

KMU Medicine and Literature
05/14/2024 Dr. Shapiro poetry session take home messages

Student 1 (translated)

Thank you, Dr. Shapiro, for letting me realize the power of literature through your experiences. The poem "Neighbor" uses a very special metaphor that made me feel the fear and powerlessness that death may be around at any time.

Student 2 (translated)

I think this online session with the professor abroad is very interesting. It is rare to have the experience of talking directly to the author. It is really a very good course.

Student 3 (translated)

This class was very special. Discussions with the author about her works and real-time Q& A also increased my understanding of poetry. In these poems, I can understand the thoughts of cancer patients, as well as the differences in life and mental adjustment as a patient. From the perspective of a patient and entering the world of patients-- I think it is very meaningful in terms of cultivating humanistic qualities.

Student 4 (translated)

In this class, Dr. Shapiro introduced four of her poems, each of which elaborated on her state of mind at different stages of the illness. "Etiquette for the Very Ill" particularly touched my heart. When family members are sick, of course we will work tirelessly to take care of them. Meeting their physical needs is hard, but the negative emotions brought by the patients make people even more sad and tired. Through Dr. Shapiro's perspective as a patient, I can better understand these situations.

Student 5 (translated)

I am very grateful to Dr. Shapiro for sharing with us. This is the first time in my life that I have the opportunity to hear an author personally share her own writing experience and creative ideas. It is quite rare and precious. It is very valuable to hear the author share her thoughts and own experiences through reading aloud. There is a big difference in hearing the author reading aloud and reading on our own. The professor hides mysteries in many poems, such as capitalization of words, and strategically constructed sentences, etc., which are all packaged carefully. Among the many poems, I like the analogy between death and friends the most. This is quite a fresh angle, and this also reminds me that we don't need to be too afraid of the coming of death.

Student 6 (student wrote in English)

This class was truly a remarkable experience, blending literature with the profound insights of Dr. Shapiro. As a medical professional, I've always found literature to be a vital tool in understanding the human condition, and this session beautifully underscored that belief. Dr. Shapiro's exploration of poetry, particularly her own works crafted during her battle with illness, offered a poignant glimpse into the emotional landscape of illness. Through her words, seemingly tranquil yet emotionally charged, I found myself drawn into a deeper contemplation of the human

experience in the face of adversity. The class not only allowed for personal reflection but also provided a unique opportunity to engage directly with the author, enhancing our understanding of the poems and their underlying themes. Dr. Shapiro's presentation skillfully navigated the complexities of illness, inviting us to consider its meaning from both a medical and literary perspective. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to participate in such an enlightening discussion and extend my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Johanna Shapiro for her invaluable sharing.

Student 7 (translated)

This is the first time that I have been able to discuss poetry with the author in person. This feeling is very wonderful, because I myself also write poems and submit them to poetry magazines. In the process of writing poems, I will present many of the ideas I want to express in the form of some metaphors or images. Sometimes it may not be so easy to understand, and I think this can be regarded as a blank space in a poem (allowing readers to have their own interpretative space). However, this time in class, we got to ask Dr. Shapiro in person what she was thinking when she was writing, and we can directly understand why Dr. Shapiro wrote this poem, why she chose such words, what her state of mind was when she wrote the poem, and we can see the author's change in attitude in the poems. This was also the first time that I read English poetry carefully, and I discovered that the creation of English poetry is very different from the creation of Chinese poetry! Whether it is the presentation of the artistic conception or the packaging of the poem/the way in which the poems are presented; these are very different presentation methods, but I think this is something I can refer to and learn from when writing poems in the future!

Student 8 (student wrote in English)

It's already nine o'clock at night in the US, but Dr. Shapiro still gave us a phenomenal lecture with a huge smile. Throughout the whole lecture, she told us about the illness that she's fighting against and the attitude that change towards death throughout the treatment. It meant a lot to me because my grandma passed away a few years ago, and before her death, she had been fighting against death for over three years. At first, death is the enemy that will take her life away, but after two years, she also learnt to see death as a neighbor, even in the end when her illness is getting worse, death is the mercy giver that will help her flee from the pain. Thank you so much for spending your time telling us your story and sharing your feelings. Hope everything goes well.

Student 9 (translated)

I benefited a lot from reading the poems written by Dr. Shapiro. Through her works, I learned about her attitude when facing illness. Through Dr. Shapiro's sharing, I learned that in the face of illness and death, we cannot ignore them. We should always think about the meaning of illness and death.

Student 10 (translated)

Thank you very much for sharing, Dr. Shapiro. I enjoyed this course very much. Dr. Shapiro used her years of experience and observation to explain why poetry can become a connection between patients and the world. In addition, Dr. Shapiro also shared very thought-provoking

work with us. My favorite of these is "Etiquette for the Very Ill". We often ask doctors to be polite to patients; but this work in turn requires patients to be polite, which impressed me deeply.

Student 11 (student wrote in English)

I enjoyed the conference. One thing I really liked about this session is the fact that we got to meet a poet. It's a very rare opportunity to have the author of poems share his/her writings directly and go through them thoroughly.

Student 12 (translated)

The most special thing about this class is that in the past, when we discussed in class, we felt the content of the literary work from our own point of view. But this time, in addition to group discussions, we can also get immediate comments from the professor on our ideas. This allows us to get insights closer to the author's thoughts, and even details such as word usage and branch lines can be answered by the author herself. In addition, the layout and rhythm of the course are just right, allowing us to enter the situation step by step. In summary, I think this course was a very unforgettable experience. Not only did we have enough time to discuss our own ideas, but we were also able to obtain and integrate the author's ideas. This made me have a deeper understanding of the poems we read today. Thank you very much Dr. Shapiro for bringing us this session.

Student 13 (student wrote in English)

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Johanna Shapiro for taking the time to share her insights on how patients perceive the impact of illness. Today's session was incredibly enriching and significantly broadened our perspectives. I believe that true understanding comes from personal experience, as mere descriptions and retellings cannot fully convey the suffering brought by illness. However, poetry plays an exceptionally important role in this regard. Poetry is not just about narration or description; it allows people to immerse themselves in the situation and experience the emotions of those affected. Compared to ordinary descriptions, poetry brings us closer to the true feelings of individuals. In conclusion, I would like to thank Dr. Johanna Shapiro once again for her impressive and enriching presentation. 112001130

Student 14 (student wrote in English)

It's been a pleasure to be able to meet Dr. Shapiro and even share our thoughts with her. I think literature is very important to medical people like me, because through literature we can relate and develop empathy for others. What's more, I personally think literature adds more colors to our life, especially when we got tons of medical stuff to read during our time in med school.

Student 15 (translated)

In today's class, Dr. Johanna Shapiro shared with us her poems and the background stories and context of the poems. One of the poems mentioned treating death as a neighbor. A group member asked whether it would be okay to treat death as such a common thing and whether this may reflect a lack of enthusiasm for life or living. It is a quite new perspective for me.

Another poem "Too Soon" described a patient who needed to recuperate after surgery but snuck out to eat. Although she knew that she would eventually need to go back to the hospital for rehabilitation, she still enjoyed the moment of pleasure with a sense of guilt. This is an interesting poem.

Student 16 (student wrote in English)

It is my greatest pleasure to join the meeting with Dr. Shapiro and talk about poetry. I have always found literature fascinating, and I consider it wonderful to combine my interests, which is literature, with my profession, medicine. Although I haven't got the talent of composing poems myself, I do enjoy finding the sarcasm, little jokes and the creativity hidden in each poem. It makes me feel connected to the poet, thereby getting to view those heavy issues related to illness with a different perspective. I really admired Dr. Shapiro, not merely for staying up so late and talking with us, but also leading us to see illness as something lighter, like neighbors, like water, it allows me to ponder the meaning of illness and the role as a doctor from this day on.
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Student 17 (translated)

At the beginning of this class, the professor slowly led us into literature, and we got to know this field. We then read some of Dr. Shapiro's works, including the works she wrote when she was diagnosed with cancer. From these poems, we can read about her thoughts and state of mind at that time. The words seem calm, but the emotions are quite strong. Literature is a bit unfamiliar to me, and I may not be able to understand its profound meaning. However, through this course, I am becoming more and more eager to read more and attain more profound thoughts through every word and sentence in literature. Thank you, teacher, for giving us this opportunity to listen to such a wonderful session by Dr. Shapiro.

Student 18 (translated)

After today's class, I understood why we need to study literature in medicine and its importance. Even just a short article or story can make all living beings empathize and they also leave a record of medical treatment.