonishing it. Emily Dickinson addresses her absent object of passion in [“Wild nights!—Wild nights!”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=173343)Another example of apostrophe is the song “Empty Chairs at Empty Tables” from the musical *Les Misérables.* Marius sits alone in a café, remembering his friends, who died in battle earlier in the musical. He sings “Oh, my friends, my friends, forgive me / That I live and [you are](https://www.dictionary.com/e/slang/you-are/) gone.” By addressing characters who aren’t there, he’s able to show his **true feelings** without reservation (source: [Dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com/e/whats-an-apostrophe-in-literature/)). Apostrophe allows people to better express their true thoughts and feelings. This device was used more in the early 1900’s, and it’s much less common today.

Apostrophes can address abstract ideas, like love. In Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, there’s one addressed to the concept of *ingratitude*: “Ingratitude! thou marble-hearted fiend, / More hideous when thou show’st thee in a child / Than the sea-monster.”

**Brainstorm together:** What are some concepts, things, or people that someone could write to in a poem that uses apostrophe?

How does “Dreamscape with Embryo” use apostrophe? **Discuss.**  
  
**Freewrite** for 15-20 minutes and address something abstract or inanimate, a person who doesn’t yet exist, or someone you haven’t met yet. You could write to an idea, a future child, a future spouse, a future friend, or a future self, for example.

**Share for 15 min.**

After you share your piece, talk about the experience of writing it. How did it change the way you normally approach writing? What did you notice?

**Lesson Plan Idea #2**

Discuss the structure of *You Do Not Have To Be Good.*

* How is the table of contents related to the title? How does the TOC function when each section is based on the phrase “you do not have to be \_\_\_\_\_”
* Look at the two title poems, “Dreamscape with Embryo” and “You Do Not Have To Be Good.” How are they functioning together?
* Read the poem that the book draws the title from -- Mary Oliver’s *Wild Geese.* People feel strongly about Mary Oliver at times because her poetry is “accessible;” some people think that if poems are accessible, they are “too easy,” etc. Many people forget that Mary Oliver was an incredible queer woman poet whose poetry helps so many people without shutting them out of the experience of reading poems.   
    
  <http://www.phys.unm.edu/~tw/fas/yits/archive/oliver_wildgeese.html>