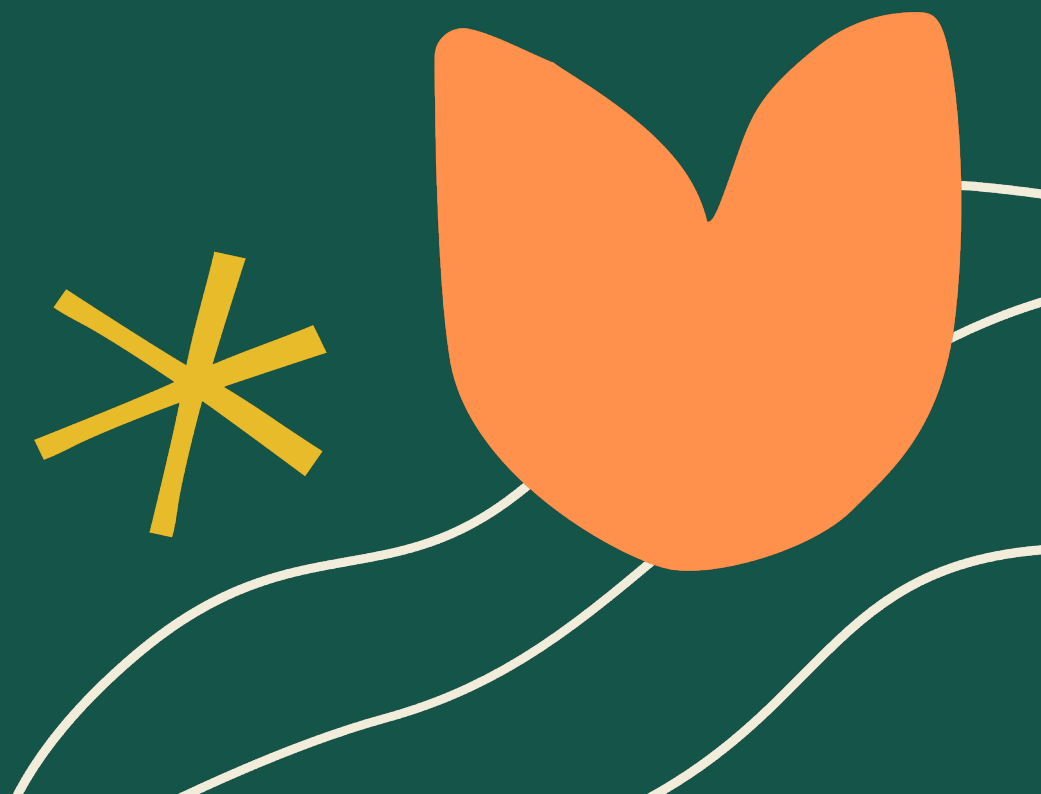
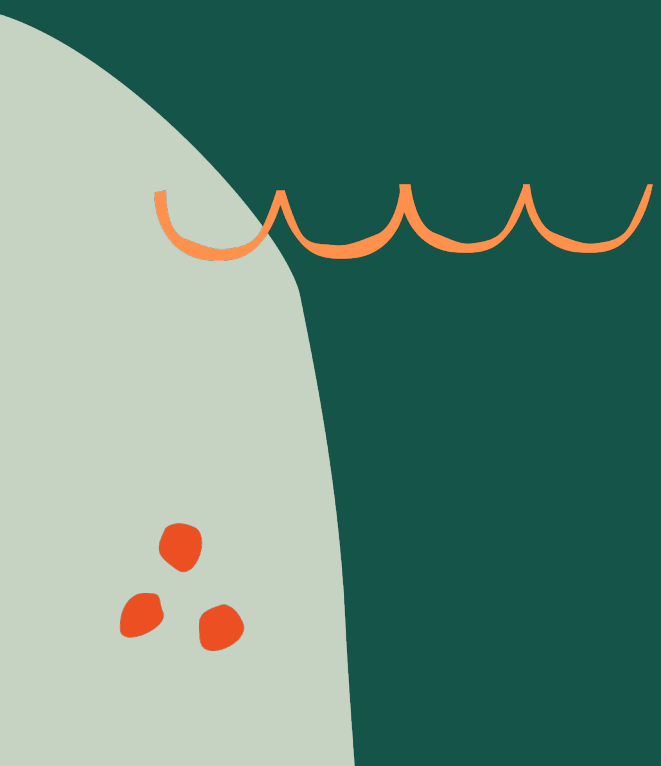




SIGNATURE STYLE:

HOW IDENTITY  
INFORMS VOICE  
IN HAIKU

Robin Anna Smith (aka GRIX)



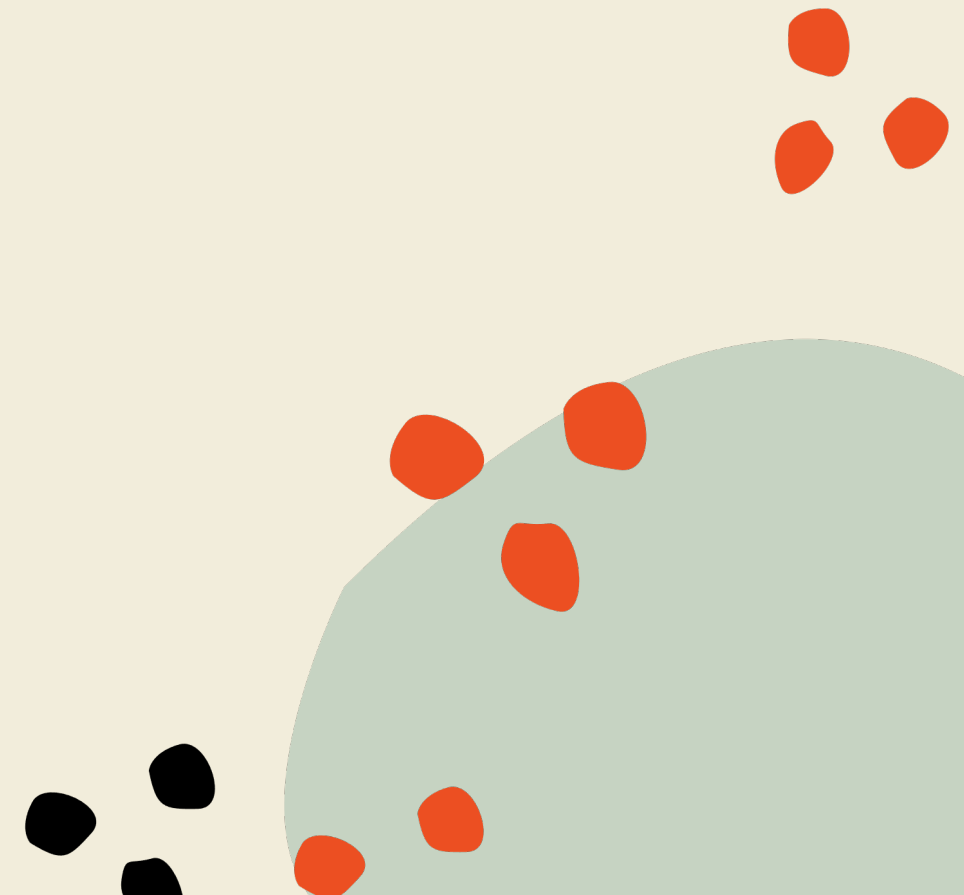
# Robin Anna Smith (GRIX)



Robin Anna Smith (GRIX) is an award-winning poet whose work has earned numerous accolades including Touchstone Award for Individual Poem and inclusion in A New Resonance 12. They are the Founding Editor of Human/Kind Press, Associate Editor at Sonic Boom and Yavanika Press, reader for kontinuum, and Co-founder of the Trailblazer Contest.

## Email

[grixartistix@gmail.com](mailto:grixartistix@gmail.com)

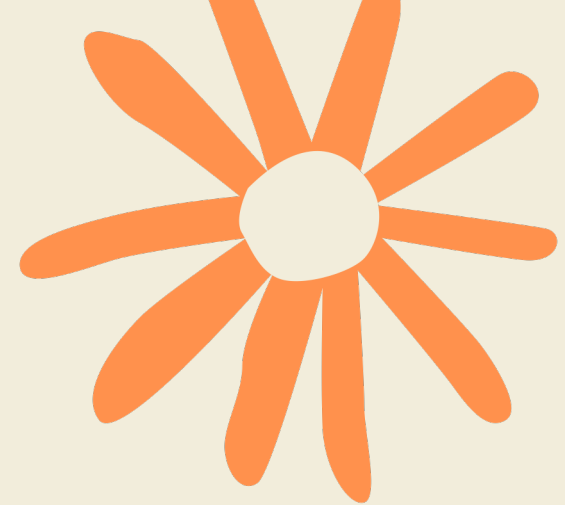
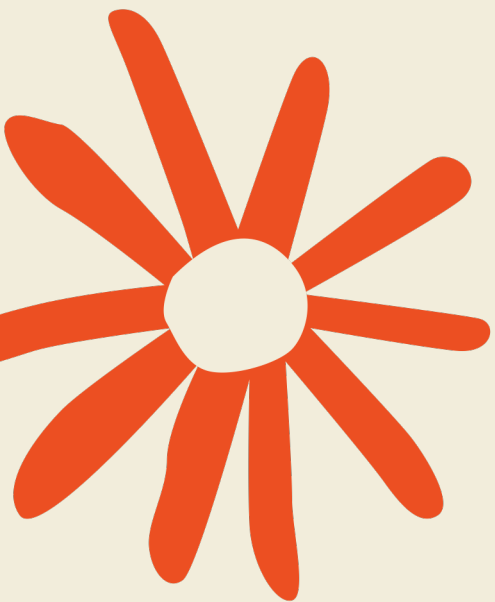


# Signature Style:

## How Identity Informs Voice in Haiku

What creates a memorable body of haiku? And how does the poet's identity affect the individual poems? In the 21st Century, we have an international community practicing English Language Haiku. Universality is relative and often it is difference that makes a haiku sing.

We'll look at samples from different haiku poets and analyze how identity has shaped their work, making their poems recognizable and memorable. We'll also discuss how staying true to oneself and one's experiences can solidify the underlying thread that ties each individual poem together into a body of work that is a unique representation of the writer and how they experience the world.



# What about the "RUUUULES"?

- Cannot include "ego"?
- Must show "universality"?
- Must be a "haiku moment"  
(the pooh-pooh of "desk haiku")?





# Life Experience as Lens

- Not "identity poetics" which is ONLY about one's identity and refers back to the poet exclusively.
- The lenses through which we see the world, which leave an inevitable imprint on our psyches, translating over into our poems.
- Applies to both the writer and the reader. This includes editors and judges! While we may read "blind" we cannot read free of bias.

# Aspects of Culture

OBJECTIVE  
(TANGIBLE):

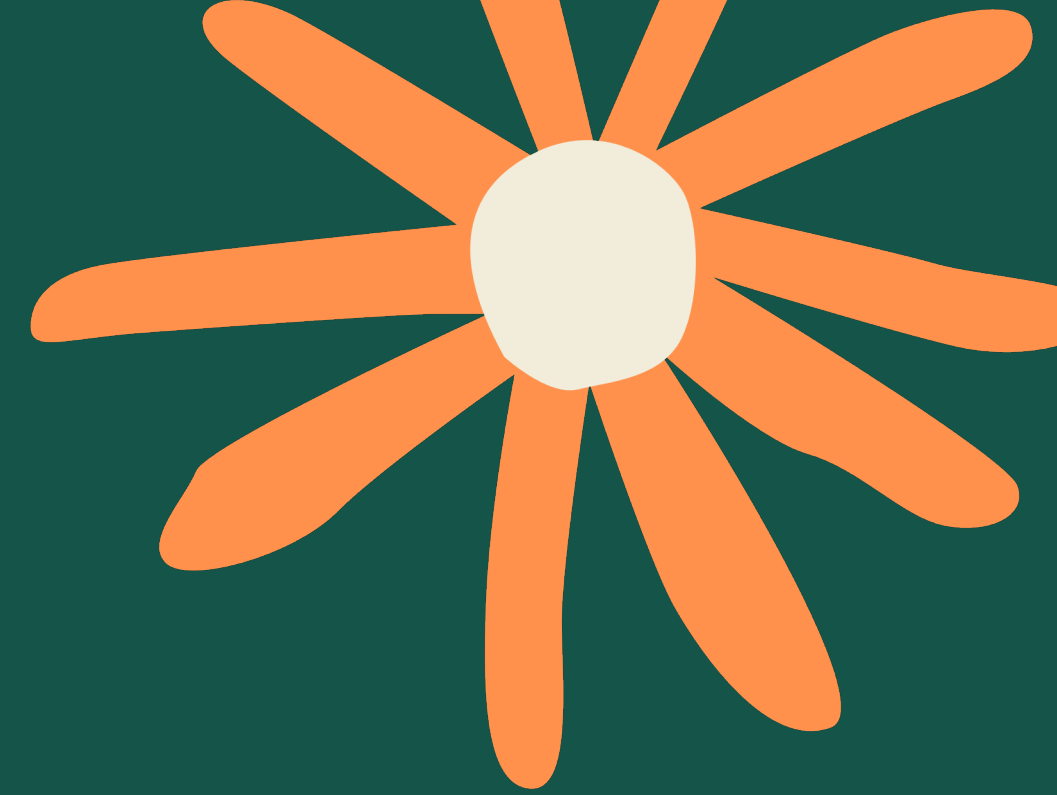
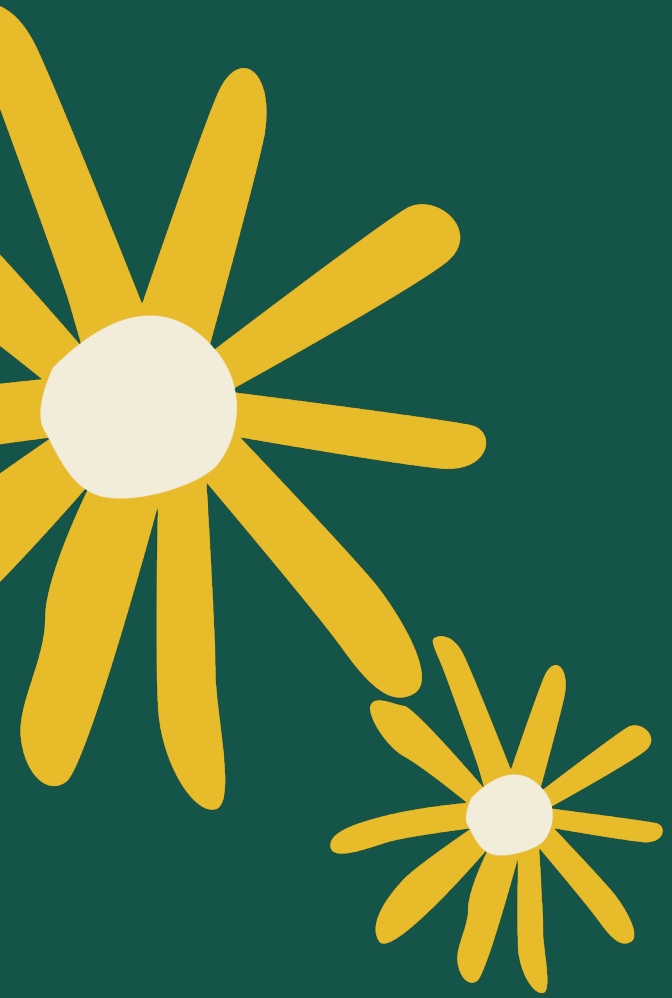
## The Observations

Customs / Norms  
Arts & Sciences  
Language  
Actions  
Symbols / Objects

SUBJECTIVE  
(INTANGIBLE):

## The Meanings/Interpretations

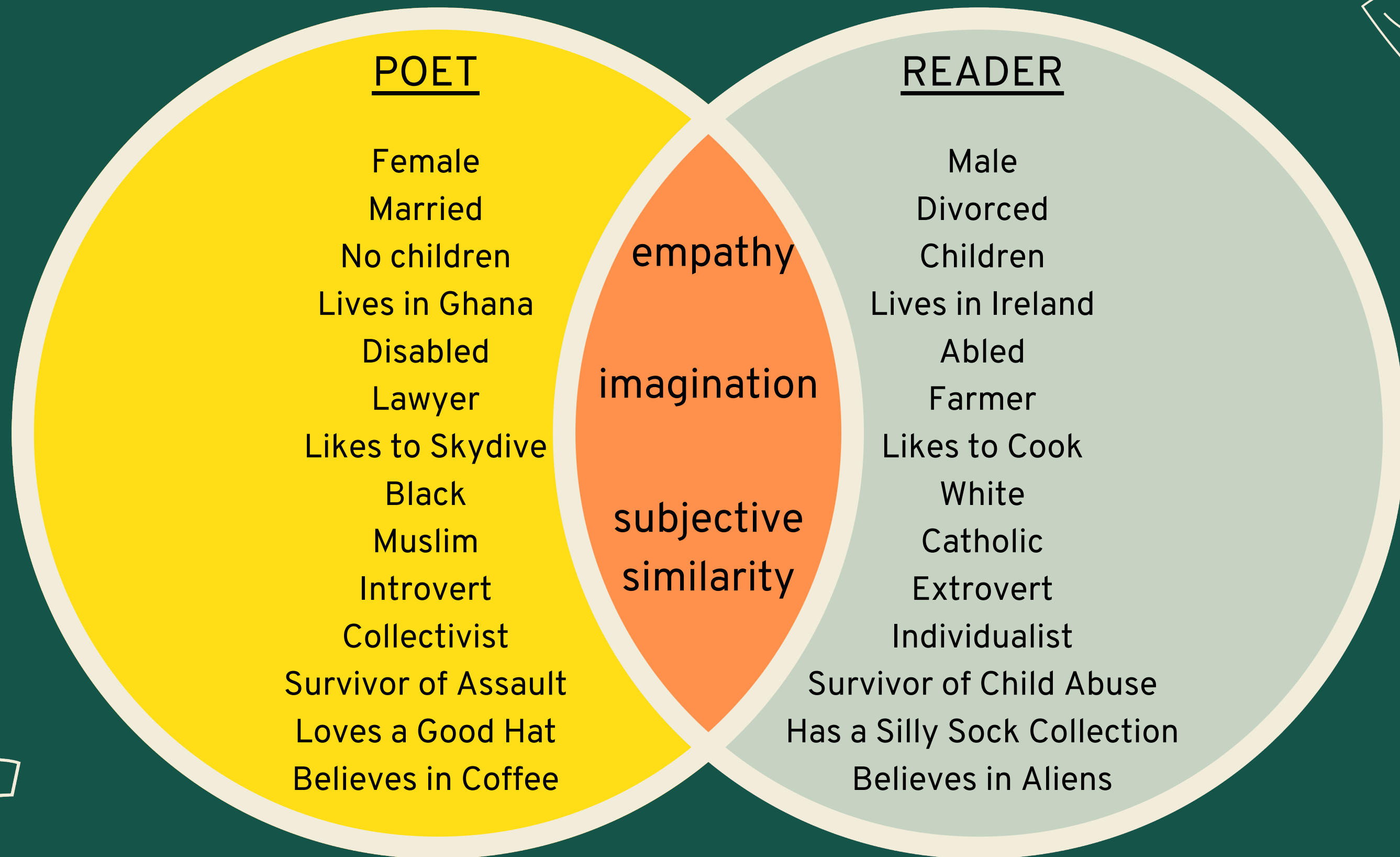
Values  
Morals  
Attitudes  
Perceptions  
Beliefs / Assumptions



We should be reading  
as responsibly and astutely  
as we are writing.

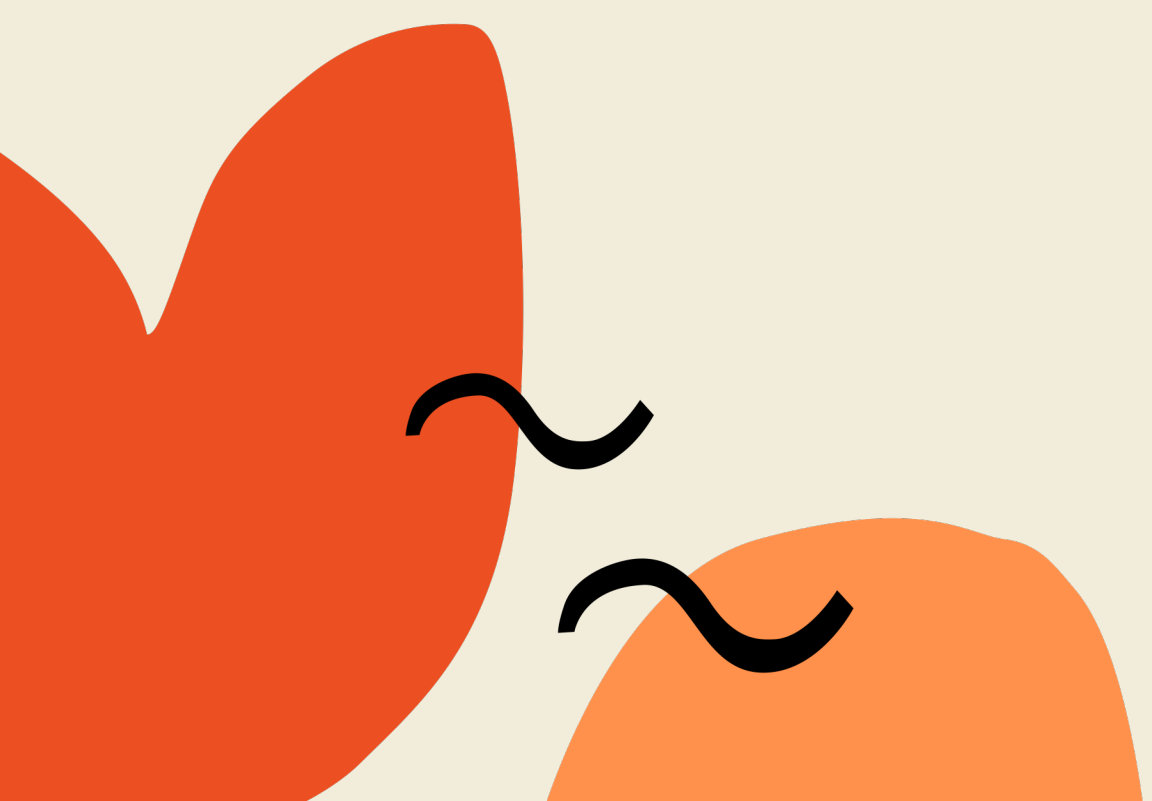



# Cross-cultural Understanding



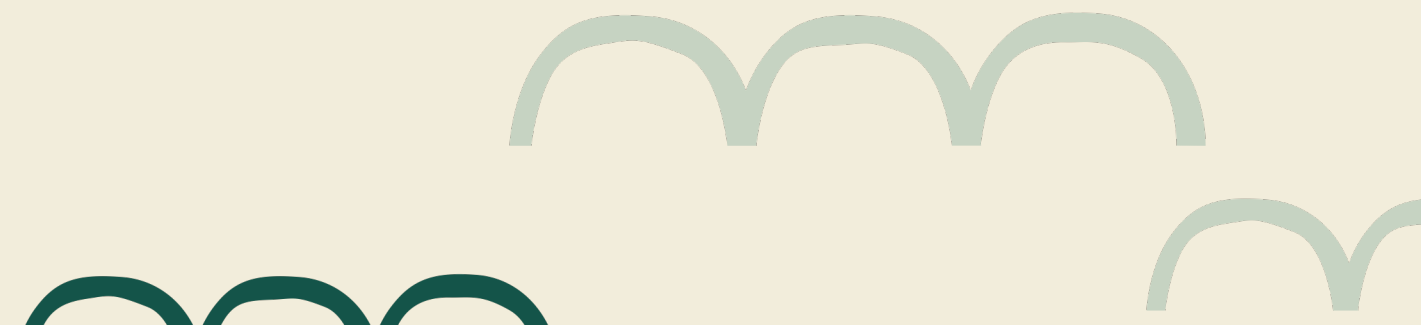
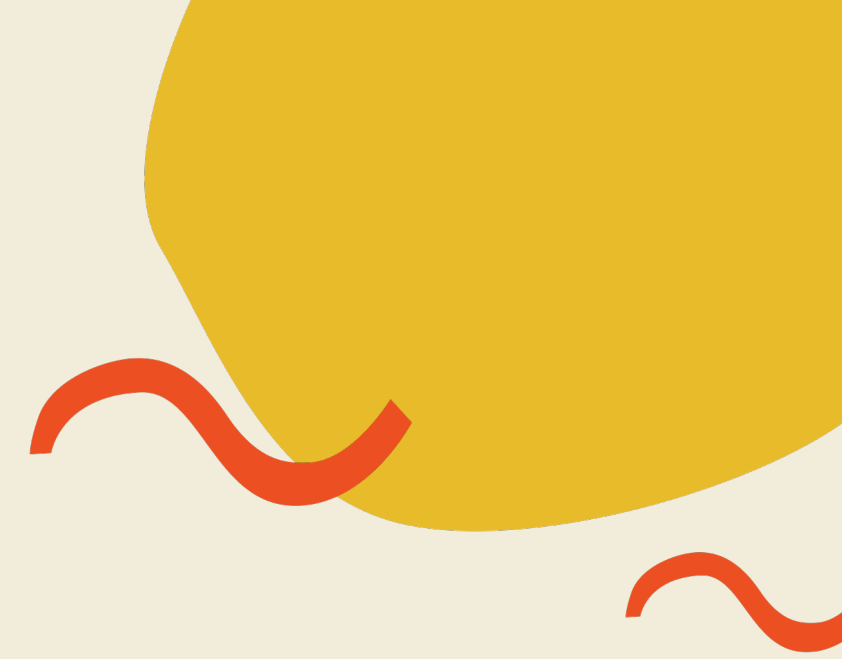


# Style Identifiers

- Subgenres
  - Topics
  - Form
  - Specificity
  - Manipulation of Language
- 
- 

# Subgenres

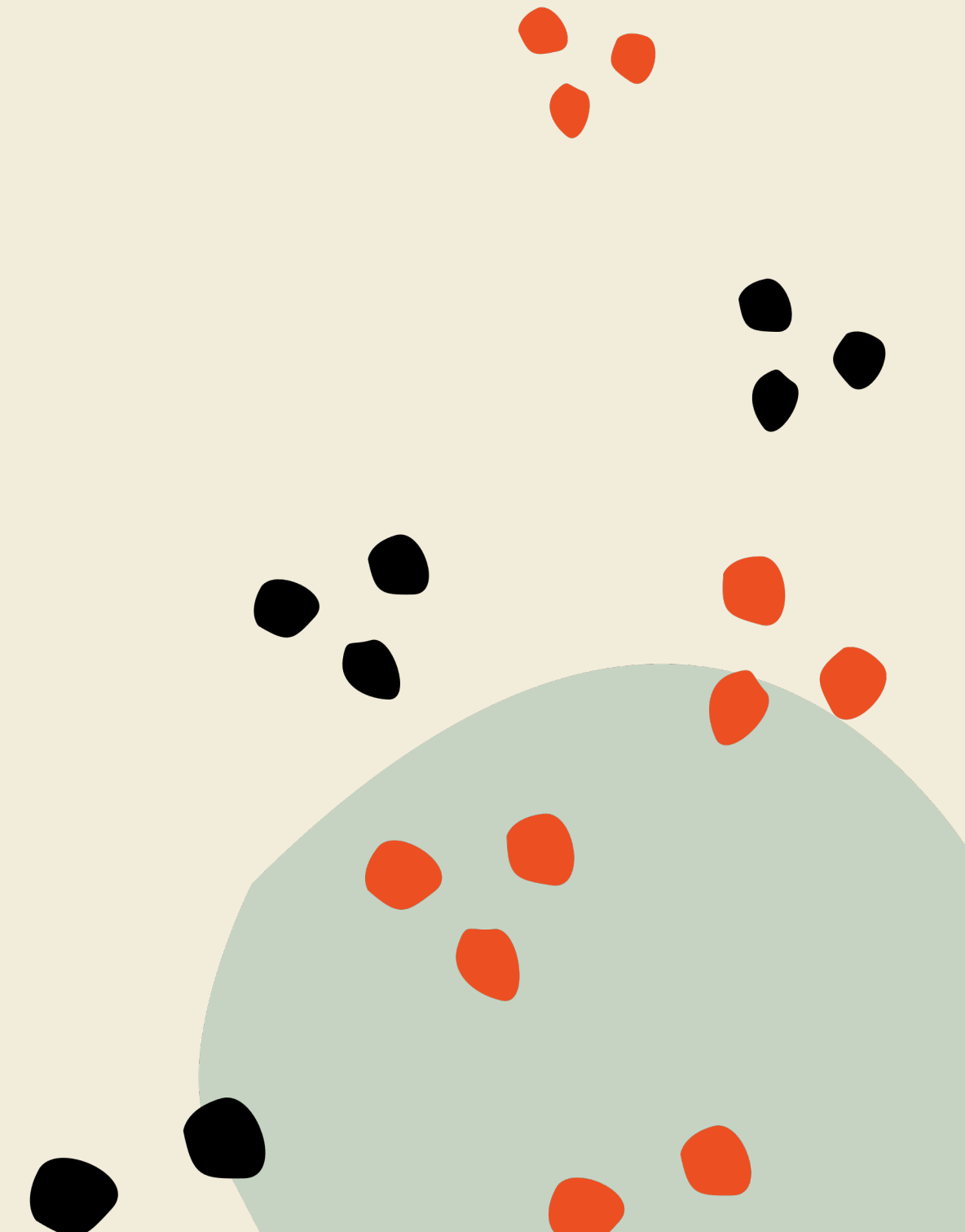
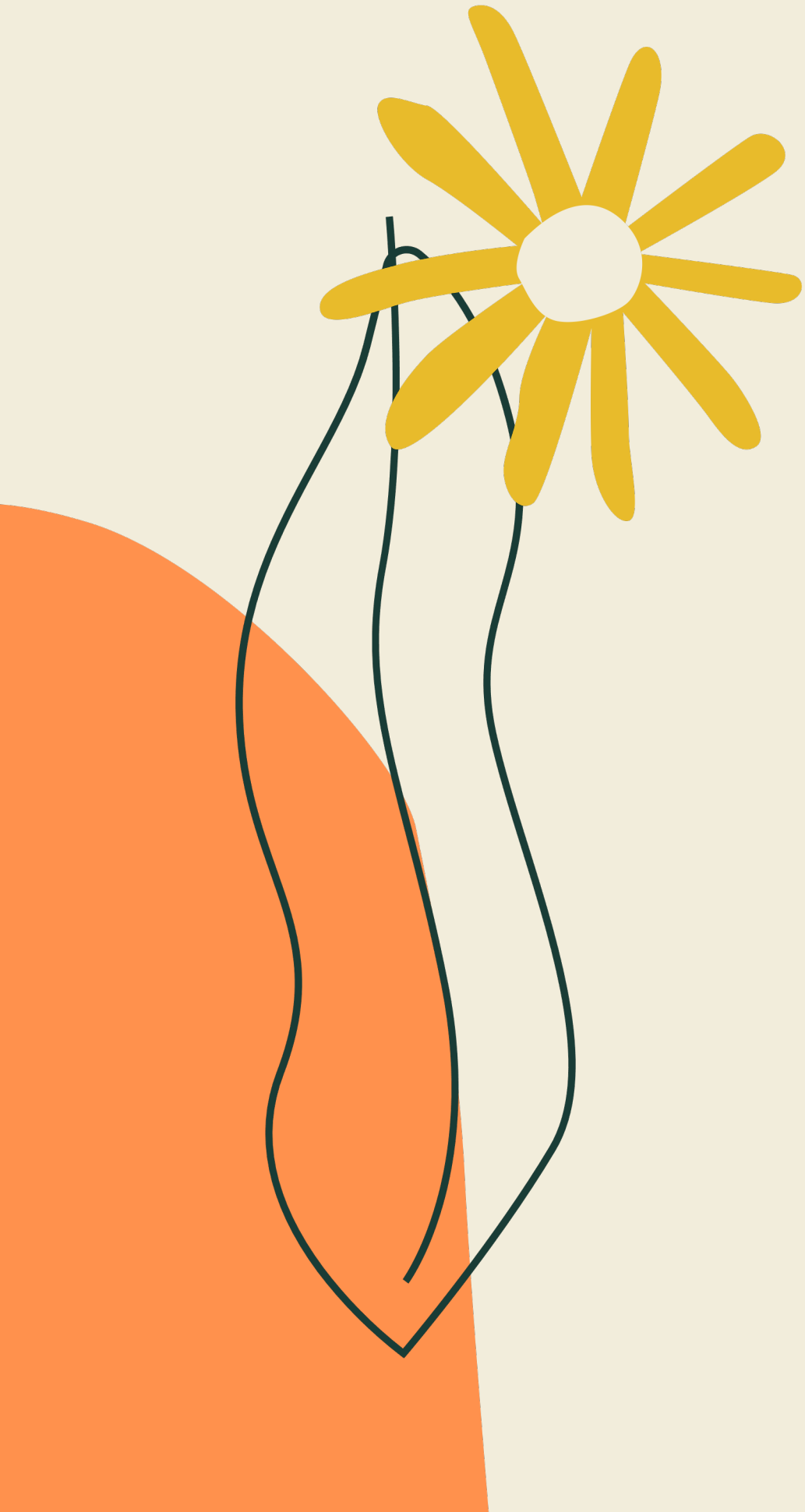
- Found Haiku
- Surrealist
- Historical (natural, cultural, personal, scientific)
- Scifaiku
- Horrorku
- Femku





# Topics

- Science
- Arts
- Culture-specific
- Location-specific
- Social Issues
- Relationships




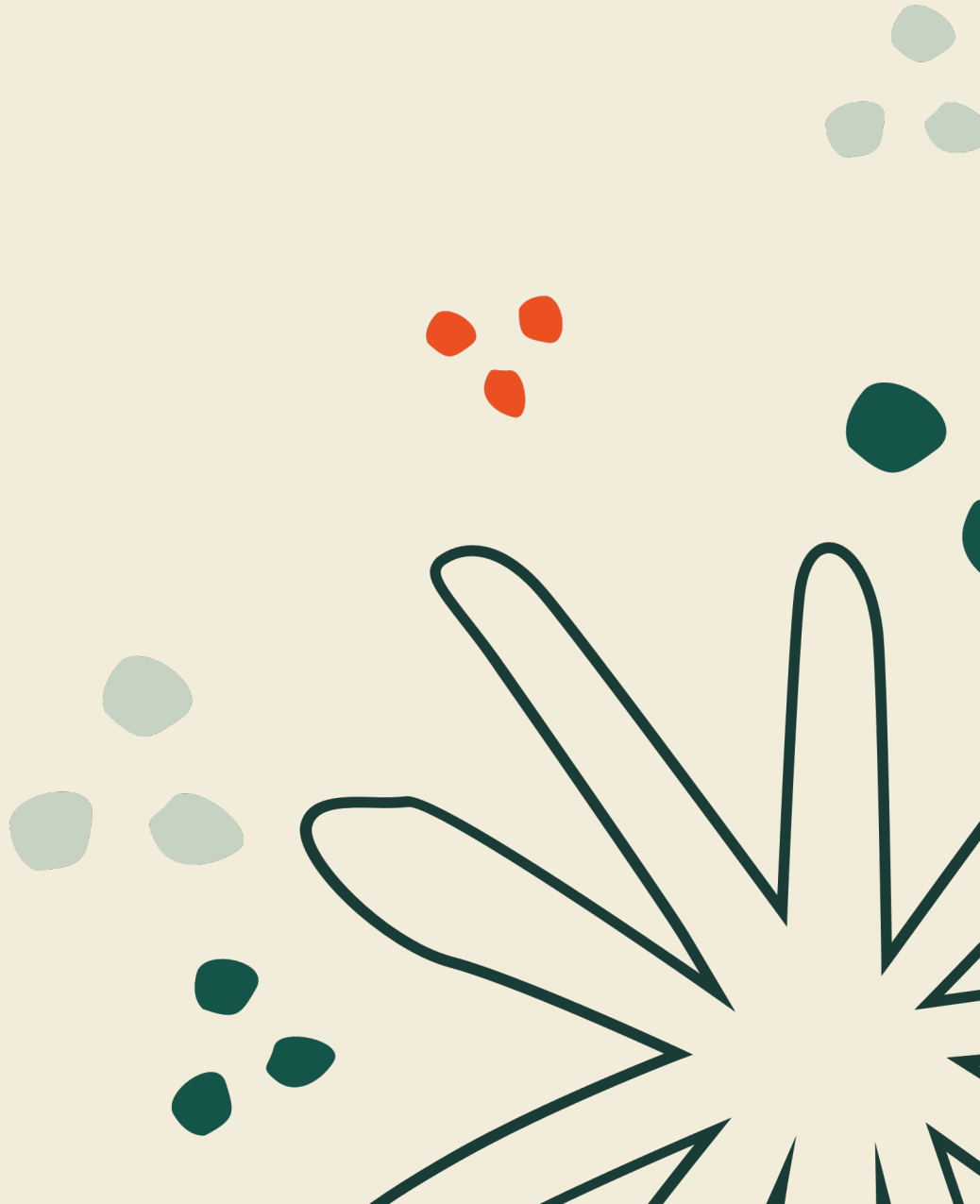
# Form

- Concrete
- Alternate Lineation  
(to the tercet)
- Art (haiga / shahai)
- Parallels
- Experimental





# Specificity

- Physical/Mental States (disabilities, pained, depression, longing, greiving...)
  - Personality (humor, imagination...)
  - Related to Roles
  - Related to Hobbies
  - Related to Occupation
  - Related to Personal Interests
- 
- 

# Manipulation of Language

- Abstraction
- Turn of Phrase
- Situation Framing
- Neuro-diverse Communication Styles (autism, stroke, TBI, chronic illnesses that affect cognition and memory)
- Use of poetic devices: rhythm / meter, assonance / alliteration / dissonance, etc.
- Mixing in Non-English Words

# Exemplar Poets

- Hifsa Ashraf

- Vandana Parashar

- Jan Benson

- Orrin Tyrell PreJéan

- Susan Burch

- Réka Nyitrai

- Kat Lehmann

- Shloka Shankar

# Hifsa Ashraf

patriarchal shadow overstepping my double helix

blind spot  
he finds the moon  
a mere dot

layer  
after layer  
after layer  
of black fog

delirium

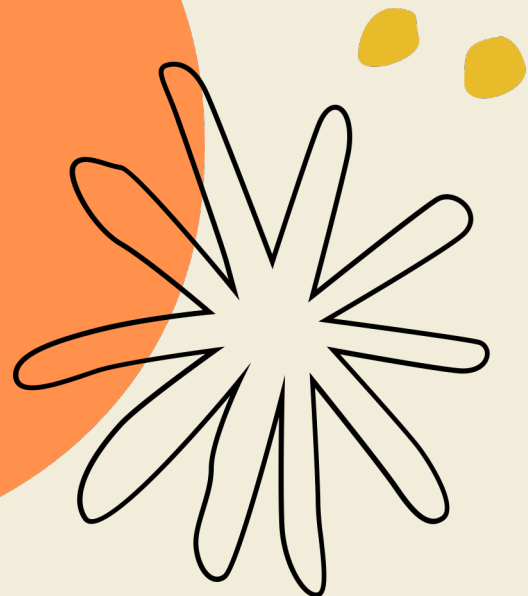
spring breeze  
whirls the white rose  
dervish dance

a starling murmuration blends into the dark amnesia



- Subgenre: Personal History, Femku
- Topics: Mental Health, Culture-specific
- Form: Alternate Lineation
- Specificity: Mental Health (State of Mind)
- Manipulation of Language: Use of Poetic Devices





# Jan Benson (1952-2019)



the thrum  
of stars in my bones  
hadron collider

the pond  
holds a half moon  
theology of bones

adobe walls at dusk  
crickets knit the names  
of the lost

the bray  
of young pronghorns  
clouds break blue

winnowing ash for bone post-paradise



- Subgenres: Natural and Personal Histories
- Topics: Science
- Manipulation of Language: Neurocognitive Difference due to Brain Injury, Turn of Phrase, Situation Framing, Use of Poetic Devices



# Susan Burch

Coke bottles with names –  
who do I want to be  
today

looking for love  
in all the wrong places –  
proctologist

hell-bent  
on talking to you –  
Ouija board

zen garden –  
an imaginary river  
runs through me

snowstorm  
my garden Buddha  
becomes Santa



- Topics: Relationships (Intrapersonal and Interpersonal)
- Specificity: Humor, Imagination, Mental State, Punctuation
- Manipulation of Language: Situation Framing, Use of Casual Language

# Kat Lehmann



## After Midnight

sleep	stages	counting	the leaps of	one sheep
edges	of the night	hours—	zombies	grazing
each	owl	nocturne	feeding on	insomnia
monster	somniloquies	beneath	our brains	sometimes
waking	in dreams	the Sea	of Tranquility	is enough

## Swallowing Autumn

following a	sun	into winter –	the inner spinning	axis
crescent moon	dreams –	the kissing	of midnight	politics
another trip	leaving a	narrative	to chase	the wind
into	withering	I eat	what becomes	silenced
loss	horizon	a star	empty	of sky

- Form: Experimental
- Subgenres: Natural and Personal Histories
- Specificity: Imagination, Related to her Scientific Background
- Manipulation of Language: Situation Framing, Abstraction





# Réka Nyitrai

lullaby in her mouth swarming fireflies

winter sky —  
the aftertaste of a white lie

behind a mountain mother's face becomes a lake

an ex-lover's voice  
snow patches  
in my amygdala



an octopus  
in her father's lungs . . .  
first autumn rain




- Subgenre: Surrealism, Personal and Natural Histories
- Form: Alternate Lineations
- Specificity: Roles
- Manipulation of Language: Abstraction, Multiple Readings in One-liners, Use of Poetic Devices



# Vandana Parashar

post-partum  
the sky finally clears  
of last night's storm


a mother's life revolving door



birdsong  
I let the voice inside me  
go unheard

dawning autumn  
I slip to the wrong side  
of forties

new me  
adding two more dots  
to the full stop



- Subgenre: Personal History
- Topics: Relationships (Intrapersonal and Interpersonal)
- Specificity: Roles, Mental State
- Manipulation of Language: Situation Framing



# Orrin Tyrell PreJéan (matsukaze)

my naked body  
and the black orchids  
in dusk

aloof peonies strolling through the courtyard in silence

muttering thunder . . .  
the smell of honeysuckle  
as you fondle me

turning a curve -  
I want to become  
an azalea

last summer rose —  
a collapsing city  
inside of me



- Subgenre: Personal and Societal Histories
- Topics: Relationships (Interpersonal and Intrapersonal)
- Specificity: Imagination. Mental State, Role, Turn of Phrase
- Manipulation of Language: Use of Poetic Devices





# Shloka Shankar

inside a raven's caw the simulacrum of memory

either/or

i relapse into

a coda

forest trail . . .

unknown birdcalls

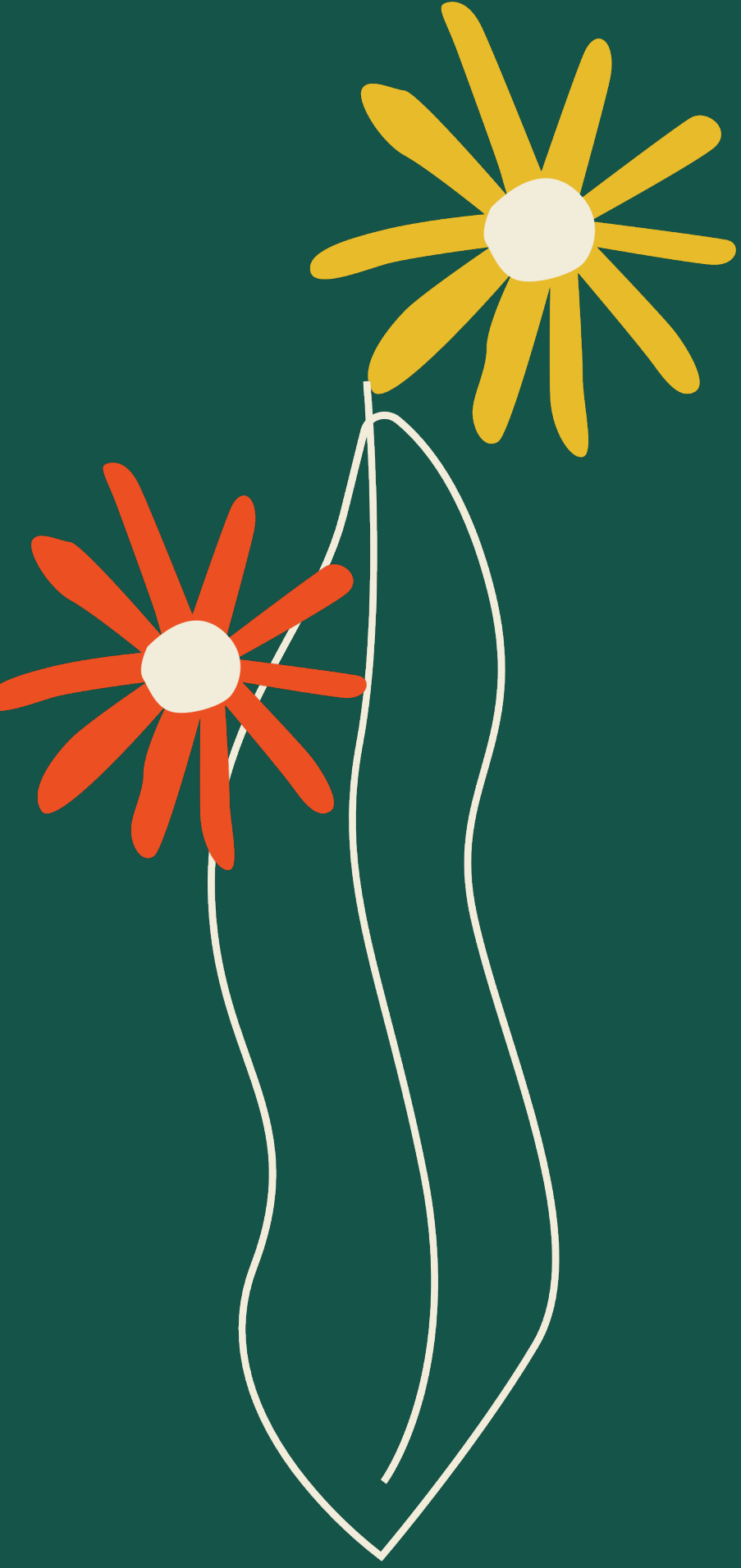
echo in iambs

as an aside i shape-shift into a key

a word for belief inside the wall of winter



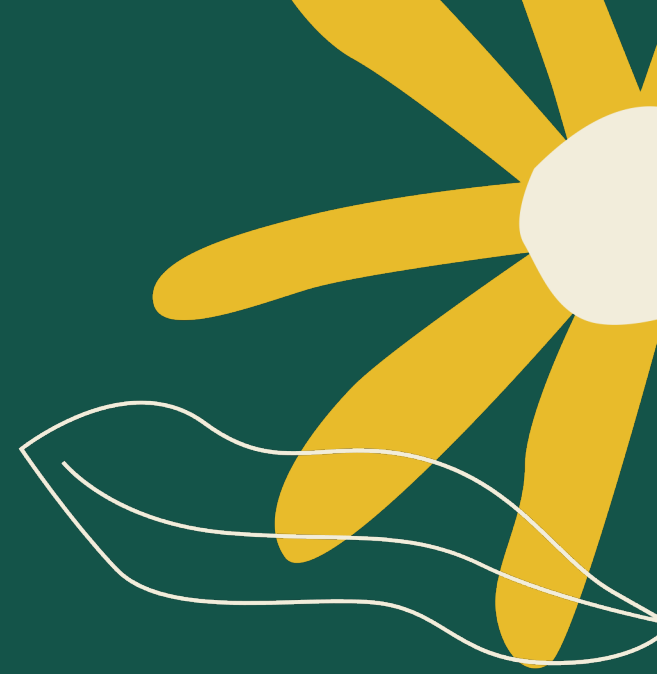
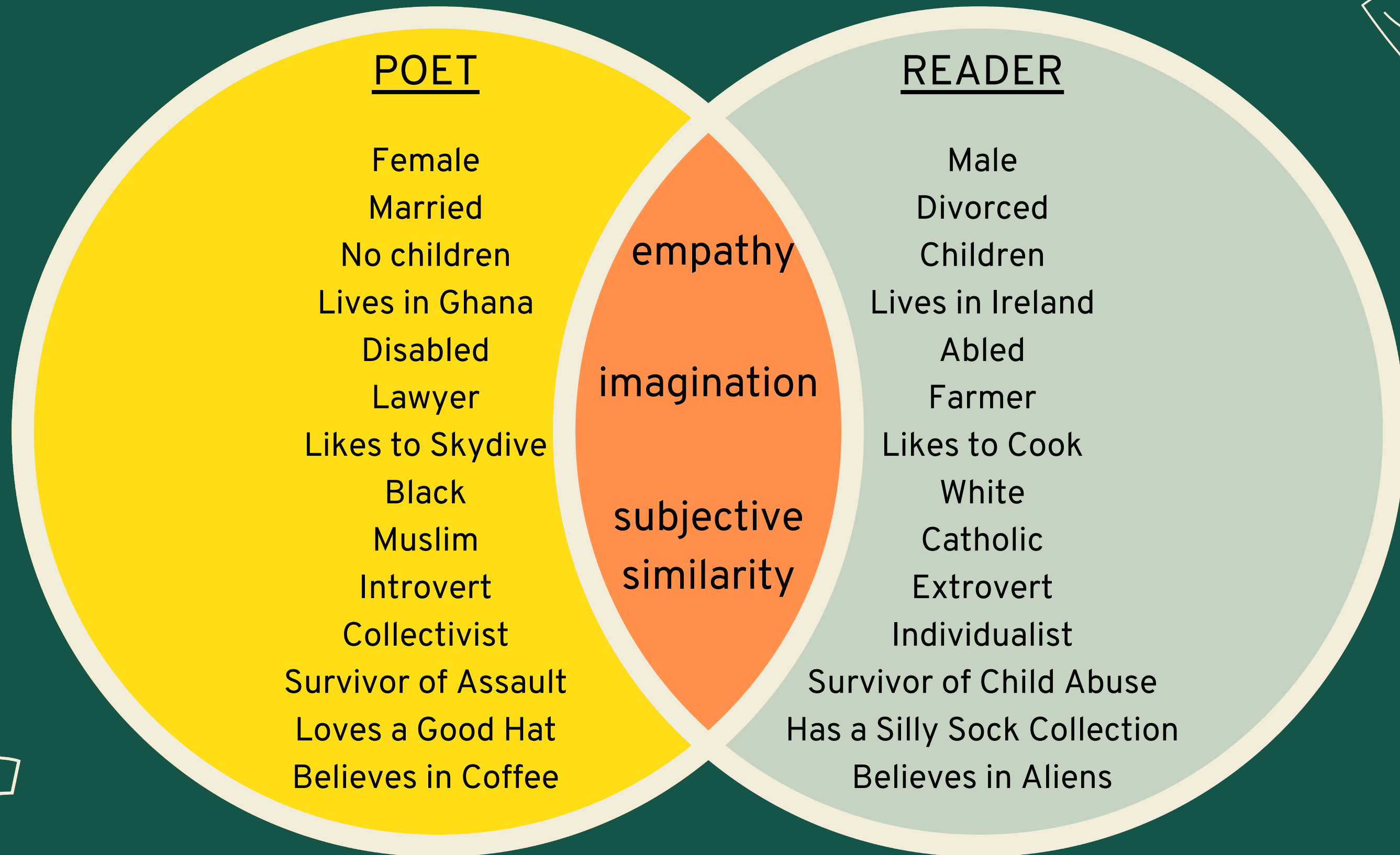
- Subgenre: Personal History
- Topics: Music
- Specificity: Imagination
- Manipulation of Language: Use of Non-English Words, Use of Grammatical and Musical Terms, Turn of Phrase, Abstraction, Use of Poetic Devices



Haiku: Robin Anna Smith  
Art: Shloka Shankar



# Cross-cultural Understanding

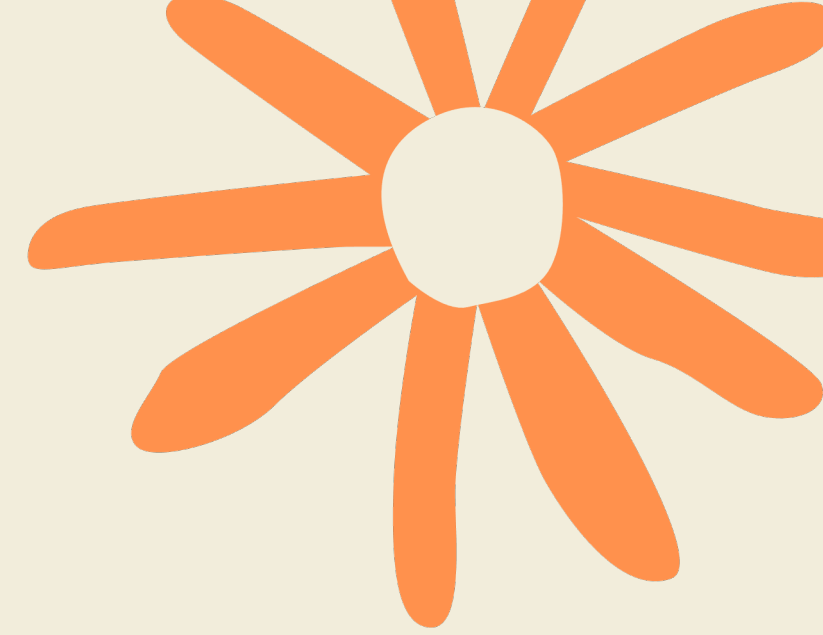


# As a Reader

- What can you do to go beyond just meeting the poem halfway?
- How can you keep your eyes and mind open to look for what is lying beneath the surface waiting to make a connection?
- How do you use the reading of each haiku as an opportunity to learn?
- \*Again, this applies to editing and judging as well.\*



# As a Writer



- What can you bring to haiku (or senryu) that no one else can because no one else is you?
- Using the style identifiers, what do you think your personal signatures are? What other identifiers can you spot?
- How can you use your background and personality to communicate in a unique manner, thus creating a memorable body of work?





We are poets, writing poems.

Writing is an artform,  
and art, no matter its topic,  
always includes the artist  
somewhere in the work.







# THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING!

To contact with questions:

EMAIL

[grixartistix@gmail.com](mailto:grixartistix@gmail.com)

---

For a copy of the presentation:

[www.grixartistix.com](http://www.grixartistix.com)

[www.trailblazercontest.com](http://www.trailblazercontest.com)

