

Soul and Role (March, 2010)

Introductions:

- Name, role, and how is your winter break going?

Touchstones:

- Reminder of our norms for creating a container for our time together

Today's Theme:

- Current condition of your work world; soul and role
- Poetry as the truth told at a slant, storytelling of one's selfhood
- “Rebus”; using loss and dormancy as a creative force for change?
- The clearing quality of winter, refining the essence of our inner-teacher, leader, or worker

Reflective Dialogue:

- What word image or phrase captured your attention around the theme of using loss as a creative force?
- Journal prompts that grabbed the attention of your heart?
- Other noticings

General offerings for the group:

Closing:

- What would you like to carry from this gathering back to your work world at DU?

*Soul and Role Touchstones

- Bring 100% of self
- There is always invitation, always opportunity; never invasion
 - No fixing, no saving, and no advising
 - Openness to learning from others
 - Speak for yourself; tell your story
 - Listen to the silence
 - Confidentiality

Rebus

You work with what you are given,
the red clay of grief,
the black clay of stubbornness going on after.
Clay that tastes of care or carelessness,
clay that smells of the bottoms of rivers or dust.

Each thought is a life you have lived or failed to live,
each word is a dish you have eaten or left on the table.
There are honeys so bitter
no one would willingly choose to take them.
The clay takes them: honey of weariness, honey of vanity,
honey of cruelty, fear.

This rebus-slip and stubbornness,
bottom of river, my own consumed life -
when will I learn to read it
plainly, slowly, uncolored by hope or desire?
Not to understand it, only to see.

As water given sugar sweetens, given salt grows salty,
we become our choices.
Each yes, each no continues,
this one a ladder, that one an anvil or cup.

The ladder leans into its darkness.
The anvil leans into its silence.
The cup sits empty.

How can I enter this question the clay has asked?

~ Jane Hirshfield ~

(Given Sugar, Given Salt)

(Rebus -- "A representation of words in the form of pictures or symbols, often presented as a puzzle.")

Questions for reflection:

-What are/were you given (the unexpected elements of your personal/professional winter) that you didn't ask for?

-Does the poem suggest a template or structure for turning the harshness of winter into the creative potential of winter?

-What metaphor (ladder, anvil, cup...) best captures your understanding of winter in your personal/professional life? What captures your heart's attention around that metaphor?

-What is the shape of the vessel/container that best holds the challenges and gifts of winter for you?

-What do the markings at the river bottom of your grief, loss, or despair, say to you?

-What is the question the clay of your winter is asking you? Maybe write a dialogue with the clay as one character and your soul/heart as the other main character.