The Golden Shovel Anthology at NCTE  November 2014

Thanks for coming to our presentation.

See the below for full details about the Golden Shovel Anthology.

Working Title: The Golden Shovel Anthology
Honoring the Continuing Legacy and Influence of Gwendolyn Brooks

The anthology will aim to reach/inspire/educate students and fledgling writers. Like Afaa Michael Weaver’s BOP form, “The Golden Shovel” is a form that encourages one to borrow in order to create. It will place student writing alongside established writers, an honor which will motivate students to continue forward with their craft. It will celebrate Ms. Gwendolyn Brooks’ continued influence, new work by established poets and a generation of new and emerging writers and serve as an educational tool, as well as have literary value as we tackle a new form to expand the canon.

-Peter Kahn, Ravi Shankar and Patricia Smith, editors

The “Golden Shovel” form/rules:

-For the purposes of this anthology, you should borrow a “striking line” from a poem written by Gwendolyn Brooks and create your own poem with the borrowed line laid out vertically on the right margin of the poem you create.
-Recommended length—six to 24 words (i.e., six to 24 lines in the poem one creates).
-The theme or topic of the created poem may or may not be linked to the borrowed poem/line.
-It is recommended to choose a striking line that contains some unusual word choices.
-An additional challenge would be to make the line lengths consistent.

-Please see the student examples and Terrance Hayes’ “The Golden Shovel” from Lighthead below to get a better understanding of the form.
-Here’s a nice link to find poems by Ms. Brooks: (http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/gwendolyn-brooks )

Student Samples:

“Cure and Curry”
By Natalie Richardson, Oak Park/River Forest High School junior
after Gwendolyn Brooks (From The Blackstone Rangers: “Bop. They cancel, cure, and curry”)

My father is a nod, a jilt. Bop.
Insists that 90s music is the jams they
will drop when I have children. Cancel
the station with rap-crap, the cure
for stiff-skin is the blunk of funk and
lilt of lips that pickles like sound-curry.

Yazoo City
By Raven Hogue

After Gwendolyn Brooks’s, A Bronzeville Mother Loiters in Mississippi. Meanwhile,
a Mississippi Mother Burns Bacon
(“then a sickness heaved within”)

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Water bugs, beryl and brisk, were made of vinyl then.
Scratched the gospel in ochre under a claw-footed tub. Great-grandfather’s blood wilted in sickness.
He sucked his breath into a fist. The iron stove heaved as they amputated his leg. Mercer churned within.

The Golden Shovel
By Terrance Hayes
after Gwendolyn Brooks
I. 1981

When I am so small Da’s sock covers my arm, we cruise at twilight until we find the place the real

men lean, bloodshot and translucent with cool.
His smile is a gold-plated incantation as we

drift by women on bar stools, with nothing left in them but approachlessness. This is a school

I do not know yet. But the cue sticks mean we are rubbed by light, smooth as wood, the lurk

of smoke thinned to song. We won’t be out late.
Standing in the middle of the street last night we

watched the moonlit lawns and a neighbor strike his son in the face. A shadow knocked straight

Da promised to leave me everything: the shovel we used to bury the dog, the words he loved to sing

his rusted pistol, his squeaky Bible, his sin.
The boy’s sneakers were light on the road. We

watched him run to us looking wounded and thin.
He’d been caught lying or drinking his father’s gin.

He’d been defending his ma, trying to be a man. We stood in the road, and my father talked about jazz,

how sometimes a tune is born of outrage. By June the boy would be locked upstate. That night we

got down on our knees in my room. If I should die before I wake. Da said to me, it will be too soon.
II. 1991

Into the tented city we go, weakened by the fire’s ethereal afterglow. Born lost and cooler than heartache. What we know is what we know. The left hand severed and school-
ed by cleverness. A plate of weekdays cooking. The hour lurk-
ing in the afterglow. A late-night chant. Into the city we go. Close your eyes and strike a blow. Light can be straight-
ened by its shadow. What we break is what we hold. A sing-
ular blue note. An outcry singed exiting the throat. We push until we thin, thinking we won’t creep back again.

While God licks his kin, we sing until our blood is jazz,

we swing from June to June. We sweat to keep from we-
eping. Groomed on a die-
t of hunger, we end too soon.