



# Bisa Butler: Portraits

## Pantom Portrait Poem

**With Pam Hart**

*Writer in Residence*

Inspired by Bisa Butler  
at the

**Katonah Museum of Art**  
[katonahmuseum.org](http://katonahmuseum.org)

# Pantoum Portrait Poem Writing

- Whether this is your first poem or your 20<sup>th</sup>, this exercise offers a chance to look and think about several Bisa Butler's portraits
- Included are two artworks for inspiration *PLUS*
- Brief history of the pantoum form
- Suggestions to help you look, think and brainstorm before writing
- Strategies for writing
- Template/description of the pantoum
- My pantoum as example
- Paper, pencil/pen, or computer are all you need to get started!

One of two  
artworks by  
Bisa Butler



***Anaya with Oranges***, 2017  
Cotton, organza, chiffon,  
lace and netting  
36 x 20 in




*The Safety Patrol*, 2018  
Quilted and appliquéd cotton,  
wool and chiffon  
82 x 90 in.

*Think about which  
piece calls to you*

# Pantoum Portrait Poem

## About the pantoum form

- The pantoum originated in Malaysia in the 15th-century as a short folk poem, usually made up of two rhyming couplets to be recited or sung
  - Over time, it was altered and adapted by poets from other parts of the world
  - Rhyming and brevity aren't as important or necessary
- 



# Gathering Words & Ideas

- Select one of the beautiful portraits created by Bisa Butler
- Spend some time looking closely and slowly
- Zoom in to notice details
- These questions can help you look, think and write as you collect some words
  - What do you see? Colors, shapes, patterns, people, expressions, personalities
  - Describe what these young people remind you of
  - Describe the mood or the personality of any of the young people in the artwork
  - Use one of your senses to describe some details that inspire you: Sight, sound, touch, smell, taste



*Anaya with Oranges*, 2017  
Cotton, organza, chiffon,  
lace and netting  
36 x 20 in



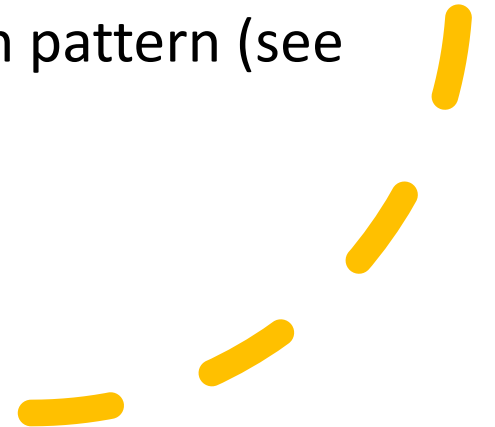
*The Safety Patrol, 2018*  
Quilted and appliquéd cotton, wool and chiffon  
82 x 90 in.



# Poem Strategies

Start by quickly writing 2-5 sentences and consider these strategies:

- Go inside the artwork & write about one or more of the characters
- Connect the artwork to your life, experiences, memory, friends, or family
- Write about a color, line, shape or some other detail in the artwork
- Follow the portrait pantoum poem pattern (see next slide)



# Guide for Writing a Pantoum Portrait Poem

BEGIN with 4 original lines

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

REPEAT lines 2 and 4 and expand on ideas in 5 and 6

2. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

REPEAT lines 5 and 6 and expand on ideas in lines 7 and 8

5. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_

FINALLY, repeat lines 1, 3, 7 and 8 in the following order

7. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
1. \_\_\_\_\_

*Repetition  
is used by  
visual artists  
and writers*



## ANAYA WITH ORANGES

By Pam Hart

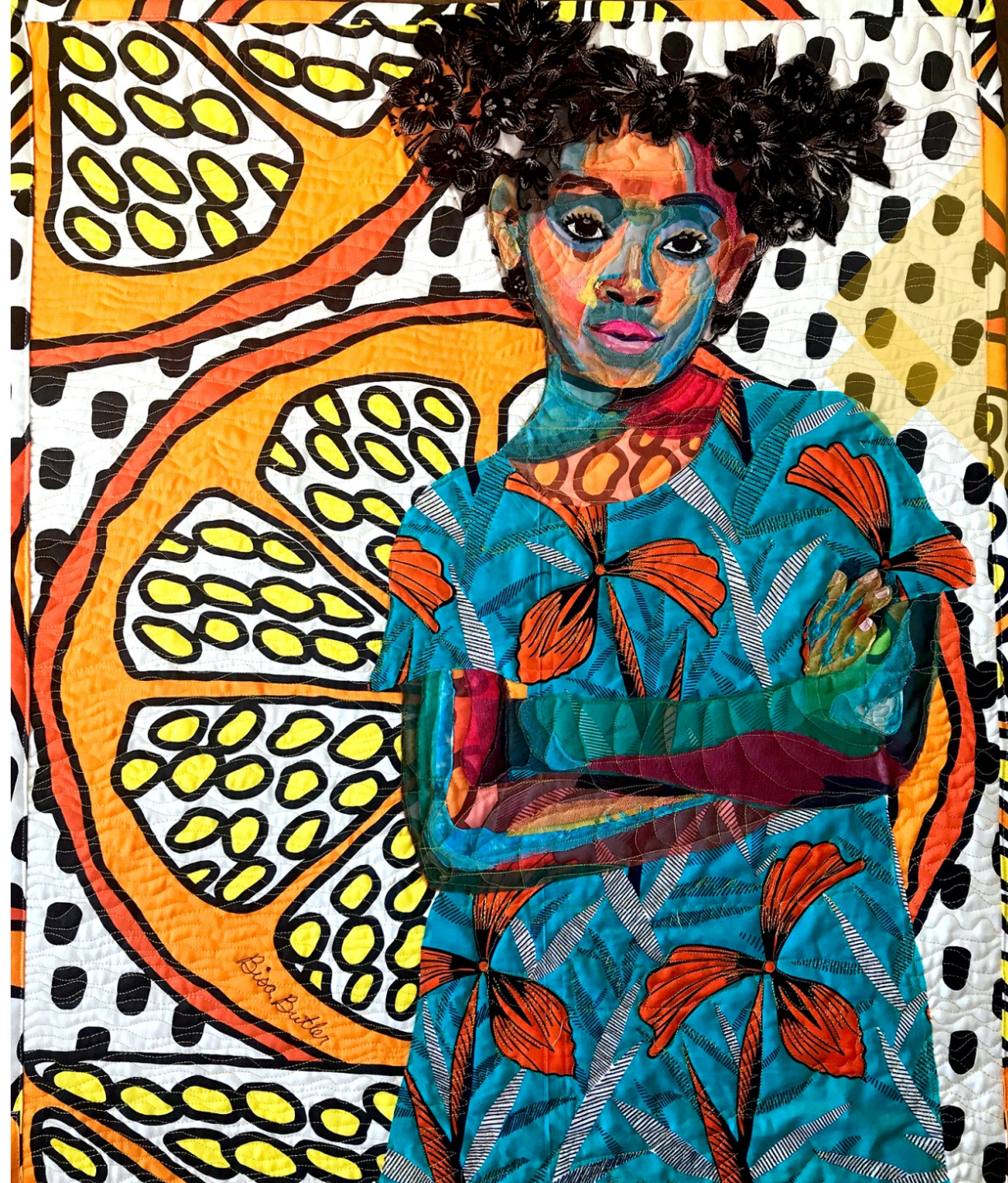
Anaya looks at you with bold strong eyes  
Her arms stitched tight against her dress  
Oranges twirling like wild suns  
Shine brightly behind Anaya's one big self

Anaya's arms are stitched tight across her dress  
Red flowers, yellow seeds, the details inspire  
And shimmer behind Anaya's one big self  
Slices of the world rolling through her life

Red flowers, yellow seeds, the details inspire  
Anaya is looking and taking you in  
Slices of the world rolling through her life  
She has dreams and ideas spinning in her head

Anaya is looking and taking you in  
Oranges twirl like wild suns  
She has dreams and ideas spinning and spinning  
Anaya looks at you with her bold strong eyes

*\*NB: I don't  
repeat my lines  
the same way  
and that's okay!*



# When you finish

- Read your draft
- Check to make sure you've used strong, beautiful words
- Read your poem again – this time out loud to hear its flow
- Revise if you hear or see word(s) you want to change
- Think of a title
- Share your Pantoum Portrait Poem
  - Take a photograph of your poem
  - Post to Facebook / Instagram with hashtag #KatonahMuseumAtHome
  - Read your poem, record and post

*Thanks for being Inspired by Bisa Butler!*