

“Message in a Bottle” (2004), by Nalo Hopkinson
English 230 | Worksheet 2 | Two pages (front and back)

Your Name(s):

Available in PDF via the class Brightspace. Published by PM Press:

https://www.pmpress.org/index.php?l=product_detail&p=425

“Powered by [ADHD](#) ...though the brake pedal probably reads [fibromyalgia](#). And if I’m going to stretch this metaphor past breaking point, the toolbox on the seat beside me might be labelled [NLD](#). After all, the flip side to ‘non-verbal learning disorder’ is arguably ‘high verbal ability.’ I’m not saying that my cognitive differences made me a writer — that would be flippant and untrue — but though they pose challenges, there are ways in which they can sometimes help. I write science fiction, fantasy, speculative fiction; call it whatever you want, my novels and stories are full of the unreal, the futuristic, the unlikely, the impossible. I was born in Jamaica, in the Caribbean. I lived for years in Guyana as well, and in Trinidad/Tobago. But the bulk of my life so far has been spent in Toronto, Canada. After about 35 years of that, I moved to the USA for a professorship in Creative Writing.” <https://www.nalohopkinson.com/about-the-author>

Text as Labour, Craft, and Technique: While it’s difficult, if not impossible, to follow or understand the totality of Hopkinson’s writing process (how this became that), we can consider some of her techniques. Describe how she uses simile (“like”), repetition (to create themes), or exposition (to provide background). Just pick one technique and use at least one example.

“Message in the Bottle” as Fiction: Your friend has never read this story. Describe it to them in two or three sentences.

Media as Material Agent and Experience: Hopkinson's approach to writing speculative fiction is quite evocative. Describe how she uses text to evoke a particular image. Alternatively, you can draw / sketch that image.

Media as Social Practice: "Message in a Bottle" is partly about the role messengers play in society and culture, and there are many messengers here. Identify one messenger in the story, describe the degree to which others trust that messenger, and explain why. Use an example.

Media as Culture and Value: What do you think "Message in a Bottle" values or cares most about? There are, of course, many possible answers to this question.