**Tutorial #2: ‘Fulbright Scholars’**

Your response to ‘Fulbright Scholars’ should only take this lesson. I am sorry I am unable to attend class today.

Part 1: Read through the following notes.

Part 2: Look at your notes, my notes and answer the following question (250-400 words):

In ‘Full Bright Scholars’, how does the conflict between memory and hindsight influence Hughes’ perspective?

How to approach this question:

1. Give it a go! Give yourself five or ten minutes to re-read and just think.
2. Distinguish what memory and hindsight are.
3. Find examples of both
4. Use the poetic devices as examples
5. Look at the poem and identify all you can about it.
6. Read my notes & think about what is being said.

**Points of discussion:**

1. You should have annotated this yourself. I am going to list the techniques/ideas that are in the poem and some examples.

* **Strand** a street with theatres in London –runs off Trafalgar Square. Evokes emotions of being stranded – alone in the crossroads of life.  He first saw her in a public place auguring the celebrity marriage with lack of privacy they would enjoy.
* **Veronica Lake bangs  (**fringes)An American film actress and [pin-up model](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pin-up_girl) noted for her [femme fatale](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Femme_fatale) roles in [film noir](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film_noir), as well as her peek-a-boo hairstyle covering her right eye, creating an air of mystery about her and enhancing her natural beauty.   Her loose waves symbolise her unstrained/undisciplined nature.  Veronica’s father also died when she was ten. This **allusion** suggests that appearances can be deceiving and raises questions about Plath’s image – is she false, affected – cosmetic rather than real?
* **Fulbright Scholars -** a play on words?  Literally an American scholarship - Full bright - intelligent or the bright lamps referred to in the Nazi lampshades in “Daddy”.
* **Luggage** – Literally their belongings but figuratively today referred to as emotional baggage – all your psychological hang-ups and problems.
* **Peach** – A sexual symbol because of its tempting, succulent juiciness and sensual feel.  Was it his initiation into the adult world of sexual gratification or knowledge like the apple offered to Eve? Is it a reference to T.S. Eliot’s Prufrock: *“Do I dare to eat a peach?”***Link here:** <http://people.virginia.edu/~sfr/enam312/prufrock.html>
* **Charing Cross Station** – The burning cross – a cross roads of life or is it the cross of suffering, sacrifice and martyrdom he endures?
* Silvia – origins:  Salvias - Sage (plant), common name for a large genus of about 900 species of flowering plants of wide distribution. The genus is a member of the mint family....
* The lack of certainty is depicted by the use of **questions**, mostly rhetorical as the poet appears to be obsessed with doubt and searching for meaning and causes of failure in their relationship.
* Essentially **colloquial** and **conversational**, the poet uses relaxed personal memories to reflect on his first impressions of his beloved but departed partner.
* **Reflection** - His self effacing conclusion of being “*dumbfounded afresh by his ignorance”*  may be a ruse to reject any blame for the disastrous relationship that developed.
* The poem opens with a **rhetorical question** which sets up the tension between the conflicting perspectives of his memories and his hindsight.
* The **contrast** and tension between the pronouns ‘I’ and ‘You’, relates to their relationship and the accusatory **tone**.

**In regards to conflicting perspectives, this poem is concerned with the memory.**

* The poem is a flash back or memory.

The impact of m**emory**: Its lingering effects, selectivity, subjectivity  and lack of reliability.

* **Appearance and reality:**  Hughes ponders his first impressions and whether there were any warning signs of what was to come or was their mutual attraction merely the result of youthful impetuosity.
* The suggestion that appearances can be deceptive is conveyed in the phrase  about her Veronica Lake bang (fringe) *“what it hid. It would appear blond.”*Together with the American “*grin for the camera*” contrasts the superficial confidence of the Americans with the uptight restrained British aloofness.
* **Truth and illusion:** Much of what we perceive to be real is a figment of our imaginations or part of our wish fulfillment.  Love can be blind and only see the things it wants to see.
* Ted Hughes “Fulbright scholars” demonstrates how truth can morph with time and be misinterpreted depending on the one presenting it. No version of the truth is more greater than the other and through the study of the poetry by Ted Hughes in Birthday letters;  *Fulbright Scholars*

**Possible thesis statements**

* That the truth is not static entity; it can change with different perspectives and representations as we discover that truth is never pure and rarely simple.

**Online Analysis of this poem:**

<http://melmcguinness.wordpress.com/2009/06/17/fulbright-scholars-some-notes/>

and

‘Full Bright Scholars’ Analysis

It is interesting to note that “The Birthday Letters” has been seen by some as:

“an unambiguous rebuke to those who saw Slyvia Plath as Ted Hughes’s victim. Here, we are to believe, is the truth about Sylvia, which can be summarized as: she was beautiful, brilliant, violent, crazy, doomed; I loved her, I did my best to make her” (Katha Pollitt, a poet and a columnist for The Nation, is the author, most recently, of “Reasonable Creatures. ” –published in New York Times).

In this poem, Ted Hughes is describing the first sighting of Sylvia Plath. He is speaking from his very own perspecitve about the memory of her image. So the poem is narrative and concrete. However, it is an interesting commentary on his relationship to come with Plath. There is a tension created between his first nonchalant notice of her, and the baggage that he is remembering from their shaky marriage that led up to her suicide.

“Luggage” is actually an important word choice on Hughes’s part. ”With their luggage? It seems unlikely” Luggage, meaning “baggage”. Was Sylvia Plath at a point in her life, in fact, where she was destined to be dragged down by her depression? Ted Hughes will never know,  strolling about the street in London and passing the photograph of incoming Fulbright Scholars, Sylvia Plath among the group of privileged Americans (she was beginning a year in Cambridge after graduating with spectacular honors from Smith the previous spring). He wonders to himself, “which one of them will I meet?” This attitude, to me, even though he does remember Slyvia specifically, says that he is not a particularly feeling individual or good husband. He saw, her and knew they would meet, and that first look at the picture locked the two into a destiny of future disaster together.

“It was the first fresh peach I had ever tasted” The peach he buys from the stall near Charing Cross Station and eats is significant because it can been analyzed in light of being a literary illusion to the Bible. Similar to the book of Genesis, in which Adam and Eve both eat the fruit from the tree of life that brought the fall of mankind, he sees Sylvia for the first time, and biting into that peach, he thinks of the one glance as the beginning of an unavoidable relationship with Plath, that ultimately fell apart.

Like eating a piece of deadly fruit, Hughes portrays Plath as an almost femme fatale figure, when he notes her hair “Your Veronica Lake bang” which has somewhat negative connotations. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veronica_Lake>

Listen to this (seriously):  “Femme Fatal” by the Velvet Underground circa 1967 (not too long after Plath herself died and certainly during Hughes’ time of poetry writing) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8IV6lJSm1c>

“Grin for the cameras, the judges, the strangers, the frighteners.” “Frighteners” here can also imply the demons that haunted Plath as she suffered from depression and obsession with her dead father and later, her dysfunctional marriage with Hughes, whom she felt at times was quite oppressive.

The poem being a first hand account of his earliest memory with Plath has almost sinister hints of how the incident first connected him to Plath and a string of future misfortune.