

I AM: Reflection for *Fronteriza* Poetry Chapbook

I am not a poet. The reason I specify this is because the MFA in Creative Writing program I completed asked us to concentrate on a genre for our thesis, and I chose to be a fiction writer. I am a fiction writer that occasionally attempts to write a poem.

However, we were encouraged to take courses in other genres as well to sharpen our writing skills. So, I took poetry classes and creative non-fiction classes and playwriting classes and translation classes. And, yes, I agree they all had something to offer my fiction writing.

We were asked to bring in a piece of writing for our first day of the Southern Nevada Writing Project (SNWP) Summer Institute+, and I decided to put together a small poetry chapbook because I thought it would give me the opportunity to explore this as a possible project with students in the future.

Several things influenced what poems I chose to put into what I initially thought of as my small collection.

1. Sharing my Background with Students

I've tentatively been given the future opportunity to work with Refugee students within the Clark County School District. And, coming into the SNWP SI+, I knew that I wanted to prepare for this. Some of the literature I've read so far on the topic indicates that it is paramount that a teacher know the background of the students she is working with. And, although this is true for all students, it is especially true for Refugee students. So, the chapbook I created is an initial attempt to potentially share some of my background with future high school Refugee students.

2. Inspiration from a classmate

During our SNWP SI+ orientation session, one of my classmates wrote a definition poem, and I thought it was so clever. I wanted to write a definition poem as well. As I mentioned before, I don't consider myself a poet, but I have found that I enjoy writing form poetry. I've found that a strict structure pushes me to be more creative.

3. The Word "Fronteriza"

As a Chicana, I'm continuously exploring my identity, and after hearing Benjamin Arile Saenz self-identify as a Fronterizo (Border resident), I realized that I too could identify as a Fronteriza. I love the way this word looks and sounds, but I also love all the meaning it encompasses. I wanted to explore some of these meanings within a definition poem.

After making these decision, I then chose some of the poetry I have written in the past that could possibly be part of a collection that could 1) introduce myself to future students, and 2) could possibly get published.

The poems in this collection are about my grandparents, my parents, my husband, cultural events and issues. I've decided that I want to write more poems and grow the collection into a proper chapbook. The last couple of years I've had the intention to interview my parents about their

lives and then do something with the stories they tell. I think that I have a more purposeful intention after dabbling in poetry writing and putting together a collection.

Sharing my poems with my classmates proved to be a gratifying experience. I think, for the first time, I shared my writing with individuals outside of my cultural group. I felt excited and honored to be able to give my classmates a glimpse, not only into my own life, but a glimpse into a part of my culture.