 Prescribed Text: Contemporary Asian Australian Poets

‘Some New Perspectives’ – Ee Tiang Hong

Pre-Reading

* What categories do you use to identify yourself? Are there any categories you deliberately choose or avoid using (for yourself or others)?
* Why can categories be useful? What parts of yourself are overlooked when you use “categories” to talk about yourself?

The Poem

1. How does Ee contrast the ideas in lines 1-2 with the ideas in lines 3-4?
2. Why might “space” and “silence” be important for understanding other people? (Think about the idea of “perspective” raised in the poem’s title.)
3. In the first stanza, Ee has highlighted that “categories” are not enough to form an accurate understanding of a person’s identity. In the second stanza, he moves on to present an ‘identity statement’ about himself. What is ironic about this statement (lines 5-6)?
4. What point about understanding and “perspective” is the poet making in lines 7-8? What has he done (or avoided doing) with his language in order to make this point?
5. What are “conceptual smithereens” (lines 9-10)? In what context is the word “smithereens” commonly used? Why do you think Ee would choose this particular word to describe his view of “truth” and “perspective’?
6. What is a “world view” (line 11)? What is Ee suggesting about how we form world views? Do you agree with him? Why/why not?
7. Ee completes the poem with two possessives: “the twentieth century’s, ours.” (line 12) Why has he chosen to use possessive language here?

Reflecting

* Summarise in your own words what this poem says about how ‘identity’ is formed and understood.
* Research Ee Tiang Hong’s background, particularly the circumstances surrounding his migration to Australia. How do you think his experiences may have influenced his ideas and writing in this poem?
* Have you ever felt ‘categorised’ or ‘labelled’? How do you think this has influenced:
  + The way other people see you?
  + The way you see yourself?