

Common Core Lesson: Slam Poetry and Identity

Grade Level: 9th - 12th grade

Subject: English Language Arts / Performing Arts

Objective: Students will critically analyze slam poetry as a form of self-expression and activism, explore how slam poets use their identity to convey messages, and create their own slam poems that reflect their identity and beliefs.

Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Materials:

Examples of slam poetry performances (videos or transcripts)

Whiteboard and markers

Writing materials

Access to a recording device (optional)

Procedure:

Introduction (10 minutes):

Begin by discussing the power of slam poetry as a means of self-expression and activism, especially in the context of identity.

Ask students to reflect on their own experiences with slam poetry or spoken word performances, if any, and how they believe it can be a platform for conveying personal identity and beliefs.

Analysis of Slam Poetry Performances (25 minutes):

Display visual examples of various slam poetry performances, with a particular focus on those that explore themes of identity, race, gender, and social issues.

Facilitate a class discussion on each performance, encouraging students to deeply analyze the performance techniques, emotional expression, and authenticity of the poets.

Pose guiding questions to stimulate critical thinking and discussion, such as: How does this slam poet use their identity to convey a powerful message? How does performance enhance the impact of their poetry?

Group Activity: Slam Poetry Analysis (30 minutes):

Divide students into small groups and assign each group a slam poem performance to analyze, with a strong emphasis on identity-related themes.

Instruct students to delve into the content of the poem, the poet's performance style, and the way in which identity-related themes are explored.

Encourage groups to create presentations summarizing their analysis and insights, focusing on the unique ways in which identity is conveyed.

Group Presentations and Discussion (20 minutes):

Have each group present their analysis of the assigned slam poem to the class, emphasizing the key elements and identity-related themes they discovered.

Foster a class discussion about how slam poetry serves as a powerful vehicle for individuals to convey their personal identities and beliefs, as well as to address societal issues.

Explore how the performance aspects of slam poetry enhance the emotional impact and resonance of the message conveyed.

Creating Slam Poetry (40 minutes):

Explain to students that they will now have the opportunity to create their own slam poems that reflect their identity, beliefs, or a chosen theme related to identity.

Provide writing prompts or themes that encourage exploration of identity, social issues, or personal experiences, guiding students to focus on emotional expression and authenticity.

Encourage students to write their slam poems individually or in pairs, with the understanding that their personal identities and voices are central to their creations.

Optionally, allow students to practice and record their slam poetry performances using recording devices.

Peer Performances and Feedback (20 minutes):

Organize a session for students to perform their slam poems in front of the class or in small groups, creating a supportive atmosphere.

After each performance, facilitate constructive feedback from peers, prompting them to assess how effectively the poet conveyed their identity or chosen theme.

Use guiding questions such as: How did the poet's performance enhance the impact of their poetry? How did their identity shine through in their performance?

Reflection and Discussion (10 minutes):

Lead a whole-class discussion on the profound impact of slam poetry as a tool for self-expression and activism, especially in conveying one's identity and beliefs.

Encourage students to reflect on how their own slam poems allowed them to authentically convey their identity and beliefs.

Discuss the broader implications of slam poetry in addressing social and personal issues, promoting empathy, and fostering a deeper understanding of diverse identities.

Assessment:

Assess students based on their active participation in discussions, the quality and authenticity of their slam poem creations, their ability to effectively analyze slam poetry performances, and their capacity to provide constructive feedback.

Evaluate their understanding of slam poetry as a powerful form of self-expression and activism, particularly in the context of conveying personal identity and beliefs through performance and written reflection.

Resources:

Books:

"The Poet X" by Elizabeth Acevedo - This novel in verse explores the journey of a young slam poet, Xiomara, as she navigates her identity, family, and her place in the world through poetry. It's an engaging way to introduce students to the world of slam poetry and its connection to personal identity.

"Don't Call Us Dead: Poems" by Danez Smith - This collection of poems by Danez Smith delves into themes of race, identity, sexuality, and social justice. It includes powerful slam poems that can serve as excellent examples for students to analyze and discuss.

"Slam Poetry: A Poet's Guide to Performance and the Spoken Word" by Gary Mex Glazner - This book provides insights into the world of slam poetry, offering tips for performance and writing. It can be a valuable resource for both students and teachers looking to understand and appreciate the art of slam poetry.

Extensions:

Slam Poetry Event: Organize a slam poetry event within the school or community. Invite local slam poets or spoken word artists to perform, and encourage students to showcase their own slam poems. This can be a powerful platform for students to share their identities and beliefs with a wider audience.

Guest Poet Workshops: Invite a professional slam poet or spoken word artist to conduct workshops with your students. They can provide guidance on writing and performing slam poetry and share their experiences as artists.