



Reading Ashley Farmer's *The Women* is like reading a cubist painting. These scavenged voices collide, contradict, entertain, horrify, and surprise as they create a dizzying and complex conversation about what it means to be a woman at this particular moment in time. In poems that are by turns witty, beautiful, and moving, Farmer investigates the disturbing chasm between how women are seen and how they see themselves. Even as she unapologetically documents the power that systemic oppression has over our daily lives, her women emerge as brave, hungry, and resilient. *The Women* simultaneously made my blood boil and made me feel less alone.

-MEGAN MARTIN, author of *Nevers*

TEACHING GUIDE

THE WOMEN

by Ashley Farmer

978-1937865-573 / 118 pages / \$15.95

Recommended Classes:

- Creative Writing
- Poetry / Prose Poetry
- Hybrid Forms
- Experimental Writing
- Feminist Literature
- Gender Studies / Women's Studies

Keywords:

Poetry / Prose Poetry / Flash Fiction / Hybrid /
Women / Collage / Cut-Up / Google / Repetition /
Research / Assemblage / Source Material / Gender /
Pop Culture

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The author moves between prose and verse forms. Why do you think individual pieces take the shapes that they do?
2. The phrase "woman" and "women" repeats throughout the book. What effect does this accumulation have on the reader?
3. Source material for this project includes references to pop culture that were current at the moment of writing. What are the names, news, and phenomenon of this sort that stand out to you? How do they serve this project?

4. The author utilizes both first person and second person points of view. How do these two different perspectives affect the reader's experience of the book?
5. There are moments within the project that reflect real-life perspectives that are decidedly misogynistic or anti-woman in nature. Why do you think the author included these?
6. How would you describe the tone of the book? Does it shift from piece to piece or is there a tone you identify as consistent throughout the work?
7. The author created each piece by Googling a title phrase ("Bad Women," "Happy Women," etc.) and contending with the results. Which "women"-related phrase would you add to this project? Are there new phrases that we've acquired culturally or that may have taken on new meaning since this book was originally published?
8. What do you suspect might be the challenges of creating new writing from existent texts? What might be the challenge of working with source material related to gender?
9. If you were to embark upon a similar project, what phrase might you Google? Why? What do you think you would discover in doing so?
10. What does this book ultimately say about women?

Possible Assignments:

- Google variations on a phrase that has personal importance to your identity, everyday experience, or interests. Evaluate the results you encounter. Which findings reflect your perspective or ideas? Which reflect points of view from someone very different from you? What's interesting about experiencing these different results side by side?
- Choose a word that has significance to you. Make a list of as many variations on this word as you can think of (for instance, if you choose the word "book," you might come up with "bookworm," "book-smart," "bookend" etc). Your list might include well-worn phrases, cliches, pop culture tropes, or even jokes. Create a series of poems that utilize repetition of your chosen word but also explore those variations on it.