



Synergos: Selected Poems

by Roberto Manzano

A Study Guide

Synopsis

The poems in *Synergos* by Roberto Manzano are an exploration and celebration of what it means to be briefly alive in an eternal universe. Connecting the sensuous (what we can see, taste, touch, smell and hear) with the spiritual (the infinite universe, nature, man's eternal soul,) Manzano's poetry is both immediate and immutable, translating complex emotions and thoughts into simple, relatable language. Most importantly, though, he emphasizes the beauty in life, even during moments of intense pain. The book is comprised of 53 separate poems and fragments (both in the original language and translated by Steven Reese) that span nine collections of poetry. The poems found within take everyday experience and translates it into the language of the romantic.

Reasons to Include This Book in the Classroom

- Roberto Manzano uses beautiful diction and language in his poetry, which can be used as a model for the students' own poetry.
- Roberto Manzano places an emphasis on "experience" and "identity" in his poetry, a topic that can easily be used as a springboard for student discussion and relation.
- In "Song to the Savannah," the narrator conveys the feeling of life perpetual motion. It explores what it means to grow older and progress forward, all the while looking back at where a person came from. This notion is extremely relevant to high school students who are at a point in their life where they are moving forward quickly and developing who they are to become. It pushes students to appreciate where they are at, what decisions they make, and where they are coming from because of the effect it will have on them as they get older.

- Roberto Manzano employs metaphors and extended metaphors throughout his poetry that force students to draw on previous experiences while reading.
- The students will have the opportunity to read a selection of poems by one artist that encapsulate an entire career. Reading through, they will be able to tie together themes and reoccurring images, more clearly defining the author's interests and personality.

Author Bio

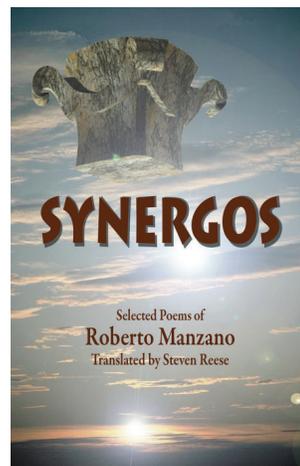
Roberto Manzano was born in Ciego de Ávila, Cuba, in 1949, and now resides in Havana, where he works for the new literary magazine *Amnios*. He is a poet and essayist, and has taught widely in Cuba. He has published a dozen books of poems and has won a host of national prizes, including the prestigious Nicolás Guillén Prize in 2005 and the Samuel Fejióo Prize for poetry of the environment. His work is distinguished by a sense of vital connection between human life, the natural world, and the cosmos.

Study Questions and Tasks

1. What is a metaphor? Find examples of metaphor in two different poems in *Synergos*. What makes use of metaphors so effective?
2. What is magical realism? Why is it used? Find examples of magical realism in *Synergos*.
3. Read the first 6 parts of "Song to the Savannah." In the poem, the narrator is reflecting back on his life and where he came from, as he progresses toward old age. What do you feel is the narrator's opinion of his past and where he came from? How does this relate to the experiences of a high school student?

Study Questions and Tasks (cont'd)

4. Read and then discuss in small groups the poem “The Barge Haulers of the Volga.” This poem is based on a painting by Ilya Repin which shows a group of tired-looking men pulling a giant ship behind them as they walk along a beach. How does this poem relate to that image? What is the poem saying about this experience? How does this experience relate to the life of a teenager?



etruscan press

84 West South Street
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18766

P: 570.408.4546

www.etruscanpress.org
books@etruscanpress.org