

- Who do you trust most? Why?
- How do you show compassion to others? How can you extend that same compassion to yourself?
- What does love mean to you? How do you recognize it in relationships?
- What do you appreciate most about your personality? What aspects do you find harder to accept?
- Explore an opinion or two that you held in the past but have since questioned or changed. What led you to change that opinion?
- Finish this sentence: "My life would be incomplete without..."
- Describe one or two significant life events that helped shape you into who you are today.
- When do you trust yourself most? When do you find it hard to have faith in your instincts?
- Describe a choice you regret. What did you learn from it?
- What do you fear most? Have your fears changed throughout your life?
- Which emotions do you find hardest to accept? How do you handle these emotions?
- Describe your favorite things to do when feeling low.
- What three things bring you the most joy?
- What place makes you feel most peaceful? Describe that place using all five senses.
- Where do you want to be in 5, 10, 20 years?

- Favorite words.
- Words that describe you.
- Made-up words.
- New words you learn.
- Words that rhyme.
- New facts you learn.
- Things that inspire you.
- Quotes that guide you.
- Dreams/nightmares (best to write these immediately upon waking!).
- Poets you want to read.
- Favorite smells.
- Favorite sounds.
- Favorite tastes.
- Favorite things to feel.
- List of firsts—first date, job, concert, kiss, etc.
- Questions.
- Things that remind you of home.
- Things you are grateful for.
- Risks you've taken.
- Important lessons you learned from your parents or chosen family.
- Overheard conversations.
- Things to do with someone you love.
- Flowers and plants you love.
- Inventory items in a junk drawer, closet, purse.
- Titles for poems.
- Favorite works of art.
- Things you're really good at.
- Things to do when you're bored or uninspired.

- Find a quote from a poem and write it so it takes up an entire page. On the facing page, make a collage that illustrates the quote.
- Imagine creating a statue to an iconic person in your life. Sketch, describe, or collage ideas for the statue.
- Find or print a page of writing— it can be a page from a book, an article from the internet, anything. Tape the page into your journal and use a pen, pencil, marker, crayon, etc. to "black out" certain words so the words that remain form a new sentence, image, or idea.
- Draw a four-panel comic of something that happened to you recently. Then translate the comic into a poem.
- Write a goodbye letter to a person or place.
- Do a "blind contour" drawing of a person or object (don't look at the page as you draw, look only at the person/object you're drawing; and don't remove your pen/pencil from the page until the drawing is finished). When finished, write what you see in the drawing.
- Write using homemade ink and a paintbrush or dried twig/feather/q-tip as your writing implement. To make ink, combine onion skin, 1c water, 1 dash salt, 1tsp white vinegar in a pot, cover and heat just below boiling for about 1 hr. Pass through a strainer or coffee filter into a clean jar with a single whole clove in it (to preserve pigment).

- Nature is indifferent to human needs./ Nature has some purpose, even if obscure.
- I can understand the world to a sufficient extent./ The world is basically baffling.
- Love is the greatest happiness./ Love is illusionary and its pleasures transient.
- Political and social action can improve the state of the world./ Political and social action are fundamentally futile.
- I cannot fully express my most private feelings./ I have no feelings I cannot fully express.
- Virtue is its own reward./ Virtue is not a matter of rewards.
- It is possible to tell if someone is trustworthy./ People turn on you in unpredictable ways.
- Economic and social inequality is the greatest social evil./ Totalitarianism is the greatest social evil.
- Overall, technology has been beneficial to human beings./ Overall, technology has been harmful to human beings.
- Work is the potential source of the greatest human fulfillment./ Liberation from work should be the goal of any movement for social improvement.
- Art is at heart political in that it can change our perception of reality./ Art is at heart not political because it can change only consciousness and not events.

# THE AUDRE LORDE QUESTIONNAIRE TO ONESELF

- How do you take a position against the fear of an articulated power that exists not on your terms?
- How can we reach down in threatening difference without being killed or killing?
- How do you deal with things you believe, live them not as theory, not even as emotion, but right on the line of action and effect and change?
- To whom do you owe the power behind your voice, what strength you have become, yeasting up like sudden blood from under the bruised skin's blister?
- What are the symbols of your survival? (draw or list 3)
- Nurturing is the power patriarchy fears. What are ways you can rediscover this power by nurturing your friends, family, and inner child?
- Without community there is no liberation. How can you implement a radical practice that requires courage, vulnerability, and trust within your community?
- Each one of us has privilege. For example, you have a bed and you do not go to it hungry. Your privilege is not a reason for guilt, it is part of your power to be used in support of those things you say you believe. What is your privilege and what do you say you believe? (List as many as you can.) Are these in conflict?
- How much of your life are you willing to spend protecting your privileged status? Is that more than you are prepared to spend putting your dreams/beliefs for a better world into action?
- Your power is relative, but it is real. How can you use your power this week and beyond?
- Who are you? (List 6-10 characteristics, qualities, adjectives). Do you bring all of who you are to what you do? Why or why not?
- What are ways you can cherish and respect all parts of who you are in your work, with family, and in hostile environments? How can you support others on this journey?
- How do you practice rather than perform self-worth, self-love?
- How can you hold the bruised child within you?
- When last did you compliment another person, give recognition to their specialties? (Write down three people in your life you will recognize in love this week.)
- What is your relationship to anger? What were you taught about your anger?
- Anger is loaded with information and energy. What does your anger illustrate about your life, your experience?
- How can you be creative and direct with your anger?

Adapted from: "The Audre Lorde Questionnaire to Oneself" by Asha Grant of The Free Black Women's Library: Los Angeles. For more information, visit [blacksyllabus.com/](http://blacksyllabus.com/)

# THE POET'S JOURNAL

