

English 110 AK
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Essay #4
November 14, 2007
Final Draft

“Steal With the Intent to Replace”

We all know that stealing is never right, but when it comes to literature, there is an exception. According to poet R. Zamora Linmark, writers should steal like the Filipino President Marcos who robbed the country during the Martial Law period, and they should research the literary works in the libraries to expand their ideas or their literary works. Born in the Philippines and raised in Hawaii, Linmark’s works includes *Rolling the R’s*, which he’s adapted for the stage, and *Prime Time Apparitions*, which is his first collection of poems. Linmark’s poems are filled with jokes, pop-culture, sex, and a playful curiosity with language. [In the poem *First Lessons*, Linmark uses allusion and visual imagery in a playful way to teach writers what to avoid and what to incorporate when composing poems based on other literary works. As Linmark advises writers that it is okay to steal even from others literary work as long as they replace with works of their own].

First, Linmark uses allusion to tell writers what to avoid when they just begin their process of writing a poem. As he points out:

Put aside Carver and Bukowski for the meantime; that rum and
Coke too. They’ll resurface like all the others, the way Dickens’
ghost returns each December or Hamlet’s father whenever
darkness drops in from nowhere. (Linmark 54)

Here, Linmark advises writers to temporarily forget about the writing styles of Raymond Carver and Charles Bukowski although they are the most prestigious and favorable poets for modern American readers. In other words, Linmark advises writers not to limit themselves to those past literary works but rather free their minds and expand their ideas when composing a poem. In addition, Linmark ensures writers that they will eventually discover their own writing styles as they reach to a higher level of complexity in their writings. This discovering process is just like the ghost character in Charles Dicken's *A Christmas Carol*, who always returns during Christmas holidays or like Hamlet's father appearing in the darkness in one of Shakespeare's famous plays, *Hamlet*. The similarity of the two stories tell writers that they should not worry about their writing styles in the beginning because writers will eventually discover their own writing styles which represent their own thoughts or comments when they advance their writing skills.

In the second part of *First Lesson*, Linmark uses visual imagery to tell writers to pay attention to what happens around them when they are stuck in the process of writing their poems. A thoughtful and creative poem often lies in the matters of real life. As Linmark points out:

Pay attention instead to the walls of your apartment building and
record the landlady who nightly quizzes her husband on how well
he knows her, what color her panties were on their wedding night,
the number of orgasms she simulated. (54)

Here, Linmark tells writers that a poem could link to something they see or hear in real life. In addition, reality is a source of inspiration to poetry writers. What happened in the apartment is not important as oppose to what comments or ideas writers can come up with based on their experiences and deliver those comments or ideas into their poems. In other words, Linmark

suggests writers to observe their surroundings because what happens around them might broaden their horizon; thus, help them in their process of writing poems.

At last, Linmark uses visual imagery again to advise writers to steal with the intent to replace. As he points out, “Purse, attack, seduce, and yes, like the Marcoses, steal, steal everything and more” (54). Here, Linmark strongly advises writers to expand their ideas by exploring other literary works for as many as possible, yet Linmark likens this exploring process to the Filipino President Marcos’ stealing process in which Marcos basically robbed every Filipinos when he placed the nation under Martial Law from 1972 to 1981. In other words, by exploring other people’s works, Linmark urges writers not to lock themselves in their limited knowledge but rather be more opening minded and take a look at others works to see what they have to offer. As he asserts, “Loot, horde, storm the Palace of Spines and rearrange Dewey, the cannons and the classics of tomorrow too” (54). Here, Linmark tells writers to go to libraries where most literary works stored to find out more literary ideas, and then deploy them into their writings as to rearrange Dewey’s system, the coding on the top of every public-own book to easily locate their whereabouts, to their own preferences. Moreover, Linmark ensures writers that this is not a so-called stealing. As he points out, “Just remember: in poetry there is only one cardinal rule practiced by all: steal with the intent to replace” (54). Here, Linmark sincerely informs writers that it is okay to steal others work as long as they replace with works of their own. And that is how great works come to reality. Without exploring the other literary works that are available to writers, they will be like travelling thousand-mile journey all by themselves. Therefore, writers should analyze whatever literary works that is available to them and use them or expand them in their writings but at the time keep the cardinal rule provided by Linmark in mind.

Linmark's *First Lessons* enlightened all of us or writers that we need to broaden our horizon by observe our surroundings. Moreover, not only does *First Lesson* teach us on how to compose a poem, but also it teaches us on how to be creative in our life. In addition, Linmark advices writers not to blindly follow traditional literary works but rather explore their own work and find out who they really are through their writings. At last, Linmark informs writers that stealing other ideas or their pieces of works is okay as long as they replace with works of their own.

Works Cited

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