

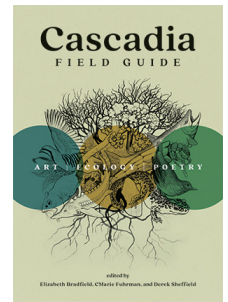
Cascadia Field Guide: Art, Ecology, Poetry

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“How We Look”: Imagine yourself into another being A poetry-writing prompt

Read Derek Sheffield’s poem, “How We Look,” on pages 267 and 268. Read it aloud all the way through to give yourself a sense for the poem as a whole and to better hear its word music.

Then read it again and notice that over the course of the poem the speaker imagines how he is perceived by another being. Another way to think of it is that in the last four lines, the point of view shifts from the Human speaker and settles into Marmot.

This is **imaginative empathy**.

We want you to write a poem that makes the same move, that begins from the **point of view** of a Human speaker and then at some point shifts to the point of view of another being (e.g., Salal, Hera Buckmoth, White Sturgeon, American Dipper).

It’s not necessary, but might be helpful to be in the presence of the being from whose perspective you are writing.

Make sure to show this being by using **imagery**, language that appeals to the senses, the way Sheffield does in the first two stanzas of “How We Look.”

After the point of view shifts, you’ll want to make sure to show the Human speaker as well, as we see in the last four lines of the poem.

In addition to using imagery to show the characters in your poem, you might consider using **figurative language** as Sheffield does in the simile that compares the Human hikers to “mules silently spaced / in the falling snow.”