

Speak Your Truth

Techniques in Spoken Word Poetry

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Grade Level	9th – 12th Grade	**Duration**	2 weeks
Subject	English/Language Arts		
Course	Composition, Creative Writing		

Essential Question

How does our ability to use language empower us?

Summary

There is a special kind of magic in hearing the words you have written spoken out loud. Spoken word poetry is meant to be heard and performed rather than read silently from a page. In this lesson, students analyze the techniques spoken word poets use to engage an audience and examine the devices they use to pack power into their poems. Students will explore their identities and their voices as they compose and perform their own spoken word poems as a finale to the lesson. This lesson is intended as a follow-up to the History of Spoken Word Poetry lesson, but it can also stand alone.

Snapshot

Engage

Students use a Tell Me Everything strategy to evoke prior knowledge of spoken word poetry.

Explore

Students view and analyze performance techniques in spoken word poetry videos.

Explain

Students observe how a spoken word poet writes a poem.

Extend

Students compose original spoken word poems.

Evaluate

Students perform their spoken word poems.

Standards

ACT College and Career Readiness Standards - Reading (6-12)

WME301: Analyze how the choice of a specific word or phrase shapes meaning or tone in somewhat challenging passages when the effect is simple

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 9)

9.7.R: Analyze and evaluate the techniques used in a variety of multimodal content and how they contribute to meaning.
9.7.W: Create engaging multimodal content that intentionally addresses an audience and accomplishes a purpose.

Attachments

- Lesson-Slides-Speak-Your-Truth.pptx
- Note-Catcher-Speak-Your-Truth - Spanish.docx
- Note-Catcher-Speak-Your-Truth - Spanish.pdf
- Note-Catcher-Speak-Your-Truth.docx
- Note-Catcher-Speak-Your-Truth.pdf
- Spoken-Word-Poetry-Performance-Tips-Speak-Your-Truth - Spanish.docx
- Spoken-Word-Poetry-Performance-Tips-Speak-Your-Truth - Spanish.pdf
- Spoken-Word-Poetry-Performance-Tips-Speak-Your-Truth.docx
- Spoken-Word-Poetry-Performance-Tips-Speak-Your-Truth.pdf
- Spoken-Word-Poetry-Rubric-Speak-Your-Truth - Spanish.docx
- Spoken-Word-Poetry-Rubric-Speak-Your-Truth - Spanish.pdf
- Spoken-Word-Poetry-Rubric-Speak-Your-Truth.docx
- Spoken-Word-Poetry-Rubric-Speak-Your-Truth.pdf
- Spoken-Word-Poetry-Writing-Tips-Speak-Your-Truth - Spanish.docx
- Spoken-Word-Poetry-Writing-Tips-Speak-Your-Truth - Spanish.pdf
- Spoken-Word-Poetry-Writing-Tips-Speak-Your-Truth.docx
- Spoken-Word-Poetry-Writing-Tips-Speak-Your-Truth.pdf

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Note Catcher (attached; one per student)
- Rubric Spoken Word Poem (attached; one per student)
- Spoken Word Poetry Writing Tips (optional; attached)
- Spoken Word Poetry Performance Tips (optional; attached)
- The History of Spoken Word Poetry Lesson
- Writing paper
- Pencils or pens

20 minutes

Engage

Teacher's Note

This video is included on **slide 17** and could be viewed after this activity or during the Explain section of the lesson if there is a need for more information about spoken word poetry and its history.

Embedded video

https://youtube.com/watch?v=G9qaVXE30FU

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to guide this lesson.

Display **slide 3**. Read aloud the essential question. Ask students to consider the question and volunteer any thoughts they may have about it. Move to **slide 4** and briefly discuss the lesson objectives.

Display **slide 5.** If needed, review with students the Tell Me Everything strategy. Ask students to take out a blank piece of paper and create a list or web with answers to the prompt: *Tell me everything you know about spoken word poetry.* Set a 3-minute timer and assign students to create their lists or webs.

When time is up, ask students to share with a partner or small group. Have them add any new information they learn to their lists or web. Ask groups to share out with the class any of the important information they gathered.

Address any misconceptions or gaps in knowledge before proceeding.

60 minutes

Explore

Teacher's Note

In this activity, have students watch spoken word poetry videos. Because of sensitive content and language, you may want to preview the videos before assigning to students. Choose three of the videos linked below, or if time permits, watch them all. These particular poems were chosen to represent diversity in poets and topics. Here is a list of the included videos:

- "If I should have a daughter (Point B)" by Sarah Kay (stop at 3:40)
- "Power of One" by Brandon Leake
- "Earthrise" by Amanda Gorman
- "Still I Rise" by Maya Angelou
- "Captain America" by William Nu'utupu Giles
- "Dear Santa" by Phil Kaye
- "An Origin Story" by Sarah Kay and Phil Kaye
- "How to Fight" by Carlos Andres Gomez

Pass out a copy of the attached **Note Catcher** to each student. Display **slide 6**. Explain to students they will watch several spoken word poetry videos.

Show **slide 7**. As they watch the videos and take notes, they should keep the following questions in mind:

1. What is the subject of the poem?
2. What tone is conveyed in the presentation?
3. What performance techniques engage the audience?
    - Body movement
    - Hand gestures
    - Dramatic pauses
    - Varying volume
    - Varying tempo
4. What words do poets use?
5. What literary elements do poets use?
    - Repetition
    - Rhyme
    - Assonance
    - Alliteration
    - Wordplay

Teacher's Note

Display the slide for the first video you have chosen for the class to view. Videos are incorporated individually on **slides 8-15.**

Ask students to take notes on their **Note Catcher** as they watch the videos. Let them know that they will use their notes for the next activity. Have students watch at least three videos. Ask students to review and complete their notes between videos.

Show **slide 16.** When students have completed their Note Catcher, review the 3-2-1 strategy, if necessary. Students should answer the following questions using the 3-2-1 Strategy:

- Identify 3 things you noticed about the performance techniques (movements, hand gestures, dramatic pauses, varying volume, tempo, etc.).
- Identify 2 things you noticed about the literary elements used (repetition, assonance, alliteration, wordplay, rhyme, etc.).
- Identify 1 thing you noticed about the subject/topic/tone of the poems.

Ask students to share and discuss their 3-2-1 with a partner. Allow volunteers to share with the whole class.

Optional Tech Integration

A shared Padlet board could be used for the 3-2-1 strategy. Students could contribute to the board as a whole class collaboration.

40 minutes

Explain

Teacher's Note

In **slide 17**, Sarah Kay talks briefly about spoken word poetry and her experience as a poet and a performer. You may wish to share her video with the class or share the link with individual students who express concern at creating and presenting their original spoken word poem.

Display **slide 18**. Watch the "Writing A Spoken Word Poem In One Hour" video. The poet walks us through her creative process of developing a spoken word poem.

Embedded video

https://youtube.com/watch?v=8PHx2TJHIhE

Display **slide 19**. After students watch the "Writing a Spoken Word Poem in One Hour" video, watch the second video by Taz Alam, "Fake Friends." The poet performs the poem she wrote in the previous video.

Embedded video

https://youtube.com/watch?v=gR0gNV7VDHk

Make a class list of the writing and performing pointers and techniques the poet mentioned and uses in her spoken word poetry.

Teacher's Note

You will find a **Spoken Word Poetry Writing Tips** handout and a **Spoken Word Poetry Performance Tips** handout in the attachments for this lesson. These handouts can be copied and distributed to the students or you may use the class list created in this activity as a reference for students.

120 minutes

Extend

Display **slide 20**. Announce to students they will now be writing their own spoken word poem. Review some of the writing tips. A copy of the **Spoken Word Poetry Writing Tips** is attached and can be distributed to students.

Display **slide 21**. Explain to students that these are only suggestions for their poem topic, but they are free to choose anything not listed here as long as it is appropriate and you have approved the topic. The length of the poem will be left to your (the teacher's) discretion.

Pass out a copy of the attached **Spoken Word Poetry Rubric** handout to each student. Review the categories with the students and explain that the rubric will be how their learning will be assessed. Since students will be writing a full spoken word poem, this activity could take several days to complete, so plan accordingly.

180 minutes

Evaluate

Display **slide 22**. Once students have written and revised their spoken word poem, they will then perform it by reading aloud to their classmates. Review some of the performance techniques learned throughout the lesson. **The Spoken Word Poetry Performance Tips** handout is attached and can be distributed to students. Remind students to refer to their Spoken Word Poetry Rubric to see how their performance will be assessed.

Students will likely need more time to practice their performance of their poem. Consider giving time in class and ask them to practice out of class to perfect the performance on their own.

Display **slide 23**. When it is time to perform their poetry, remind students of the audience rules.

Optional Tech Integration

Students can perform their spoken word poem on a Padlet video instead of a live version in class.

Optional Differentiation

Students can create a slideshow presentation instead of recording a Padlet video or presenting their spoken word poem in front of the class. The pictures used could be found on the internet or pictures/video from student records. They could do an audio voiceover with their own voice reading the poem.

Resources

- Alam, T. (2018, Mar 9). *Fake friends: Spoken word poetry.* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/gR0gNV7VDHk
- Alam, T. (2018, Mar 6). *Writing a spoken word poem in one hour: TAZ TRIES.* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/8PHx2TJHIhE
- Amoah, C. (2020, Apr 9). *How to write like your favorite spoken word poet.* | *Tips for beginners* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbtN3A1bh2g
- Amoah, C. (2020, Apr 16). *How to perform like your favorite spoken word poet* | *Tips for beginners.* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQNuUfYoXQI&t=2s
- Angelou, M. (2014, June 10). *Still I rise* [Video]. Literature today UK. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qviM_GnJbOM
- Giles, W. N. (2016, Jan 31). *Captain America.* [Video]. Button Poetry. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l16HaRJV6xY
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- Gorman, A. (2018, Dec 4). *Earthrise.* [Video]. Climate Reality. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwOvBv8RLmo
- K20 Center. (n.d.). 3-2-1. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/117
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Padlet. Tech Tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/1077
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Tell Me Everything. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/107
- Kahn, P. (2012). Creating golden shovel poems. Poetry Out Loud. [Lesson Plan]. https://www.poetryoutloud.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/07/GoldenShovelLessonPlan.pdf
- Kay, S. (n.d.). *If I should have a daughter.* [Video]. TED. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0snNB1yS3IE&t=1s
- Kay, S. and Kaye, P. (2012, Apr 29). *An origin story.* [Video]. Speakasync. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=esgfG3BoAPc
- Kaye, P. (2017, Jan 5). *Dear santa.* [Video]. Speakasync. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QU8PuObxMfI
- Kovaleva, P. (2020, Dec 11). Use your voice inscription on gray background. [Photograph]. Pexels. https://www.pexels.com/zh-cn/search/%E5%8F%A3%E5%8F%B7/
- Leake, B. (2021, Jan 19). *Power of one.* [Video]. United Way of San Joaquin County. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8DEA0fWgR5Q
- MasterClass. (2020, Nov 8). How to write spoken word poetry. https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-write-spoken-word-poetry#how-to-write-spoken-word-poetry
- Power Poetry. (n.d.). 5 tips on spoken word. https://powerpoetry.org/actions/5-tips-spoken-word