

Poem I:
This River Here

Ex. I.4:

There is an implied metaphor throughout this poem—that time is a river. Tafolla never says this, but the historical moments that she describes all seem to “flow” with the river itself. Identify the various types of history involved in the poem, “This River Here.” Personal history and public history, ethnic, cultural and religious history, linguistic history, are some examples. Notice that there are different levels of diction that help to differentiate these. These are historical “lenses” through which the poet examines a single place. How and why they are important parts of the poem? Think about your own life and write a poem that describes an event using different historical lenses.

— Exercise provided by Dave Oliphant, publisher of Prickly Pear Press, poet and translator, historian of jazz