

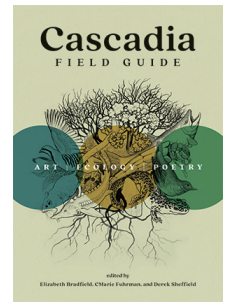
Cascadia Field Guide: Art, Ecology, Poetry

Elizabeth Bradfield, CMarie Fuhrman, Derek Sheffield

ISBN: 978-1-68051-622-7

[Mountaineers Books](#), 2023

www.cascadiaguide.com



Listening to the Language of Wonder For High School & College Students

A close-reading exercise that teaches students to see why a particular passage of writing might be moving to them.

1. After reading the Shrub-Steppe Community in *Cascadia Field Guide*, pgs. 233 - 253, identify at least three passages of ecology from the being stories that touch your sense of wonder (a passage can be anything from a phrase to a paragraph). As you quote those passages here, include their page numbers and explain briefly what draws you to them. The being stories are the passages of ecological writing that come before the poem. In Shrub-Steppe, the first being story is about Coyote and begins "The variousness of Coyote lives everywhere in this being."
2. Choose your favorite poem from the Shrub-Steppe Community and explain what it is you like about it and how it is working. As you do so, identify one passage of showing (language that speaks to the senses), at least two strong verbs (not "moved" but "strolled," "sauntered," "scrambled," "flew"), and one passage that seems especially surprising to you. Please quote passages from the poem to support your responses. Other terms you might employ include word music (alliteration, assonance, rhyme), onomatopoeia, imagery, line break, metaphor, simile, paradox.
3. Identify any questions this Community elicits in you.

NOTE: any community can be used for this exercise, but the examples below are drawn from the

Example Student Response by Aislyn Ross

1. The first passage that struck me was on page 238, where the text goes into detail about the mating dance of the Greater Sage-Grouse. The passage brings me into this magical part of our natural world, and it made me really appreciate the beauty of this being. They perform something so unique and so separate from anything human, something completely their own.

On page 244, the text reads, "After they emerge from their pupal state, they don't need leaves or anything else to eat. In their adult form, winging over the Shrub-steppe, they do not even have mouthparts. With an average life span of about two weeks, they are able to live off food stored in their bodies from when they were wriggling caterpillars." To me, this is a testament to how diverse life on Earth really is. I can't even fathom the existence of a creature that naturally can't eat, and simply

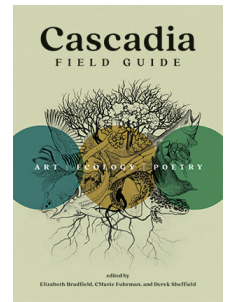
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dies when it runs out of nutrients. It makes me wonder how evolution brought about this moth.

Another passage that stood out to me reads "When temperatures plunge below zero, Spotted Frog survives only because the high amount of sugar in their blood acts as a natural antifreeze. Amazingly, even if their breathing and heart stop, they will rejuvenate when the temperatures warm (pg 246-247)." Life finds a way-- a cliché, I know, but it is quite fitting here. How does a creature live in temperatures it isn't supposed to operate in? It doesn't-- instead, this frog just powers back on when the temperature is nice again. Biology is crazy!

2. There were so many wonderful little poems in this section, but one of my favorites has to be "Moth" by Ever Jones. This poem felt magical and emotional. But most of all, it felt human--ironic considering it is a poem titled "Moth" featured in an Ecology book. It was less about a moth itself, and more of an exploration of something much larger: life. This poem reminded me that we really don't know anything about our existences on Earth. It also reminded me of the importance of simply just taking in the natural world. One thing I feel like this poem does well is drawing the reader in and taking them into this world that the poet created. The poet utilizes very strong verbs, such as "chafing", "weaving", and "collides". The poem also contains beautiful imagery- "The moth collides endlessly with the moon." My favorite passage is from the very end of the poem, where it reads "When the earth is no longer ours, the letters / will slide open easily as a palm cupping water / or a moth revolving around a porch light pouring / fine dust into a thirsty mouth that calls everything loss." I don't know what this means, but it is breathtaking, and ends off the poem perfectly. It is also a good example of showing--now I can't say WHAT is being shown, but for certain it is not being told directly to my face.

3. What are the abiotic elements of the Shrub-Steppe that lead to such life developing there? What are some of the beings that inhabited the Shrub-Steppe have gone extinct, and why?

Example Student Response by J Lopez Ramirez

1. The first passage that grabbed my attention was "[Coyotes] now inhabit most communities of Cascadia. Highly adaptable, they have thrived in areas significantly altered by Human development. Still, you may not see them. Coyote has a natural wariness of Humans and is genius at living invisibly right under our noses" (236). This interesting passage reminded me of how we might always forget about coyotes because of the similarity between them and wolves, and

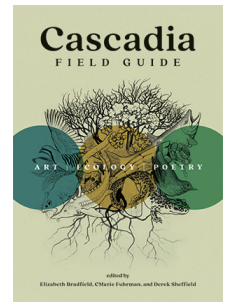
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wolves being always in the spotlight. The being story in general really made me realized about the importance of coyotes, their great abilities, and how intelligent they are.

2. The second passage that I liked was the following, "In spring, [Greater Sage-Grouse] gather to strut, dance, and breed in leks, or dancing grounds, on clearings like grassy swales or ridgetops. Some say disco will never die, and this being seems to agree" (238). I love how the Greater Sage-Grouse are described, and because of my love for dancing now I want to see a Greater Sage- Grouse performance in-person.
3. The third passage that surprised me was "When temperatures plunge below zero, Spotted frog survives only because the high amount of sugar in their blood acts as a natural antifreeze. Amazingly, even if their breathing and heart stop, they will rejuvenate when the temperatures warm"(246). This fact about Spotted frogs seems that was taken from a movie or something. Wow! Spotted frogs have the possibility to return to live? that sounds like a superpower. A movie like spider-man about Spotted frogs came to my mind after reading that being story.

Poem Comment

A poem that really got me thinking is "Cryptobiotic Sonnet". It is very enjoyable and surprising to read because it got me off-guard and make me feel clueless about what to expect. A very surprising passage from this poem is one of the first sentences; where the author talks about the taste of her husband's ashes and "swallowing them didn't bring him back" in this second sentence, the author uses surprising imagery, she made me want to read more and really understand why she did that, and while I analyzing the poem, I realized--or my interpretation of the poem is-- that this poem is nostalgic, melancholic, and wondrous toward the past while also making a connection with the Cryptobiotic soil.

We are told in the being story that the Cryptobiotic soil is ancient and fragile, and in a way this poem gives us that. There is a person very fragile for the loss of her beloved one, and for what I understand with "He and I were pregnant then, but I bled the unknowable into soil", she uses a strong verb here '*bled*', which makes me think she also lost a baby. After that sentence, the author makes a line break, and also makes a turn to two different sentences "There were no music." followed by "I often walk the desert looking for proof of my ancestors."

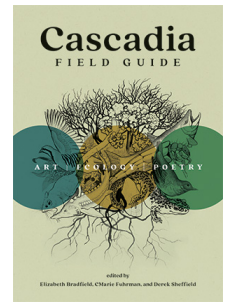
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CMarie Fuhrman, Cryptobiotic Sonnet

The ashes of my beloved tasted like nothing
and swallowing them didn't bring him back
They still feel warm, my mother said, as we fed him to the river
He and I were pregnant then, but I bled the unknowable into soil.
There were no songs. I often walk the desert looking
for proof of my ancestors. I once found a Clovis point
unbroken by years, cattle hooves, or floods, an icicle
with an amber heart and tip dipped in blood.
I felt only its primeval edge when I pressed it to my tongue.
I buried the artifice in soil whose name means hidden life.
An ancient skin which binds together the dead
in layers to hold new lives. I'll be dead
before the scar I made heals by the beautiful work of rot,
which I carry now beneath my fingernails like ten black and waning moons.

- Showing
- Verbs
- Surprising

GLOSSARY:

Artifice-clever or cunning devices or expedients, especially as used to trick or deceive others.

Clovis point-



Primeval-of or resembling the earliest ages in the history of the world.

Personally, I do not understand the meaning behind "There were no music" maybe the author is using allusion here and I do not recognize it, but also I think she tells us this because when sadness is around people, they tend to be overthink and not hear outside sound.

A extremely surprising and beautiful passage from this poem is "An ancient skin which binds together the dead in layers to hold new lives." This passage made me wonder what the author was referring for a long time, the author also uses a strong verb here 'binds', and after a few hours I landed in the theory that she is obviously referring as the soil being an ancient skin, which I do not know if this example could be considered personification; nonetheless, because of the author talking

about dead in the beginning, and considering these facts: most people that pass away are buried into the soil in real life, and dead bodies can give nutrients to soil, I believe she is talking about new plants, trees, or bushes that can grow because of new nutrients. The author tells us that rot is a beautiful thing which is a very interesting contrast because most people might find rotting as something disgusting, but this next passage "before the scar I made heals by the beautiful work of rot" feeds my theory that the author is talking about the bodies giving nutrients to soil; however, my thinking can be also be wrong, though, because the author starts with the spreading of someone's ashes in the river, that means that his body will not give nutrients to soil, and then the author talks about what I just mentioned, which is kind of ironic or may be considered a paradox.

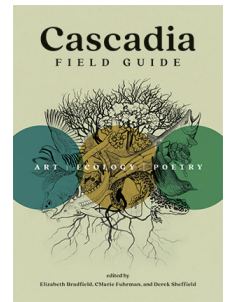
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The last sentence, which is a simile is just very pleasing and shows us that she has been through the Cryptobiotic soil, "which I carry beneath my fingernails like ten black and waning moons" because when our fingernails are dirty, they do look like 10 waning moons, and this passage showed me that dirty fingernails can be magical.

Lesson plan by Derek Sheffield, tried and tested in his Wenatchee Valley College classroom.