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Recommended Classes: Creative Writing, Poetry, Experimental Literature, Queer Literature, Contemporary Literature, Gender & Sexuality in Literature, Feminist Literature

Keywords: Queer, Gay, Masculinity, Persona, Experimental, Poetic Form, Visual Poetry, Lyric Poetry, Language, Youth, Speculative Poetry, Excess, Tarot, Apocrypha, Religion, Divinity, World-building, Eroticism, Esoterism, Occult, Camp, Queer Relationships, Desire, Love, IPV, Violence

Discussion Questions

1) What does the title phrase ("Mask for Mask") mean and how is it in conversation with the poems inside the book? Are there any moments in the book that masks appear? Are they literal masks or more figurative ones?

2) How is the speaker (or speakers) of these poems performing gender and/or sexuality?

3) How is language (diction, vocabularies, lexicons) being used in these poems?

4) How are formal elements, visual elements, and/or white space being used in these poems?

5) How would you describe the organization of the poems from the beginning to the end in *Mask for Mask*? There are three sections: what do you think unites the poems in each section?

6) What poetic lineage might *Mask for Mask* descend from? Does it embrace its ancestors or reject them? Select a M4M poem to compare/contrast with another writer's you feel is similar.

7) Certain terms appear more than once. Who are the perimeter boys? What is the Sweet Teen Room? Who is Middle V? In what ways are these entities part of a world-building process?

Possible Assignments/Activities for Teachers

1) Ask your students to define "persona" and research the history of the "persona poem." Ask them to look into other examples of persona poetry and compare/contrast them with the voices found in *Mask for* Mask. Allow this question to open up into a bigger discussion about the difference between 'author' and 'speaker' (and to consider how this may differ in poetry vs. prose), as well as comparing/contrasting terms like 'voice,' 'character', 'narrator,' etc.

2) Talk to your students about the nonlinguistic and typographical elements present in poetry. You could even ask them to research visual poetry or concrete poetry and find an example to share. Ask your students to consider how the poems in *Mask for Mask* use form, white space, typographical elements like emoji, and how these elements change the reading experience. You could even ask them to select one of the poems and mimic its form as a writing assignment.

3) Discuss "diction" and "register" with your students and ask them to locate the different levels or scales the poems in *Mask for Mask* use. You may even ask them to draw a chart for more "low"/"informal" diction and ask them to chart colloquial terms, then have them create a section for "high"/"formal" speech. After the students have separated linguistic elements, ask them to dig deeper into how language is being used and why certain vocabulary words or lexicons were accessed over others. Try to open up the conversation into topics of what it means to communicate or miscommunicate, or what it means to code switch. As a possible assignment, students could A) either use a dictionary to select a wide range of registers to use as a creative writing assignment word bank or B) select 5-10 words from *Mask for Mask* to place into a word bank and write their own original poem using those words.