



The History of Spoken Word Poetry

Historical and Cultural Perspectives in Literature



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Grade Level	9th – 12th Grade	Time Frame	120 - 180 minutes
Subject	English/Language Arts	Duration	2 - 3 class periods
Course	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

- Common Cartridge (attached)
- [Lesson Slides](#) (attached)
- [Note Catcher handout](#) (attached; one for each student)
- [Resource Page—The History of Spoken Word Poetry](#). (attached; one for each student)
- [Color, Symbol, Image handout](#) (linked; one for each student)
- [Color, Symbol, Image Rubric](#) (linked; one for each student)
- Writing paper
- Pencil or pen
- Highlighters (optional)
- Art supplies (only needed if the Color, Symbol, Image strategy is done by hand)

15 minutes

Engage (face to face)

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 on the slide:

Embedded video

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=7yyrSq7OcoA>

Display **slide 6**. Review the questions on the slide with students. Ask students to consider the questions on the slide 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 (face to face)

Teacher's Note

You may want to preview the language and content of the spoken word poetry presentations ahead of time.

A list of the videos students will view in this part of the lesson is provided below:

[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 them that they will be watching six spoken word poetry videos. For each video, have them take notes on their Note Catcher handout. Ask them to consider the following questions as they watch the videos:

1. Whom is the poet speaking to (their audience)?
2. From whose perspective is the poet speaking?
3. What is the subject/topic?
4. Is the topic culturally relevant? Historically relevant? Socially relevant?
5. How so?

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

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

Display **slides 9-13**. Continue with the same process throughout the video slides.

Ask the students to discuss as a class what stood out to them in the videos. Ask for volunteers to share any questions they may have about any of the videos or whether or not anything interesting stood out to them.

30 minutes

Explain (face to face)

Display **slide 14**.

When students have discussed the videos, announce to them that they are going to read a short history of spoken word poetry. As they read, they should be thinking about any the questions they may have about the videos that the article may answer. 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. Pass out copies of the [Resource Page—History of Spoken Word Poetry](#). Prompt students to highlight important words or points or take notes in the margins.

Ask students to discuss what they wrote in small groups and then share out to the whole class. Be sure to address any misconceptions students may have at this time.

Optional: Differentiation

The [Jigsaw](#) strategy could be used to help struggling students when reading the text in this activity.

30 minutes

Extend (virtual)

Have students choose one of the spoken word poetry videos from earlier in the lesson or a favorite spoken word poem of their own. They are asked to infer what the poet's history or time period, culture, or social issue is from their poem. They are also asked to discuss what might have affected the poet's perspective and why they chose spoken word poetry as a medium of expression.

Teacher's Note

This assignment could be used as formative assessment to address any misconceptions at this point in the lesson, or it could be used in addition to the activity in the next module as part of the summative assessment.

Communicate the following to students:

Overview: In this activity, choose one of the spoken word poetry videos from earlier in this lesson or choose another of your favorite spoken word poems. After you have selected your poem, think about what you have learned about spoken word poetry and what you already know from your experience. Use that information and knowledge to make an inference and draw a conclusion about the poet's history or the time period, culture, and/or social positioning and what perspectives may have influenced their choice of spoken word poetry over other mediums of expression.

Next, share the following procedure with your students. This information may be embedded in an LMS or may be shared in a virtual classroom such as Google Classroom.

Procedure:

1. Choose one of the spoken word poetry videos from earlier in the lesson or choose another favorite poem.
2. Open a new Google Doc and type the title of your poem, the poet's name, and your name.
3. Watch the video and keep these questions in mind:
 - Are there some clues to the poet's culture?
 - Does the poet use any references to history in their poem?
 - Do you know the social issue the poet is addressing or what society expects from them?
 - Why do you think the poet chose spoken word poetry over other mediums of expression?
4. When you have finished the video, think about those questions again. Use that information and what you have learned about spoken word poetry to make an inference and draw conclusions to answer the questions.
5. Write 3-5 sentences answering those questions and record that on your Google Doc.
6. Submit your Google Doc when finished.

60 minutes

Evaluate (virtual)

Instruct students to use the [Color, Symbol, Image](#) strategy to represent their understanding of spoken word poetry in this activity. Their choices should reflect what they have learned in the previous activities about the historical, social, and/or cultural perspectives and influences of spoken word poetry. Students write a brief statement about why they chose each piece.

Student Sample Response

"I chose yellow for my color because it reminds me of a light and 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 submission, 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.

Optional: Differentiation

Students could complete this activity by hand drawing their color, symbol, and image, or they may choose to do it using Canva or Google Slides or Draw. If students choose to hand draw the assignment, they should take a picture of it and upload it as a file submission. A [rubric](#) has been provided to the students to guide their completion of the assignment.

Communicate the following with students:

Overview: In this final activity, use the [Color, Symbol, Image strategy](#) to demonstrate what you have learned about the historical, social, and/or cultural perspectives and influences of spoken word poetry. Think about what color might represent the concept of spoken word poetry and then explain your choice. You do the same for a symbol and an image. Your color choice might represent the mood or tone of the concept. A symbol might be something like two lines crossing or a circle or a thumbs up. Think metaphorically when you think about a symbol, but more concretely for an image.

In other words, if I asked you to show me a color, a symbol, and an image for the concept of love, you might choose red for the color because it is typically associated with love. Your symbol might be the shape of a heart because when you love somebody you feel it in your heart and the symbol of a heart is often used to represent love. Your image might be a family having fun at a park or gathering around a new baby, or maybe hugging a grandparent, or a picture of a home because when you think about love you might think about your family. That memory reminds you of a time when you felt loved.

Remember to explain your choice. It must make sense. If you had chosen red for the color of love, but said it was because red is your favorite color of car, you will need more explanation as to why that color represents love. Take your time with this assignment and be creative!

Next, share the following procedure along with these links:

- [Color, Symbol, Image rubric](#)
- [Color, Symbol, Image handout](#)

<https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/lesson/1535?rev=31733>

This information may be embedded in an LMS or may be shared in a virtual classroom such as Google Classroom.

Procedure:

1. Here is a [rubric](#) to help guide the completion of your CSI (Color, Symbol, Image).
2. You can choose how you want to complete this assignment. You could either hand draw the assignment, or you could use this [Color, Symbol, Image slide](#) to create a digital version of your CSI. If you choose to hand draw the assignment, you will need to take a picture of it and upload it as a file.
3. When you have chosen each piece of the CSI, explain why you chose those to represent your understanding. Remember to consider this question when choosing your_color, symbol, and image:
 - What have you learned about the historical, social, and/or cultural perspectives and influences of spoken word poetry?
4. When you have finished your assignment, submit your file.

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
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- 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>
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