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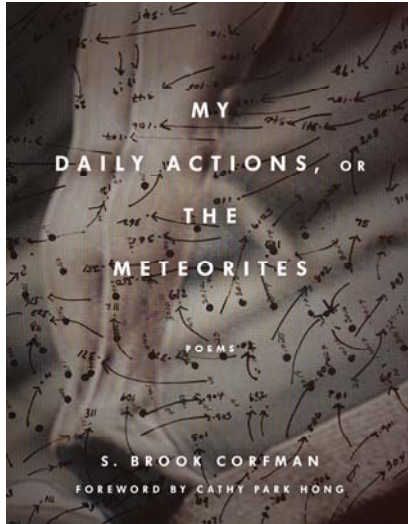
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Teaching Guide for My Daily Actions, or The Meteorites

S. Brook Corfman

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MY DAILY ACTIONS, OR THE METEORITES

by S. Brook Corfman

foreword by Cathy Park Hong

88 pages, 7 x 9

9780823289493, Paperback, \$22.00

Poets Out Loud

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TEACHING GUIDE: Discussion Questions, Prose Poem Writing Exercises, Resources Questions for Discussion

1. As a reader, how do you respond to the poems in the paragraph form in contrast (or dialogue) with the poems with more space? What is the reading experience like in each mode?
 - 1a. In a note to a different prose poem by the poet published in the Academy of American Poets' Poem-a-Day series, the poet observes: "I adore the prose poem, because it refuses immediate knowledge—the only way to learn about an individual prose poem's rhythm or structure is to enter." We could also see this as the prose poem withholding a certain kind of information from you, at first, compared to other forms. Does this change your thinking?
2. The first poem of the book ends with a rush of sensation: "Each step towards or away from the door becomes impossibly detailed." How would you characterize the book's approach to detail?
3. Many parts of the book reference the materialities of writing, whether via phone (i.e. autocorrect) or notebook. Does imagining the *way* the poems were written affect how you read them? If so, how?
4. What does the figure of the meteorite signify over the course of the book, and how does it change or challenge your thinking?
5. How and where does violence surface in this book? How and where does nonviolence appear?
6. One poem observes, "I have never read a book that mirrored my gender, and like books anyway." The idea of seeing oneself in one's media—of finding it relatable—is often a first response when we evaluate new media. What other ways do you interact with art? Is there a genre of art or writing that you appreciate despite (or perhaps because of) its seeming difference from your experience? Is there a genre you particularly appreciate because it lends itself to something in your experience? Do you engage with these works the same way?

Easter Egg Reference GIFs: bit.ly/3kfRfA4, bit.ly/2XtQBvW

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7. There are few titles in the book, but one—"Premonition"—repeats for the first and last poems of the book. How would you characterize the book's relationship to the future? Do the "Premonition" poems have a unique relationship compared to the other poems?

8. The poet indicates some of the other artists and writers whose works have influenced them, both in the note at the end of the book and sometimes directly in the poems. Look up one or more of these figures. What connections do you find? Are you surprised by what you discover? Would you have felt compelled to research these figures without being asked?



Prose Poem Writing Exercise #1: Parataxis

[Step One]

Make two lists.

List A.

Things that you saw, experienced,
or did in the past 24 hours ("real" things)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

List B.

Metaphors, images, feelings that are not "real"
from the same period (maybe still concrete!)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

[Step Two]

After making each list, take a moment to go back through and fill out any missing details. (i.e. if you wrote "I went to the grocery store," what was the particular thing that happened that has remained with you? It was hot? A struggle to get your bags into your apartment? The line was long?) Then star the three or four entries from each list that are most vivid to you.

[Step Three]

Build a poem by writing one sentence from the first starred entry in List A, then a sentence from the first starred entry in List B, and back and forth. Try just to get the frame of these 6-8 sentences onto the page in front of you without editing too much. But at the same time, if a sentence "catches" you and sparks an idea, feel free to follow it.

[Step Four]

Read your prose paragraph—what do you notice? What kind of sensory feeling do you get? How many different sentence structures appear? Now you have a frame from which you can scale up or back, or modify. If another piece from your list is calling you, add it in. Add a question or a philosophical observation. Because this prompt begins from details and senses, tie off the poem by considering the presence of pronouns & people—do you need a more grounded narrative POV at points, or does the poem build an associative momentum?



Prose Poem Writing Exercise #2: Scene

[Step One]

Choose a "scene" to write about. This might be:
your scene of writing (particularly fruitful if you have been working on a "project" or a series)
an ordinary/daily/repeated action or habit
a vivid/present experience of traveling
or something else!

[Step Two]

Choose a page or margin size other than your platform default (so not 8.5x11 on a computer, not your default notes app, fold your notebook page in half or rotate it).

[Step Three]

Think of that scene as a kind of wide, continuous shot in a film, one which lets in a lot of detail. What time of day is it? What might a viewer think is happening in the scene? (i.e. could they tell you were writing, and if so, what might they think you were writing?) Are there parts of the scene that somehow "stand out" more than others, even as both are present? Write with as few pauses as possible for a duration of your choice—this can work with as little as 5-7 minutes or, if you have chosen a particularly vivid scene, as long as half an hour. You're going to play with what you create, so try and let go of "crafting" this description in a targeted way, and instead let your language grow as you engage with the scene.

[Step Four]

When you've finished your writing, go back through it and create multiple erasures, reorderings, and re-puzzlings of your work. Try to reduce what you wrote to a single paragraph in length. You can think of this as a kind of "post-production" phase, in which you have an abundance of detail and can decide how to use it (montage, cuts, a scramble visual vocabulary.) If you wrote digitally, this might involve deleting large chunks or copy-pasting into a new space. If you wrote by hand, you can reread to star or box the language that stands out to you and then (or instead) copy out the language you're interested in onto a new sheet of paper. Try not to be too beholden to a narrative, if one appeared as you were writing—what leaps appear in the language you produced that you can bring out?



Additional Resources

Other writing by the poet:

A letterpress chapbook/artist book, *Meteorites* [bit.ly/30sOmUG]

An interview about that chapbook, before the poet knew it would become this full-length book [bit.ly/3gwPHQ1]

"Melting Muscles," a scholarly article on performance artist Cassils & heat [bit.ly/2DA783A]

The poet's first book *Luxury, Blue Lace*, chosen by Richard Siken for the Autumn House Rising Writer Prize [bit.ly/39Vt5Gx]

On the prose poem:

David Lehman, introduction to *The Great American Prose Poem*: the prose poem "works in sentences rather than lines... *Verse* and *prose* are the real antonyms."

While Baudelaire's *Paris Spleen* (1869) is considered the form's origin in a Western frame, Japanese forms like the *zuihitsu* (Shonagan, 10c) & *haibun* (Basho, 17c) far precede it

On lyric & environmentalism:

Elizabeth Willis, "Notes from and on a Landscape: Hell, Fire and Brimstone" [bit.ly/3i8j9fz]

Rob Nixon, introduction to *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*

Linda Villarosa on the legacy of redlining and long-term pollution [nyti.ms/2ESW5TR]

On trans life:

Jules Gill-Peterson's *Histories of the Transgender Child*

To Survive on This Shore: Photographs and Interviews with Trans and Gender

Nonconforming Older Adults [tosurviveonthishshore.com/interviews]

Trans* and Non-Binary Poetry: An Ever Evolving Resource List [bit.ly/2EIXYHh]

Greer Lankton's installation *It's All About ME, Not You* and artist statement [bit.ly/33Fc1D]

Janet Mock's *Redefining Realness* (memoir), Juliana Huxtable's *Mucus in My Pineal Gland* (poems)

While statistics about the extent and kinds of violence against trans people remain unreliable, it is clear from those we do have and from trans people's reported experience that transphobia manifests as an extreme amount of physical and emotional violence and harassment, including housing and employment discrimination, street harassment, intimate partner violence, and assault. It is also clear that deadly violence against trans people is overwhelmingly used against Black trans women [bit.ly/2ESXrhp]. Some resources to begin teaching this intersection:

Sara Ahmed's work on complaint, incl. The Figure of the Abuser [bit.ly/3i9LORz]

Cameron Awkward-Rich on Trans Day of Remembrance & the form of elegy

[bit.ly/39WSzTI] or on Tony McDade and "Black Trans Lives Matter" [bit.ly/33riguw]

The documentary *Disclosure* (Netflix), on the history and effects of trans representation in film; a three-minute clip (starts at 1:00:14) on the practice of casting cis men to play trans women can anchor a conversation about the material effects of representation

C. Riley Snorton's *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*: "The recurrent practice of enumerating the dead in mass and social media seems to conform to the logics of accumulation that structure racial capitalism, in which the quantified abstraction of



black and trans deaths reveals the calculated value of black and trans lives through states' grammars of deficit and debt." (viii)

