 Prescribed Text: Contemporary Australian Poets

‘This is where is begins’ Merlinda Bobis

Pre-Reading

[Bibliography](http://www.merlindabobis.com.au/biography.htm): http://www.merlindabobis.com.au/biography.htm

Award-winning writer Merlinda Bobis grew up in Albay, Philippines at the foot of an active volcano, which figures prominently in her writing and performance. As a child her main interest was painting, but at age ten she began writing poetry because ‘painting with words’ was cheaper. She has published novels, short stories, dramas and poems. Her plays have been produced/performed on stage and radio in Australia, the Philippines, Spain, USA, Canada, Singapore, France, China, Thailand and the Slovak Republic. She has performed some of her works as theatre, dance and music.

Merlinda has a Bachelor of Arts (Summa cum Laude) from Aquinas University of Legazpi and a Master of Arts in Literature (Meritissimus) from the University of Santo Tomas, Manila. For ten years she taught Literature and English at Philippine universities before coming to Australia in 1991 on a study grant. She completed a Doctorate of Creative Arts at the University of Wollongong where she taught creative writing for more than twenty years. She continues to dream new stories in Canberra.

Activity 1: Pre-Reading

Look at what you have read, what are three (3) possible themes/ topics that Bobis might explore in her poetry?

Without having read the poem provide a possible explanation for why the poem is called ‘This is where it begins’.

Provide a definition for the following:

Bikol

Pilipino

What genre of stories often begin with ‘once upon a time’?

Activity 2: During Reading – Revising language techniques

Complete definitions for the following language techniques before you begin reading the poem, this will aid you in your reading of the poem

| Term | Definition | Example from the poem |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Epithet |  |  |
| Dialect |  |  |
| Subversion |  |  |
| Anaphora |  |  |
| Creation story |  |  |
| Episodic structure |  |  |
| Cumulative listing |  |  |
| Allusion |  |  |
| Anecdote |  |  |

Activity 3: Post-Reading – Matching textual evidence with language features

After you have read the poem, go back to the table you completed in activity 3. Using the annotations you have made for the poem, complete the final section of the table where you find evidence of each of the following techniques in 'This is where it begins'.

Activity 4: Reflecting

1. Think of a story that you remember being told by a relative when you were a child.
   * Write the story (as best as you can remember it).
   * What else can you remember about the experience of hearing the story? (for example, particular sounds, places, feelings you had)
   * Why do you think this story has stayed with you?
2. What does this poem suggest about the link between stories and cultural identity?