



# The History of Spoken Word Poetry

## Historical and Cultural Perspectives in Literature



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<b>Grade Level</b>	9th – 12th Grade	<b>Time Frame</b>	120 - 180 minutes
<b>Subject</b>	English/Language Arts	<b>Duration</b>	2 - 3 class periods
<b>Course</b>	A.P. Language and Composition, A.P. Literature and Composition, American Literature, World Literature		

### Essential Question

What impact does history have on literature? How does literature shape or reflect culture?

### Summary

In this lesson, students evaluate the historical and cultural perspectives behind spoken word poetry. Students review several spoken word poems and analyze their historical, cultural, and social connections while studying the history of spoken word poetry. Students then demonstrate and justify their understanding of the concept of spoken word poetry and its influences and perspectives with a creative final product. This is a multimodality lesson, which means it includes face-to-face, online, and hybrid versions of the lesson. The attachments also include a downloadable Common Cartridge file, which can be imported into a Learning Management System (LMS) such as Canvas or eKadence. The cartridge includes interactive student activities and teacher's notes.

### Snapshot

#### Engage

Students respond to questions after watching a spoken word poetry video.

#### Explore

Students analyze several spoken word poetry videos.

#### Explain

Students read and discuss The History of Spoken Word Poetry.

#### Extend

Students evaluate a spoken word poem and make inferences about the poet's perspective and influences.

#### Evaluate

Students use the Color, Symbol, Image strategy to demonstrate their understanding of the history and influences of spoken word poetry.

## Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 9)

**9.3.R.1:** Analyze the extent to which historical, cultural, and/or global perspectives affect authors' stylistic choices in grade-level literary and informational texts.

## Attachments

- [CSI—The History of Spoken Word Poetry - Spanish.pptx](#)
- [CSI—The History of Spoken Word Poetry.pptx](#)
- [Color Symbol Image Handout—The History of Spoken Word Poetry - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Color Symbol Image Handout—The History of Spoken Word Poetry - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Color Symbol Image Handout—The History of Spoken Word Poetry.docx](#)
- [Color Symbol Image Handout—The History of Spoken Word Poetry.pdf](#)
- [Common Cartridge—The History of Spoken Word Poetry.zip](#)
- [Lesson Slides—The History of Spoken Word Poetry.pptx](#)
- [Note Catcher—The History of Spoken Word Poetry - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Note Catcher—The History of Spoken Word Poetry - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Note Catcher—The History of Spoken Word Poetry.docx](#)
- [Note Catcher—The History of Spoken Word Poetry.pdf](#)
- [Resource Page—The History of Spoken Word Poetry - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Resource Page—The History of Spoken Word Poetry - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Resource Page—The History of Spoken Word Poetry.docx](#)
- [Resource Page—The History of Spoken Word Poetry.pdf](#)
- [Rubric Color Symbol Image—The History of Spoken Word Poetry - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Rubric Color Symbol Image—The History of Spoken Word Poetry - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Rubric Color Symbol Image—The History of Spoken Word Poetry.docx](#)
- [Rubric Color Symbol Image—The History of Spoken Word Poetry.pdf](#)

## Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Note Catcher handout (attached; one for each student)
- The History of Spoken Word Poetry Resource Page (attached; one for each student)
- Color, Symbol, Image handout (attached; one for each student)
- Color, Symbol, Image Rubric (attached; one for each student)
- Writing paper
- Pencil or pen
- Highlighters (optional)
- Art supplies

15 minutes

## Engage

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to follow along with this lesson. Display **slide 3**. Read aloud the essential questions. Ask students to consider the questions and volunteer any thoughts they might have. Move to **slide 4** and briefly discuss the lesson objective.

Display **slide 5**. Play the video from the link on the slide:

<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/jonathan-lykes-performs-perception>

Display **slide 6**. Review the questions on the slide with students. Ask them to consider the questions and share with an [Elbow Partner](#). After an appropriate amount of time has passed for discussion, ask for volunteers to share their thoughts with the class. Follow up with a whole class discussion.

45 minutes

## Explore

### Teacher's Note

Below is a list of the videos students will view in this part of the lesson. You may want to preview the language and content ahead of time. Consider removing/hiding the videos from the Lesson Slides and Note Catcher if you deem them inappropriate for your students.

[Alex Dang "What kind of Asian are you?"](#) by Alex Dang

[A Muslim girl and a Jewish girl](#) Washington DC team

[Spoken Word to His Mother](#) by Brandon Leake

[Love you some Indians](#) by Rowie Shebala

[Rise](#) by Amanda Gorman

[To This Day](#) by Shane Koyczan

Display **slide 7**. Pass out a copy of the attached **Note Catcher** handout to each student. Explain to students that they will be watching six spoken word poetry videos. For each video, assign them to take notes on their Note Catcher handout.

Have them consider the following questions as they watch the videos:

- Whom is the poet speaking to (Who is their audience)?
- From whose perspective is the poet speaking?
- What is the subject/topic of the poem?
- How is the topic culturally relevant?
- How is the topic historically relevant?
- How is the topic socially relevant?
- What strategies do the poets use to make their poems relevant?

Review the definition of **culturally**, **historically**, and **socially relevant**, if necessary.

### Optional: Differentiation

Define the terms socially, culturally, and historically relevant, if needed for student understanding:

**Socially Relevant:** How did people live, what were social trends, and what did people believe at a particular time?

**Culturally Relevant:** How are the arts and popular interests associated with a particular time and place? What were common or shared experiences (religion, race, geography, ethnicity, etc.)?

**Historically Relevant:** What was happening in the world when the poem was written? What historical events took place at this time

Display **slide 8**. Play the first video. Allow students time to complete their Note Catcher for each video before moving on to the next presentation.

Display **slides 9-13**. Continue with the same process of asking students to take notes during each of the videos.

Discuss as a class what stood out in each of the presentations. Ask for volunteers to share any questions about any of the videos. Encourage students to share anything they find interesting, disturbing, or familiar in any of the poems.

30 minutes

## Explain

Display **slide 14**.

When the class has discussed the videos, assign the handout **Resource Page—History of Spoken Word Poetry**.

Prompt students to highlight important words or points or take notes in the margins as they read. Ask them to identify any questions the videos may have generated. When they finish reading, ask them to write down the most significant or important point they learned from the text. If needed, review the [POMS](#) strategy with the students.

Ask students to discuss their points of significance in small groups and then share out to the whole class. Be sure to address any misconceptions students may have at this time.

30 minutes

## Extend

### Teacher's Note: Tech Integration

In this activity, students are asked to review one of the videos from earlier in the lesson and answer questions about the video they choose. If students do not have devices available to them to review the videos, consider going through them again as a whole class. Another option is to choose one video to review for the entire class and view it together. If you would like to delve deeper into student understanding, consider watching all the videos again and discussing the questions as small groups or whole class.

Display **slide 15**. Have students choose one of the videos they viewed earlier in the lesson. You may need to review them. Alternatively, they could choose another spoken word poem if they have a favorite. Ask students to watch the video again and answer these questions about their chosen poem:

- What clues to the poet's culture can you identify?
- What historical references does the poet use?
- What social issue is the poet addressing?
- What does the poet think society expects from them?
- Why did the poet chose spoken word poetry over other mediums of expression?

Ask students to consider these questions carefully, to write their answers to the questions on a sheet of paper (students could also use a Google Doc, if you prefer) with the name of the video they chose, and turn in their answers.

### Teacher's Note

Student responses can be used as a formative assessment to gauge their understanding of spoken word poetry. Alternatively, these could be used in conjunction with the next activity as a summative assessment.

45 minutes

## Evaluate

Display **slide 16**. Review the [CSI: Color, Symbol, Image](#) strategy with students if needed.

Pass out a copy of the **Color, Symbol, Image handout** and the **Color, Symbol, Image Rubric** to each student. Explain to students that they will reflect on what they have learned about the historical, social, and/or cultural perspectives and influences of spoken word poetry using a color, a symbol, and an image. They will also write a brief statement explaining why they chose that color, symbol, and image to represent their thinking.

### Student Sample Response

"I chose yellow for my color because spoken word poetry shines a light on topics that are historically swept under the rug. The symbol I chose is the peace symbol. I feel like spoken word poetry is a way to bring all cultures together in peace regardless of their history. The image I chose is a photo of Olympians with their fists in the air at the 1968 Olympics because that represents to me solidarity and bravery. Spoken word artists are very brave to speak out on what they believe even when they are the only ones. Their poetry gives them voice and lets others know they are not alone."

### Teacher's Note

When assessing students' CSI work, consider the explanation behind their choices more than the actual choice of color, symbol, or image. Their explanation should communicate their understanding of the historical, cultural, and/or social connections to spoken word poetry.

## Resources

- Brown, A., & Otuteye, M. (2018, April 10). *The Bread Loaf School of English toolkit for teaching spoken word & slam poetry*. [https://nanopdf.com/download/teaching-slam-poetry\\_pdf](https://nanopdf.com/download/teaching-slam-poetry_pdf)
- Dang, A. (2014, January 29). *What kind of Asian are you? Button Poetry*. [Video]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VoP0ox\\_jw\\_w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VoP0ox_jw_w)
- Gorman, A. (2020, March 4). *Rise. Vital Voices Global Partnership*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdBT9JBV09k>
- Inkbottle Press. (n.d.) *History of spoken word poetry*. <https://www.inkbottlepress.com/interesting/history-of-spoken-word-poetry.html>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). CSI: Color, Symbol, Image. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/161>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Elbow Partners. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/116>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Jigsaw. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/179>
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- K20 Center. (January 27, 2021). *Online Discourse Etiquette*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yPUXQAuhD3E&t=1s>
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- Leake, B. (2020, September 1). *Spoken word to his mother. America's got talent*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vaM-OrZi6IA>
- Lykes, J. (2007). *Perception. Facing History and Ourselves*. <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/jonathan-lykes-performs-perception>
- Miazga, M. (1998). *The spoken word movement of the 1990s*. <https://www.ndsu.edu/pubweb/~cinichol/CreativeWriting/323/Spoken%20Word%20Movement.htm>
- NanoPDF.com. (2018). *Word & slam poetry*. [https://nanopdf.com/download/teaching-slam-poetry\\_pdf](https://nanopdf.com/download/teaching-slam-poetry_pdf)
- Roth, B. (2018, December 25). *Where and how did spoken word poetry originate?* Quora. <https://www.quora.com/Where-and-how-did-spoken-word-poetry-originate/answer/Bryan-Roth-5>
- Shebala, R. (2014, October 27). *Love you some Indians. All def poetry*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijQmGBOP6mc>
- Skitterphoto. (2017, November 7). *Silver-colored microphone*. [Digital image]. Pexels. <https://www.pexels.com/photo/silver-colored-microphone-675960/>
- Smithsonian Folkways. (n.d.) *Say it loud. African American spoken word*. <https://folkways.si.edu/say-loud-african-american-spoken-word/struggle-protest/article/smithsonian>
- The Poetry Foundation. (n.d.). *An introduction to the Black arts movement*. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/148936/an-introduction-to-the-black-arts-movement>
- Washington D.C. Team. (2013, August 9). *2013 Brave new voices - A Muslim girl and a Jewish girl. Youth speaks*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tv00xjClbx0>
- Wikipedia. *Griot*. (2021, May 13). <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Griot>