Introduction

This seminar was meant to be pretty much a repeat of the seminar on Poetry I led in 1985, but thanks to the interests of its members it actually developed quite in its own way, or ways. We spent a lot of time discussing poems we ourselves had written, poems by classic authors such as Dante and Yeats as well as the standard American authors, and poems by Afro-American authors, of whom Langston Hughes emerged as a particular favorite. There is hardly a unit that doesn't include some of his work, and several (by Pat Casey, Vickie Mallison, Jean Sutherland, and Barbara Trader) concentrate especially on Afro-American poetry. I think all of us reached a new level of commitment to poetry by writing a poem, discussing it, revising it. It turned us on in a powerful way, and sensitized us newly to poems by others. It leaves me with the strong feeling that any teacher who offers instruction in poetry must insist that students write their own.

Traugott Lawler