

LESSON 10

HOW TO TALK ABOUT SELF-EXPRESSION

A few weeks later, things still weren't much better with my dad. He was upset because he thought I deliberately threw the interview. I told him that wasn't true, but yeah, maybe I wasn't so hot about the idea of college, and maybe the interviewer picked up on that. That threw him into another fit, and he started going on and on about what happens to kids who don't go to college, how I'd never have a future, yadda yadda yadda. Mike and Wayne got a big kick out of it all, because normally they're the ones getting yelled at by Dad. I just tried to hang out at Janet's house as much as possible.

Tonight, though, I was feeling better. The last Friday of the month is always open mic night at the Tin Cup, and I was ready with two new poems. The first one was something I wrote for Ms. Lieberman's class. It was all about youth and confusion and indecision, and I called it "My Hamlet Days." (Okay, so, maybe it's a little conceited to compare you "elf to the greatest character in English literature . . . but I'm a poet. So sue me.) The second was all about being in love with someone gorgeous and unattainable. I didn't put in enough details to identify Rex, but I couldn't resist adding a line about the way his hands looked holding a guitar.

All the regulars were reading that night, and there was a great community vibe. I loved how different all the writers were at the Cup. There were people who rapped, people who wrote long political rants, and that night there was even one guy who improvised his poetry over a jazz quartet. During a QJ break I was talking to Maryam, one of the rappers, when I saw a familiar face. Rex was wearing a black zip-up hoodie and had his hands jammed in his pockets. He looked like he was waiting for something I looked over my shoulder, expecting to see one of his band mates. When I turned around again, he gave me a crooked little smile.

Maryam had discreetly disappeared at that point. I sputtered for a bit, looking for support, but before I knew it Rex was walking over to me and there was nothing I could do. "Hey," he said.

"Hey," I managed to say back. Okay, not a bad start. I looked down: no boobs in sight.

"Tom the DJ mentioned you read here sometimes." Tom saw me and flashed the thumbs-up sign from his turntables. I blushed like a tomato and tried to cover it up by coughing really loudly.

"Yeah, isn't that funny? I mean, you play music here, I read poetry here...." The sentence trailed off, letting my total lack of coolness hang in the air for all to witness. He laughed anyway.

"You should call me sometime," he said suddenly. He pulled out a card with the Giants' logo on the back and scribbled a number. "Maybe we could, I don't know, play music and read poetry," he smiled. "Call me next week, okay?" And just like it was nothing, he walked off, leaving me holding the card and trying to not to squeal like a twelve-year-old.

WORDS ABOUT READING POETRY

The first poet read a really **florid** poem about her boyfriend that made me want to retch. Bet you he was pretty embarrassed too.

florid (*adj*): flowery, overdone

I hate poets who give really **histrionic** performances, and flail all over the place while shouting and throwing things.

histrionic (*adj*): overdramatic

RELATED WORDS

The following words can be used to describe people's speaking voices. Charles is a really **emphatic** reader, he takes his time and gives very commanding performances.

emphatic (*adj*): forcible, definite

He has very crisp **enunciation** – you can always understand exactly what he's saying.

enunciation (*n*): the clarity of one's pronunciation

His **stentorian** voice makes him sound way older than he really is.

stentorian (*adj*): loud and powerful in tone

Mara, on the other hands, is a totally **phlegmatic** performer. She always sounds like she's reading her grocery list.

phlegmatic (*adj*): without emotion

That's better than Nitin, though, who tends to read his poems with this completely **affected** British accent. For God's sake, the boy was born in St. Louis!

affected (*adj*): behaving unnaturally with the intention of impressing other people

Sometimes his poetry gets really **sententious** and preachy, but you can forgive him because it's really good.

sententious (*adj*): overly moralizing

I like the open mic night at the Tin Cup because you can hear so many different **genres** of poetry in one evening- from dirty political limericks to classical sonnets to completely free-form poems.

genre (*n*): category of literature or art (for example: crime novels, romances, and fantasies are all various genres of fiction,)

Young-soon's poems are incredibly complex and **nuanced** – you can hear them over and over again and learn something new each time,

nuanced (*adj*): filled with slight, understated shades of meaning

I want to get a copy of her poems, so I can read them and see what **subtle** things I missed.

subtle (*adj*): not obvious; understated

Watching her perform her poems is really **revelatory**, because you'd never think such amazing stuff would come from such a quiet girl.

revelatory (*adj*): expressing something not known before
Lots of people try to **emulate** her style, but they can never match her.
emulate (*v*): to mimic
I find reading my poetry to be **therapeutic**. It helps me express myself in a safe way.

therapeutic (*adj*): an activity that is healing
Marlon, the MC, is a total **raconteur**. He's a stand-up comedian the other days of the week, and it totally shows.

raconteur (*n*): an entertaining storyteller
At the end of the year I want to put together an **anthology** of Tin Cup writers, to raise money for the event.

anthology (*n*): collection of literary works by various authors

WORDS ABOUT CRUSHES AND ACCIDENTAL ENCOUNTERS

Most of my crushes have been short-lived, **evanescent** things.
evanescent (*adj*): fleeting
Those crushes are usually **illusory** and based on nothing, but this one is for real. I think.
illusory (*adj*): like an illusion; not real
I did my best to seem totally **nonchalant** when Rex came up to talk to me, but I don't think I did a very good job of it.
nonchalant (*adj*): breezy, unconcerned

RELATED WORDS

When he complimented my poetry, I tried to be **flippant** about it – as if it were just a hobby, and not my passion in life.
flippant (*adj*): inappropriately casual
I didn't even have to **insinuate** that we should go on a date – he totally beat me to it.
insinuate (*v*): to get into a position gradually; to suggest
I kind of liked not having to **languish** and wait around, wondering if he was going to ask me out.
languish (*v*): to suffer as a result of being denied something
Rex didn't even pretend it was just a **fortuitous** meeting, He actually admitted he came to see me!
fortuitous (*adj*): happening by chance, lucky
I knew something good was going to happen today-the twelfth of the month is always an **auspicious** time for me,
auspicious (*adj*): marked by lucky signs
All in all, it seemed like a **propitious** meeting, even though I still feel like a moron in front of him.
propitious (*adj*): favorable
I'll admit, I had been **furtively** looking around all night to see if he would show up.
furtively (*adv*): done in a way that attempts to escape notice
When he finally did come talk to me, I almost spilled my Snapple all over his shoes. Miss **Maladroit**, as always.

maladroit (*adj*): clumsy, inept
I also seemed to have lost all ability to talk like a normal person, He complimented me, and all I could do was mumble **inarticulate** nonsense.
inarticulate (*adj*): unable to speak clearly or choose the right words
He very **tactfully** ignored my stupid remarks.
tactfully (*adv*): not rudely; done with concern for other people's feelings
I admit it-I have a **penchant** for mumbly indie rockers.
penchant (*n*): a strong tendency toward or liking for
For a moment onstage, I got lost in a **reverie**, thinking about me, Rex, and the cute pierced children we would have.
reverie (*n*): getting lost in happy thoughts about something
I was in a slate of **oblivion** for a second before realizing I was still onstage.
oblivion (*n*): a complete state of nothingness or forgetting
Normally I'm pretty **circumspect** about boys. Who can trust a seventeen-year-old boy, after all?
circumspect (*adj*): unwilling to act without weighing all the consequences
Janet keeps warning me to be **wary**, but not too **wary**.
wary (*adj*): cautious
I'm trying not to do anything **impetuous**.
Impetuous (*adj*): hasty, done without thought
But then, **spontaneity** is what being a teenager is supposed to be all about, right?
spontaneity (*n*): actions done on the spur of the moment
I keep getting lost in **whimsical** thoughts about Rex and me going out.
whimsical (*adj*): fanciful, imaginative
But then I have to be **pragmatic**. I don't want to count my chickens before they're hatched!
pragmatic (*adj*): practical, concerned with results
I think about Rex **relentlessly**.
relentlessly (*adv*): continuously, without lessening or slacking
He practically **exudes** sex appeal.
exude (*v*): to emit, to ooze out slowly
I can imagine the two of us living in **connubial** bliss. Ew, not now! But someday ...
connubial (*adj*): relating to marriage
When I see him, my heart goes into little **paroxysms** of joy.
paroxysm (*n*): sudden outburst of emotion
I love him **ardently** and wholeheartedly.
ardently (*adv*): done with heartfelt sincerity
When he smiles at me with those crooked teeth, I'm totally **elated** and thrown into a state of jubilation.

elated (*adj*): overjoyed

jubilation (*n*): incredible joy

We're definitely **compatible**. We have the same hi-top Converse sneakers. If that's not love, I don't know what is.

compatible (*adj*): go well together

I have all kinds of **amorous** thoughts about Rex that make me blush a little.

amorous (*adj*): lustful

I've always wanted to have a **carnal** relationship with a musician.

Blame MTV for all those **wanton** music videos!

carnal (*adj*): sensual, sexual

wanton (*adj*): unrestrained and unruly (usually related to sexual behavior)

All sorts of **lurid** things went through my head the next day. Maybe this was all some kind of awful trick!

lurid (*adj*): sensationalistic