



Reader's Guide

from David Martinez
author of *Hustle*

Author Asks:

1. I begin *Hustle* with a “proem” or a prologue poem, “On Palomar Mountain.” How does this poem’s separation from the rest of the collection affect how you read the following poems?
2. It has been commented that this collection is an investigation of masculinity. Which poems investigate gender, and how do they do so?
3. I have created various systems of imagery in *Hustle*, one such systems involves my relationship to nature. How does *Hustle* deal with poetry’s history of nature poems?
4. I have also adopted the language of the Bible in *Hustle*. How does the authority of the Bible affect the reading of this collection?
5. Another system of imagery in *Hustle* is myth and folklore. Coupled with the biblical language employed, how does myth and folklore influence the language of *Hustle*?
6. I document many different types of violence in *Hustle*. How do the various types of violence influence the speaker of the poems throughout the collection?
7. For me, one of the important components of poetry is narrative, or more accurately a problem and a resolution, how does *Hustle* maximize narrative?
8. Place is an important component of concretizing “voice” in poetry. How does *Hustle* utilize places such as San Diego? Houston?
9. Every poem in the collection has autobiographical elements. Does knowing that every poem in *Hustle* is based on a “true” event influence the reader’s interpretation of the text? How so?
10. Every part of *Hustle* was closely examined. How does the cover and design of *Hustle*, which was designed by my tattoo artist, add to the reading experience? Has the cover art on other books led your reading before?
11. I wrote strictly metrically for two years, focusing on petrarchan sonnets and blank verse. Can you identify how this training illuminates itself in my free verse?

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12. *Hustle* has many different styles employed. How do the various line lengths, syntax, diction, and imagery successfully amalgamate to a successful style?

Writing Exercises:

1. In an attempt to subvert my own intentions, I will sometimes take a famous line or the beginning of a poem I admire, and begin a poem by slightly riffing off my favorite lines. For instance, in Section 7 of *Calaveras*, I take lines written by Neruda and alter them. Instead of “Tonight I can write the saddest lines,” I write, “Tonight I can write the most violent lines.” Pick a poem that you love and write a poem about a personal experience you have had. Try to surprise yourself. Can you successfully integrate the appropriated lines into a poem? Can you differentiate it from the original?

2. Neruda wrote odes to common things, such as his socks. Can you write an ode to a common thing, taking an interesting perspective or connection that you had never considered? This is not only a good technique for looking at something “new,” but closely related to dramatic monologue and imagining yourself in the space of another, which can lead to interesting discoveries.

Further Reading:

Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman

Collected Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins

Four Quartets by T. S. Eliot

A Street in Bronzeville by Gwendolyn Brooks

The Wild Iris by Lous Glück

Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair by Pablo Neruda

Winter Stars by Lerry Levis

Wind in the Box by Terrance Hayes

Poemas Humano (Human Poems) by Cesar Vallejo

Complete Poems and Letters of Emily Dickinson

Real Sofistikashun by Tony Hoagland