



### ***African American Poetry and the Idea of Citizenship***

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:  
3-5<sup>th</sup> Grade student

**Key Words:** citizen, citizenship, culture, identity, society, country, poetry, African American, slavery, segregation, protest, boycott, civil rights, equity, equality, patriotism, critical patriotism

**Teaching Standards:** See [Appendix 1](#) for Teaching Standards addressed in this unit

**Synopsis:** In this unit, students will be introduced to the connection between African American Poetry and how it has been written and used by African Americans as both a commentary of and challenge to our society's view on their roles as citizens in the history of our society. Throughout this 6-week unit, students will be exposed to the poetry of both past and present decorated African Americans poets. They will be able to define what citizenship is, how they, as third graders, are themselves citizens of different groups, the responsibility being a citizen entails, as well as the benefits and consequences of being a citizen of a family, group, school, neighborhood, city, state, nation and world! The poems that have been chosen will follow a progression to relate, developmentally, to where students currently are in their social, emotional, and academic thinking and learning, as we build our classroom community for the school year.

*This unit is recommended for 3-5<sup>th</sup> Grade students but was specifically written and used in my 2020-2021 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class. It was written to be integrated into the current North Carolina 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade SEL (Social-Emotional Learning), Literacy and Social Studies Curriculum.*

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## *Building the Idea Citizenship Through African American Poetry*

### **Introduction**

#### Rationale

This CU introduces third grade students to the idea of ‘citizenship’ and launches them into African American poets who have written about such freedoms. The rationale is to expose students to famous African American poets who have written and spoken about citizenship, starting to build a foundation of awareness for them to understand specifically how the genre of poetry was, is and can be used as a powerful tool for African Americans (or anyone) to speak and fight for their citizenship as the equal members of our society. This rationale is important to me because of my early childhood educational experiences, as well as traveling and teaching in South America for a year after college graduation.

Growing up in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, I was a tiny girl living in a large, Catholic family of six children and attending Sacred Heart Catholic School until the end of my 4<sup>th</sup> grade year when my parents divorced. In Pinellas County, Florida and in three short months during the early years of desegregation, I went from attending an all-white school run by the Sisters of Mercy in their white habits, to being bused across town to Woodlawn Elementary School. Woodlawn, historically, was where only black children had been educated. We had a black principal, Mr. Williams, and my 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher was a Caucasian man – Mr. Remy.

Thus, continued the rest of my years of primary, secondary, and higher education. I attended schools with peers from different races, cultures, and beliefs. I continued to notice distinct differences in the ways in which white students and black students were approached, treated, and even graded. Some teachers were encouraging to everyone, while others did not expect or believe that the students who were black were ‘as capable’ as the white students, often blatantly showing unequal attitudes, expectations, treatment, or just general disregard. There seemed to always be a level of righteous indignation, anger, and dismay I that carried in my mind and heart over the prejudice, injustice and lack of common human decency I witnessed.

Fast-forward to today and the society in which we find ourselves. My friendships with people of all races have allowed me to listen to their stories and develop a deeper understanding of systemic racism that has always and still exists. We still have a very long way to go to become a civil and inclusive society where everyone is treated with equal respect. Being an educator for over 36 years, 25 of those working with students with special needs, I have always challenged myself to help students understand the diverse and wonderful world in which they live, recognize

how many people have never be treated as ‘equally’ as others, and emphasize and practice inclusivity and equality among races, religions and ethnicities.

### Demographics

For the year 2020-2021, Pinewood Elementary School is in the Southwest Learning Zone in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Charlotte, North Carolina. Our school is a Title 1 School with 100% of our students eligible for free breakfast and lunch. There are currently 543 students enrolled in grades Pre-K to 5<sup>th</sup> grade, which includes one Pre-K Special Needs classroom and three Specialized Academic Curriculum (SAC) classrooms. 279 students are male, 264 female, with 50.9% Hispanic, 33.0% African American, 6.4% Caucasian, 5.5% Asian, 0.7% American Indian, and 3.5% two or more multi-race.

My current third grade class consists of 7 males and 9 females ranging in age from seven to nine years old. Ethnicities include Asian, Indian, Hispanic, and Multiracial students. I currently have no students who identify as Caucasian. Of the students I serve, there are 4 English Language Learners and one child with moderate-severe learning disabilities who requires 1-on-1 instruction. All other students, excluding the Asian boy (although he is also bilingual), speak mostly their native tongue while at home with family.

### Unit Goals

Introducing students to historical and present-day African American poets who have contributed to the literary fabric of the United States of America will initiate and develop their knowledge of larger concepts such as the idea of *who* is considered a citizen, *what* constitutes citizenship, *where* and *when* in history these poets have made their contributions, *how* African Americans have and continue to use poetry to stand out as prominent, intelligent and purposeful members of our society, and *why* they have been recognized as great contributors to the fabric of our country.

The main goal of this CU is EXPOSURE! Students will be able to define and explain what citizenship is, and to identify important African American poets, connecting with their words and ideas. As we read and dissect these works as well as complete lesson activities, students’ awareness of how these poets have risen to receive honor and recognition for their literary contributions should increase.

I want students to realize that there has been historical prejudice and exclusion of many different members of our society, and that each poet’s experiences and perceptions shine forth in the works they have produced and been recognized for. It is expected that not all content and concepts of every piece will resonate with students. Nonetheless, the exposure as well as the enjoyment of poetry should be considered as students unveil the rich words and history provided throughout the unit.

## Content Research

In order to provide students with exposure to great African American poets and a foundation to an understanding of the historical prejudice and the exclusion of these members of society as full citizens, I wanted to first have to look at a few things about education in general, and then, more specifically, the way in which African Americans and other people of color have been treated within our educational systems. I wanted to design a unit that spans across curriculums, where students would have the opportunity to share ideas about their own culture and how it pertains to their citizenship in their families classrooms, schools, and in our society.

In my research, I leaned upon past and present information that reinforces the fact that education has, more often than naught, never been 'separate but equal'. Despite the resources and the ability to do so, our society continues to choose segregation and misappropriation over diversity, fair treatment, and equity. I would like to look at three paradigm shifts happening in education over the past 20 years. The move away from industrialization to digitalization, macroaggressions versus microaggressions present within our educational system, and finally the shift to more integrated and thematic, across-curriculum instructional models.

Sir Ken Robinson is a forward thinker in education and someone I have long admired and followed. His theories regarding creativity and that historically formal education systems were developed to assist in industrialization of the world and longer serve us, hold much validity. This was thought provoking when I first heard his reasoning in a TED Talks presentation and read his book Out of Our Minds: Learning to be Creative. (Robinson 2001) Robinson dares to ask the question, "Can creativity be taught?" (Robinson 2001, pg. 114) He points out that in our society, we think of creativity as something someone has or does not have, which he proports is false. He states, "People are not creative in the abstract; they are creative in something – in mathematics, engineering, in writing, in music, in business, in whatever." (Robinson 2001, pg. 115) As educators, we are charged with the task of finding the gifts, talents and specific creativity within each of our students, pushing them onward to become not only productive problem solvers in our society, but question askers – for example, what will the future of our society look like 20 or 50 years from now, and how do we prepare for that society? (Robinson 2013, TED Talks)

He believes, and I concur, that all children have a tremendous capacity for creativity and innovative thinking and our current model for education does not promote this. In fact, with conviction and reasoning, he contends that the education systems of the 1800's and 1900's are obsolete and can stifle the development, creativity and individuality needed to propel present-day society into the global, digital age. (Robinson 2008: TED Talks).

In his prospectus, “A Global Reset of Education”, he writes “Much like agricultural systems that thrive due to the soil, our communities, cities, neighborhoods, schools and people thrive when the culture is right. This is something that great educators and schools understand – an education system is not successful because of tests and output-driven hurdles, it is successful when individuals are recognized, and diversity of talent is celebrated.” (Robinson 2020: par. 4)

The paradigm shift from the teacher being the one to impart knowledge and students’ regurgitation of that knowledge (universal) to the idea of everyone bringing some form of expertise, creativity, and the ability to ask questions and find answers to those questions to expand their knowledge on given subjects (individualized) is growing in substance and power.

Another innovative researcher, engineer and teacher of computer programming is Sugata Mitra. He wondered why only the rich people who could afford a college education, seemed to have the ‘gifted’ children – what about the children who lived in the slums behind the brick wall next to the university where he taught? He conducted some experiments in the poor slums of New Delhi, and in remote villages across India and around the world to test the ingenuity, creativity and intelligence of poor children who had no access to computers or education in computer programming.

Mitra’s findings were astonishing! His work proved that the schools of today are obsolete, and that children of all socio-economic backgrounds can, will, and do learn about whatever they want to learn about when given the tools and the chance. His TED Talks outline a method he has called “Learning in the Cloud”, where children, when given a topic, can come up with their own questions, find the answers to those questions, and share in depth about what they have learned. Teachers, in his model, are the facilitators and play the role of “granny cheerleaders”, as he calls them. (Mitra 2012, TED Talks)

Society is being called to a higher standard of inclusion, recognition of our societal differences, and more innovative ways for children not only to learn, but to ask questions and propose answers to problems we have not yet been faced with. Seeing this progress and knowing the outcome, brings me to my next two points regarding education overall, and historically and specifically, the treatment and education of students of minorities, specifically African Americans, in our white-dominated society.

Growing up white, in a multi-racial society, has always afforded me more privilege and opportunity than my black colleagues. My early and ongoing life experiences, along with developing solid friendships with black people, Hispanics, Vietnamese, and people of other cultures have consistently kept me aware of societal deformities and inconsistencies as they pertain to opportunity, education and fundamentally--citizenship.

These friendships have taught me that the textbooks we learned from had little to do with the facts surrounding the true history of our country. Sadly, this continues to be the case in American education, but gladly, things *are* changing. Teaching is changing. The access to information is changing, and many ideas and realizations are being brought to light like never before in the development of an inclusive society.

Diversity Awareness and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is now being embedded into many American classrooms. Socratic seminars and units of study place the teacher in the role of ‘facilitator’ of learning and put students in the driver’s seat. Content and access to content is provided for all learners, regardless of race and socio-economic status. The expectation, even from a very young age, for students to ask questions, process, discuss and create solutions for what they are learning is becoming the expectation and norm. Sociologists, psychologists, and educators are challenging traditional and, might I say, antiquated methods of not only teaching, but how educators interact with students -especially students of color.

Microaggressions are defined in Miriam-Webster dictionary as “*a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority)*”. Many studies have been conducted on the subject, and most people of color can tell you they have experienced macroaggressions and microaggressions throughout their lives, although they may not use that specific term. In her article, “Unmasking ‘Racial Microaggressions’”, Tori DeAngelis explains in detail how this subtle form of racism is prevalent in society today. (DeAngelis, 2009: 42) She sites many studies that have documented microaggressions and minorities’ responses and feelings about being treated this way:

*“Respondents agreed that these backhanded communications can make them feel as if they don't belong, that they are abnormal or that they are untrustworthy. Some described the terrible feeling of being watched suspiciously in stores as if they were about to steal something, for instance. Some reported anticipating the impact of their race by acting preemptively: One man noted how he deliberately relaxes his body while in close quarters with white women so he doesn't frighten them. Others cited the pressure to represent their group in a positive way. One woman said she was constantly vigilant about her work performance because she was worried that any slipups would negatively affect every black person who came after her.”*  
(DeAngelis, 2009: 44)

Derald Wing Sue, Ph.D from the University of Denver’s Center for Multicultural Excellence writes “microaggressions may be based on socioeconomic status, disability, gender, gender expression or identify, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, nationality, or religion.” (Sue, et

al 2019: 128) In the classroom some examples may look like: failing to pronounce or call a student by their proper name, scheduling tests on religious holidays, having low expectations for students of a different race, ethnicity or socioeconomic background, expressing political or racially charged opinions without regard to students who may represent those opinions in your classroom.

In her book *Citizen: An American Lyric*, Claudia Rankine, which was required reading for this course, documents numerous cases of both macroaggressions and microaggressions in our recent history. Her dynamic perspective from an educated, affluent, and highly decorated African American woman is both thought-provoking and heart-wrenching -exposing just how far we still need to develop in race relations as a country. She delves deeply into systemic racism and asks the difficult questions about the ‘how’s’, ‘whys’ and the motivations behind white people and their attempts at keeping other races down. In a Litro-Lab Podcast interview by Mia Funk about the book, Rankine says,

*“I put this book together as a way of interrogating micro-aggressions in terms of day-to-day racism in the United States. Often, I’m asked—Why did you write that? And I think it’s because when macro-aggressions, huge aggressions happen people often say how did that happen? As if we haven’t been building up to that moment day-to-day, every day for hundreds of years.”*

The most common microaggression that I am certainly guilty of, is correcting the speech, syntax, and verbiage of students while they are sharing their thinking. Instead of really listening to the content of what they are saying, many times I have been more interested in correcting *how* they are saying it. Correcting the verb tense, rearranging the words of their sentences so that they ‘make sense’ to me, and making the ‘repeat it the right way’ instead of acknowledging the content of what they are sharing interrupts the flow and meaning of lessons. These kinds of microaggressions are more and more being recognized and called out – no longer are they accepted practices from educators, administrators, or students.

Dr. Tanji-Reed Marshall, known for her workshops and writings on *Curriculum, Pedagogy and Power; Details of a Just Education*, emphasizes the importance of the scaffolding of ‘directive thought’ and ‘generative thought, grounded in questioning’, allowing students to find their own voices, present information as they understand it, and for teachers to create the space for students to confront and question and discuss their different ways of solving problems within the classroom. She stresses the importance of allowing students to speak in their own linguistic styles, outside of the Anglo- American constructs of language they may not need ‘in

the moment' in order for every voice to be heard and acknowledged without interruption, disruption or correction. (Marshall 2019, UnboundEd Summer Institute)

Marshall's methods and thinking tie into the work of both Robinson and Mitra, whereas, as educators, we are applauding and supporting the creative processes of learning (*what* is being shared and said) without penalizing a student for *how* it is being said, just because it is not being said in the acceptable Anglo-American manner.

The idea of citizenship for all, whether embraced by all, is slowly but surely coming to fruition. It is our responsibility as educators to include in our planning and teaching, historical information to include the contributions of every citizen. Literacy and, specifically, poetry, is the perfect avenue in which to introduce 3<sup>rd</sup> graders to the offerings in this field by African American poets. They should also be exposed to the big historical ideas surrounding these literary pieces, knowing that they will further be learning about these events in their subsequent educational years. They must be taught that critical patriotism is still patriotism, nonetheless.

I have always believed in the power of diversity. The strength in having persons with different gifts and mindsets coming together to exchange experiences, perspectives, and ideas makes us all relevant citizens. I have never been able to fathom how our differences could, would, or should separate and divide us. Problem-solving and presenting different points of view intertwines us and binds us together, making our society and the world a stronger, more resilient, interesting, and educationally exciting place. Segregating our neighborhoods, cities, classrooms, and schools weakens the fabric of our society. This brings me to the pedagogy of how I set up my unit, and why I set it up in the way I did.

Susan Kovalik, from the Center of Highly Effective Learning and Teaching, built upon Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences. Her researched work, formerly known as *Integrated Thematic Instruction (ITI)*, has transformed the way I build community, engage students, and ensure growth. She has spoken and given workshops to help teachers create and implement evidence-based conditions for what she calls a body-brain compatible learning environment.

Over the years, I have connected some of my teaching practices with the core beliefs of Kovalik, and found her practices to not only be sound, but EXCITING and EFFECTIVE! Giving students an overall BIG IDEA to attach information to by having a year-long theme that is substantive and applies to the real world, will prepare students to become participating and contributing members of our democratic society. (Kovalik 1994: 4)

Whether it be animals, places or ideas, when teaching the fundamentals and strategies of



*how* to read, Kovalik stresses the importance of teaching children about world in which they live, with concepts that are “worthy of the time spent on (them) it”. (Kovalik 1994: 7) When letters, words and sentences are connected to ideas or people or places - both within and around the world in which they live - a deeper type of learning and comprehension will take place. Students’ curiosity will be sparked, their awareness of history increased, and their ability to relate to their environment and henceforth become productive and problem-solving members of society increases a hundredfold. Subsequently, she believes that students must be encouraged to see, integrate, and speak about the connectedness of all things. (Kovalik, 1994: 37)

For students to have brain-compatible experiences and for them to process and remember more information Kovalik says that learning should occur in this sequence: EXPERIENCE (‘Being there’, if at all possible) – CONCEPT (the BIG IDEA) – LANGUAGE (and definitions about the concepts) – APPLICATION (to the real world). (Kovalik, 1994: 39) She stresses that field trips, movies, etc. be taken/seen *prior to* units of instruction, so that students can attach information they learn to the actual visceral and visual experiences they have already had. This increases retention and understanding of new information and acts as an internal ‘filing cabinet’, if you will, in which to store that new information.

Because of their age and developmental level, it is easy to understand how most third graders, unless by their parents, have been taught very little about diversity, the real history of segregation and slavery in America, the First Amendment, the Civil Rights Movement, prejudice, injustice, or the subtle ways in which some citizens have been, and in many cases, continue to be ‘kept down’, so to speak. Through the poems of African Americans, this unit will introduce them to the idea of citizenship as experienced and written about by them.

Hopefully, it will be a support to what they have already been taught about citizenship in the earlier years of their education, and be a further introduction into how the poetry of some of the finest American citizens has contributed to the development and fabric of our society.

## Instructional Implementation

### Teaching Strategies

When considering the content of this CU, I wanted lessons to be historically relevant and span across-curriculums, integrating them with current SEL, Literacy and Social Studies curriculums. I also want the lessons to be available to be shared and taught either in sequence or in isolation, across other grade-levels as teachers so desired.

By delving into the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) for 3<sup>rd</sup> graders in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS), the CTI course *African American Poetry and the Idea of Citizenship*, fit perfectly into what students would be learning during Quarter 1.

Our 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade school year begins with Social Emotional Learning (SEL) through the platform of Caring School Curriculum. (Center for the Collaborative Classroom: 2018) In Literacy, our first quarter theme is *Overcoming Learning Challenges Near and Far*. Students read and learn about the difficulties students face accessing reading and learning resources around the world, how they overcome these difficulties, and the bravery and ingenuity by which they solve the many challenges of educating children who live in these remote areas. (EL Education Language: 2016) During the first weeks of the school year our Social Studies curriculum asks and answers the question “*What is Culture?*” – introducing students to diversity in America, and what that means for all peoples. The required reading and content are critical to the continued development of our global society. Because of this, the correlation between culture and citizenship was an easy leap to make!

In this unit, I start off by taking students on a virtual field trip around the globe to experience and think about how children, like themselves, access their education. The idea of citizenship will be introduced during this first week, and the introduction of African American poets and poetry will be scaffolded in the following weeks.

## Classroom Lessons/Activities and Assessment

### *Lessons – Week 1:*

<b>WEEK 1:</b> Introduction to Citizenship	<b>Documentary: On the Way to School</b> (purchase or live stream the video on Amazon)
<b>ENGAGE:</b>	Tell students that during these first few weeks of school, we will be talking about a lot of new ideas and watching/listening to/seeing some things about the world that they have never heard about before!
<b>EXPLAIN:</b> During the parts of this movie, I am going to have you stop and jot down, in bullet form, what you “NOTICE” and what you “WONDER” about all of the things you will be seeing and hearing.	<b>Ask:</b> ~Have you ever thought about how children in other schools go to school? This week we are going to learn about how 4 children from other parts of the world access their education, so that they can become productive citizens of their community and the world! ~Can anyone tell me what a ‘citizen’ is? (have students talk about this concept – do not give any answers!) <b>Say:</b> Let’s find out together!
<b>EXPLORE:</b> Show movie in 18 to 22-minute intervals – per day. They may not ask any questions during the movie. Teacher to stop every 4-5 mins for students to write down what they “Notice” and “Wonder” about each of the people in the movie	<b>Mon:</b> Jackson – Kenya, Africa (just show this part of movie) <b>Tues:</b> Zahaira – Atlas Mts., Morocco (show next part of movie) <b>Weds:</b> Carlos – Argentina, SA (show this part and movie will go back and forth between all 3 children now) <b>Thurs:</b> Samuel – Bay of Bengal, India (show next part) <b>Fri:</b> Complete the movie ***** <i>Show students a map of the world, and where each country is located as it is introduced in the movie</i> *****
<b>ELABORATE:</b> <b>Teaching Activities –</b> Notice/Wonder Charts – 1 for each day, including last part of film and cover sheet!	NOTICE and WONDER chart. Have students fill out a separate one for each day – create a booklet for them and have them decorate the cover with the title of the movie. Make sure they record the Name / Place / Mode of Transportation / Distance to School (daily or weekly)
<b>EVALUATE:</b> <b>Teaching Assessment - Poster</b>	Share “Notices” and ‘Wonders’ with each other - press the point of what each child did to become a citizen of their family/school. Have them create a poster depicting the 4 children in this movie in any way they wish and write a 1-3 sentence caption about each person that summarizes how they get to school.

*Teaching Activity - WEEK 1:*

Make a **Packet of 5 OF THESE SHEETS for EACH STUDENT**, with a **Cover Sheet** that they can illustrate. As they watch each segment about each child in the video, have them fill this in when you stop the video and ask them to write what they Notice and Wonder. They will use these notes to create the Poster at the end of the week.

*On the Way to School*

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**Person:**  
**Country:**

**Distance:**  
**Mode:**

<b>NOTICE (Things I SEE)</b>	<b>WONDER (Questions I have)</b>

*Teaching Assessment - Week 1:*

As a cumulative Activity, have students create a poster on construction paper, poster board, or in Book Creator ([www.bookcreator.com](http://www.bookcreator.com)) if they know how to use it, illustrating how each child got to school, and having at least one ‘caption’ under each picture. Make sure they also document HOW they got to school, and HOW FAR they went!

**On the Way to School – Poster**

<b>Person:</b>	<b>Person:</b>
<b>Person:</b>	<b>Person:</b>

*Lessons – Week 2:*

<p><b>WEEK 2:</b> Introducing the BIG IDEA and defining CITIZENSHIP – What does it mean to be a citizen of your family?</p>	<p><b>The Poems of Charles R. Smith Jr.</b> <a href="#">Allow Me To Introduce Myself – Charles R. Smith Jr</a> <a href="#">About Me – Charles R. Smith Jr.</a> <a href="#">I Am America – Charles R. Smith Jr.</a></p>
<p><b>ENGAGE:</b> Tell students that for the next few weeks of school, they will be listening to the poetry of some very famous past/present African American Poets.</p>	<p><b>Monday:</b> read aloud / listen to <i>Allow Me to Introduce Myself</i> <b>Tuesday:</b> read aloud / listen to <i>About Me</i> <b>Thurs – Friday:</b> read aloud / listen to <i>I Am America</i></p>
<p><b>EXPLAIN:</b> This year we are going to think about the BIG IDEA of CITIZENSHIP. <b>Lesson Activity</b> – Vocabulary Collector</p>	<p><b>(Say-if you watched it:</b> Last week we thought about what a citizen was as we watched the movie <i>On the Way to School</i>) <b>Ask:</b> What smaller word do you see inside the word citizenship? What is a citizen?</p>
<p><b>EXPLORE:</b> Define: <b>citizen, citizenship, culture</b> (from the SS Unit), <b>diversity /poetry</b> Begin a CITIZENSHIP Bulletin Board / Bubble Map (see example) <b>Teaching Activity</b> – ex. bulletin board</p>	<p>Have students define and discuss the meaning. <b>Ask:</b> Are you a citizen of anything? What does that mean? What makes someone a citizen? Are there some people who are NOT citizens? Why or why not? Does your culture play a part in your citizenship? How? What about different people from different cultures with different beliefs?</p>
<p><b>ELABORATE:</b></p>	<p>Have S. share their thinking and ideas about what a citizen is and the other question above. How does Charles R. Smith Jr. define who an American is? Do you agree with him? Why or Why not?</p>
<p><b>EVALUATE:</b> <b>TeachingAssessment</b> – template of a Person to personalize</p>	<p>Draw a picture of yourself and use at least 10 words or phrases to describe who you are! Surround yourself with the words and phrases that describe who you are a citizen in your family/in our class.</p>
<p><b>EXTEND:</b> As a tie-in to literacy and the importance of it, this poem can also be shared with students about the importance of learning to read from this African American’s perspective.</p>	<p><a href="#">Why Read - by Charles R. Smith Jr.</a> DEPENDING ON YOUR STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC, AND BECAUSE OF QUESTIONABLE LANGUAGE, BEGIN THIS POEM AFTER THE FIRST 12 SECONDS of the poem. The first few lines of the poem speak about gun and gang violence and may way to be skipped.</p>

*Teaching Activity – Week 2*

Vocabulary Collector – Make a copy for each student and have them add the definition as you progress through this Unit. You could also upload this into a Google Doc and have students insert a picture of an example of each word!

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>WORD:</b>	<b>Definition:</b>	<b>Example:</b>
citizen		
citizenship		
culture		
poetry		
identity		
society		
country		
African-American		
slavery		
segregation		

protest		
civil rights		
boycott		
equality		
equity		
patriotism		



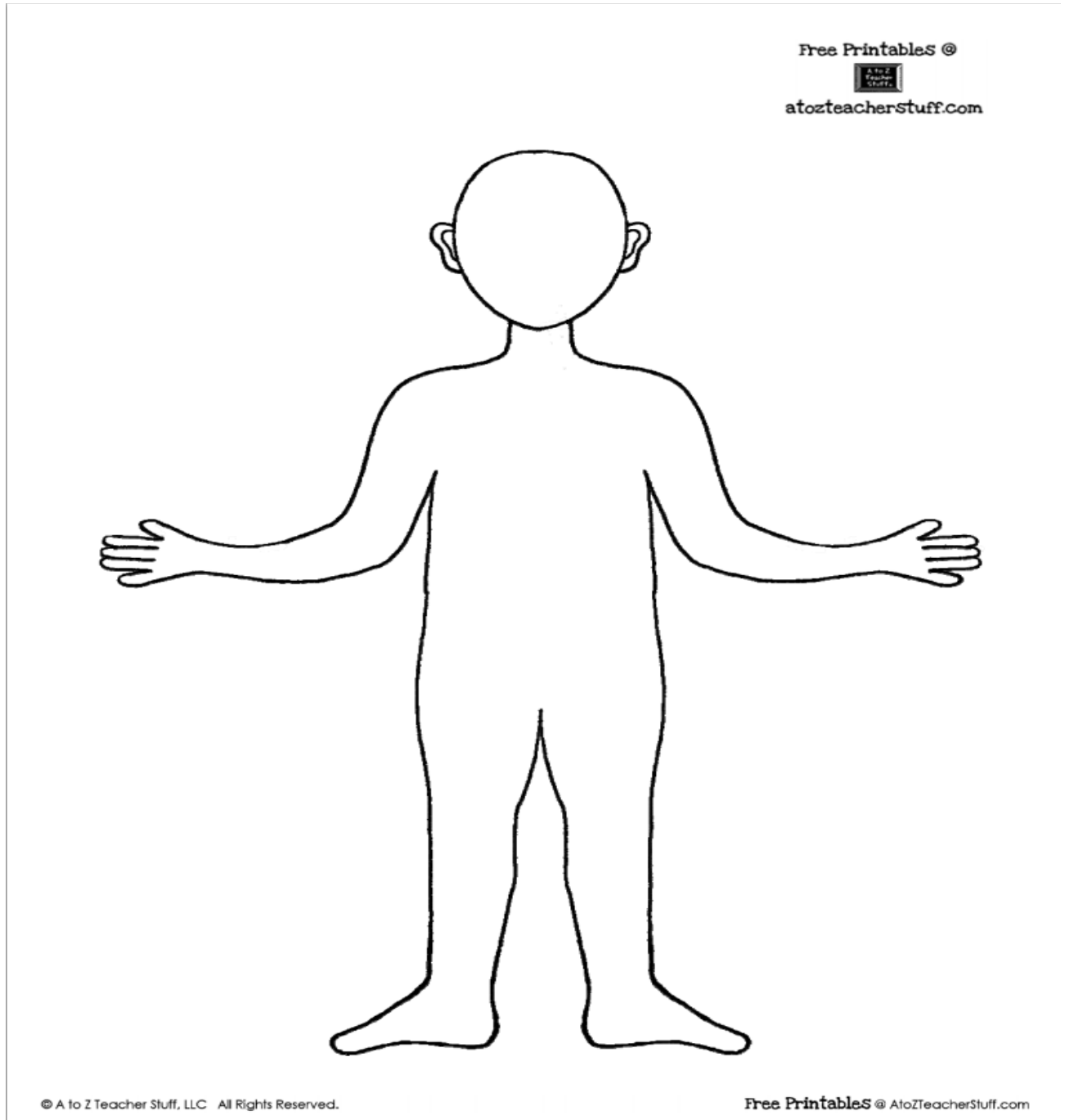
## Teaching Activity - Week 2

### Example of Interactive Bulletin Board



*Teaching Assessment - Week 2*

Template of a Person – After listening to *Allow Me to Introduce Myself* and *About Me* by Charles R. Smith, Jr., have students illustrate/label this picture to introduce themselves to the class.

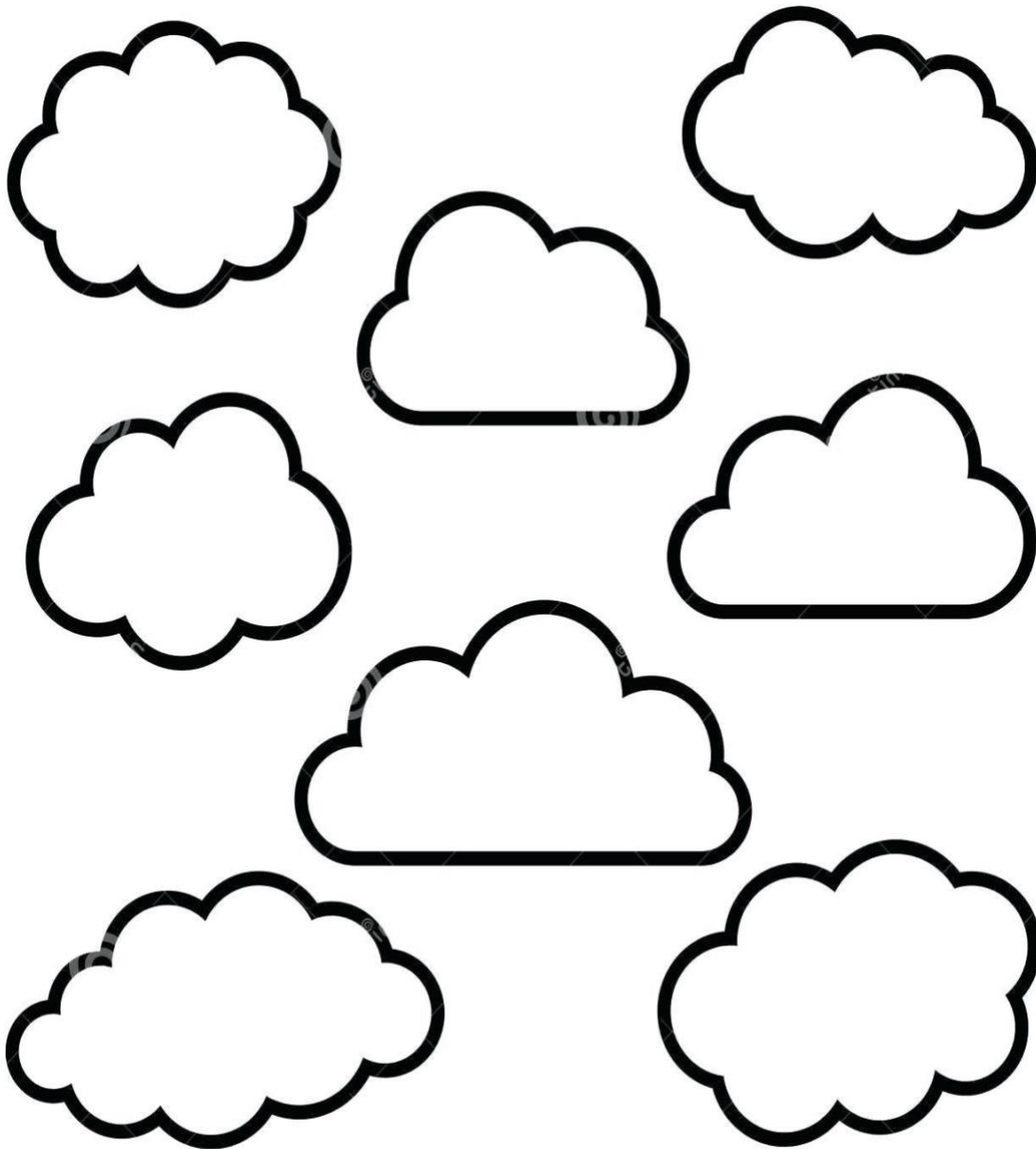


*Lessons Week 3:*

<b>WEEK 3:</b> What does it mean to be a citizen of this classroom?	<b>The Poetry of Langston Hughes</b> <a href="#">Hold Fast to Dreams by Langston Hughes</a> <a href="#">Dream Variations by Langston Hughes</a> <a href="#">What Happens to a Dream Deferred - Langston Hughes</a>
<b>ENGAGE:</b>	<b>Monday:</b> <i>Hold Fast to Dreams</i> <b>Tuesday:</b> <i>Dream Variations</i> <b>Wed-Friday:</b> <i>What Happens to a Dream Deferred</i>
<b>EXPLAIN:</b> Define: <b>variation / deferred /</b>	This week we will listening to the poems of a very famous poet about ‘dreams’. As we listen and discuss these poems, I want you to think about some of the meaning of the words in these poems and about your own dreams.
<b>EXPLORE:</b>	<b>Ask:</b> ~Do any of you dream? ~What are some of your dreams for your future? ~What are some of your dreams for your family/our classroom/the world? ~What are some things you can do to help fulfill your dreams? ~How does being a citizen of a family/classroom help us fulfill our dreams? ~How can different people from diverse backgrounds, who are different from us help us fulfill our dreams?
<b>ELABORATE:</b>	Have students delve into the questions from this week and share their dreams. <b>Ask:</b> Do you think all children have similar dreams? Why or why not? How does having a dream for the future tie all citizens together?
<b>EVALUATE:</b> <b>Teaching TOOL #6</b> – Clouds of Dreaming Template	As the week progresses, have students create their Clouds of Dreams poster, filling in and personalizing the things that they dream about for themselves and for all citizens.

*Teaching Activity and Assessment - Week 3*

Clouds of Dreams Template – After reading Langston’s Hughes’ poems about Dreams, have students personalize this template (or create one of their own digitally) to share with the citizens in the class what some of their dreams are!



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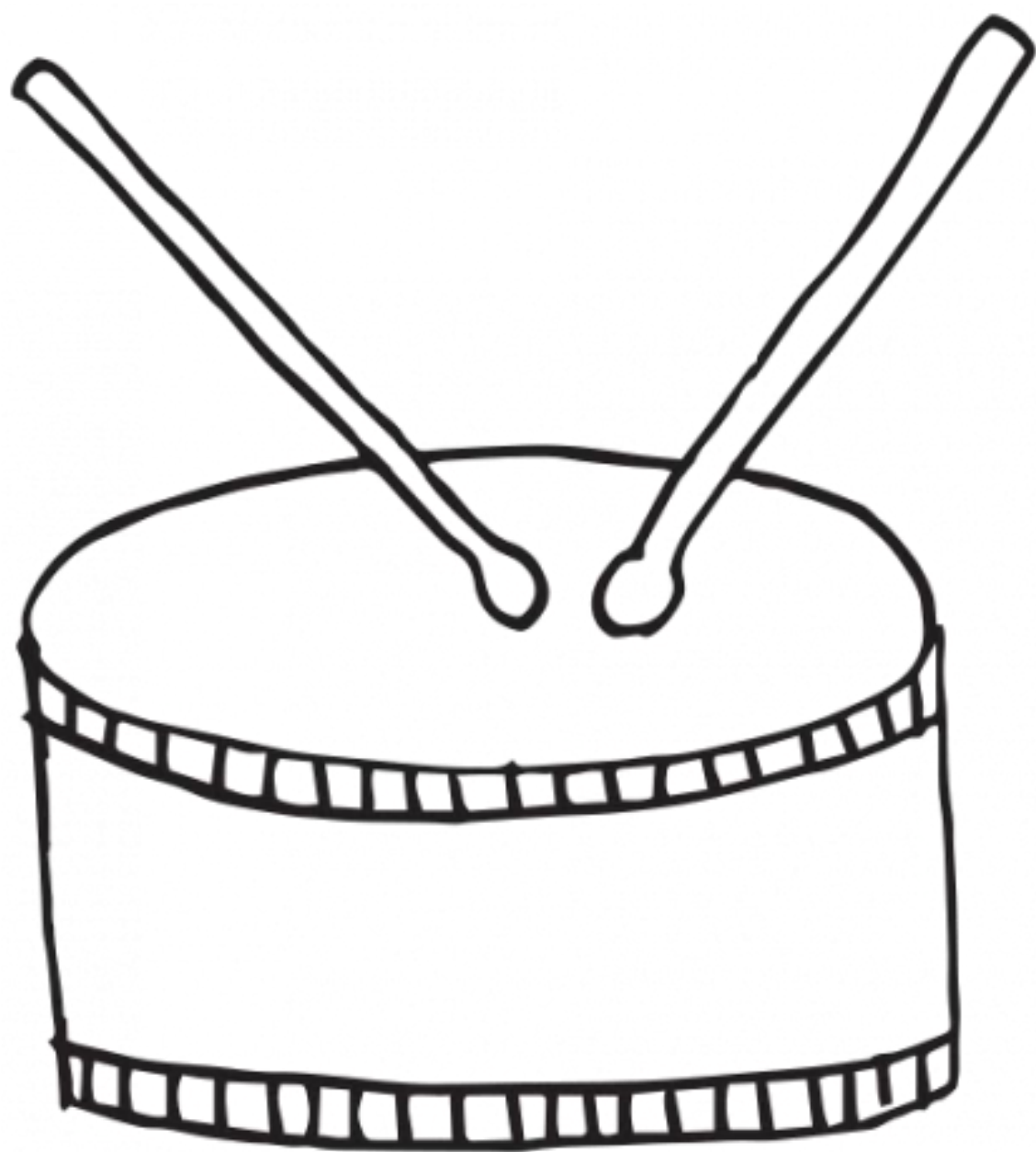
*Lessons Week 4:*

<b>WEEK 4:</b> What does it mean to be a citizen of our school?	<b>The Poetry of Nikki Giovanni</b> <a href="#">Choices - by Nikki Giovanni</a> <a href="#">Love Is - By Nikki Giovanni</a> <a href="#">The Reason I Like Chocolate - by Nikki Giovanni</a> <a href="#">Drum - by Nikki Giovanni</a>
<b>ENGAGE:</b>	<b>Monday:</b> read/recite/listen to <i>Choices</i> <b>Tuesday:</b> read/recite/listen to <i>Love Is</i> <b>Wednesday:</b> read/recite/ENJOY – <i>The Reason I Like Chocolate</i> <b>Thursday/Friday:</b> read/recite/listen to <i>Drum</i>
<b>EXPLAIN:</b> Define: <b>society / identity /</b>	Revisit
<b>EXPLORE</b>	<b>Ask:</b> ~How do the choices we make effect our citizenship in the school setting? ~How do our personal preferences (likes and dislikes) as make our school community stronger? ~What is Nikki Giovanni’s message through these poems, and what is she calling us to do? ~How does marching to the beat of our own drum bring diversity and enrichment to our school society?
<b>ELABORATE:</b>	Through the course of these mini-lessons, have students share about themselves and answer the above questions.
<b>EVALUATE:</b> <b>Teaching Activity:</b> Drum Templates	As the week progresses, have students fill in/ personalize their drum to depict the concepts Nikki Giovanni is trying to convey in her poems this week – especially <i>Drum</i> .

*Teaching Activity – Week 4*

Drum Template #1 – After reading Nikki Giovanni’s *Drum* have students personalize this template (or create one of their own digitally) to share what makes them unique and special, so that they can ‘march to the beat’ of their OWN drum.





*Lessons Week 5:*

<p><b>WEEK 5:</b></p> <p>What does it mean to be a citizen of the United States?</p>	<p><b>The Poetry of Rita Dove</b></p> <p><a href="#">Lady Freedom Among Us – Rita Dove</a></p> <p><a href="#">Civil Rights-Rosa Parks Poem by Rita Dove</a></p>
<p><b>ENGAGE:</b></p> <p>This poem is read by Rita Dove at the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Capital Building. It is the first 3 mins of the video. Her poem describes the Statue of Freedom which was resurrected by the slave</p>	<p><b>Monday-Tuesday:</b> <i>Lady Freedom Among Us</i></p> <p><b>Wednesday – Friday:</b> <i>Civil Rights – Rosa</i> - this is a 2-part video. You will have to stop it and explain to students about the history of the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's</p>
<p><b>EXPLAIN:</b></p> <p>Define: <b>patriotism /First Amendment / civil rights / segregation / equality/ equity /protest / boycott/</b></p>	<p>~Share with students the history of this statue, who it was built by, and who placed it where it is today and has stood for over 250 years.</p> <p>~ <i>Civil Rights – Rosa</i> - this is a 2-part video. You will have to stop it and explain to students about the history of the 1950-'s and 1960's</p> <p><b><u>***This is where the idea of African American History and patriotism starts to develop and be seen by students.</u></b></p>
<p><b>EXPLORE:</b></p>	<p><b>Monday or Tues:</b> Show students the article below</p> <p><a href="https://www.aoc.gov/explore-capitol-campus/art/statue-freedom">https://www.aoc.gov/explore-capitol-campus/art/statue-freedom</a></p> <p><b>Ask:</b> Does it make a difference if all citizens are not treated equally?</p> <p><b>Thursday:</b> Show simple explanation of the First Amendment and discuss with students</p> <p><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=puxdQRxlzWQ&amp;t=9s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=puxdQRxlzWQ&amp;t=9s</a></p>
<p><b>ELABORATE:</b></p>	<p>Field student questions and responses to this historical information that they are learning, perhaps for the first time.</p>
<p><b>EVALUATE:</b></p>	<p>Write an Acrostic Poem with the word F-R-E-E-D-O-M</p>



*Teaching Activity Week 5:*

Students will follow the example below to write an acrostic poem with the word FREEDOM. They may illustrate their poem, and write 1-3 sentences explaining what 'FREEDOM' means to them.

## Acrostic Poem

- Uses the letters of a topic word as the first letter for each line of the poem.
- Each line includes words and phrases related to the topic.
- Usually does not rhyme



*Lessons Week 6:*

<b>WEEK 6:</b> Creating poems and artwork about Citizenship.	<b>Writing Poems about Citizenship</b>
<b>ENGAGE:</b>	Tell students that this week they will be writing their own poem about our BIG IDEA – CITIZENSHIP!
<b>EXPLAIN:</b>	~ Review vocabulary / ideas ~ Revisit each African American Poet and what they wrote about ~ Use some of the vocabulary and ideas that we have spoken about over these last weeks ~ Tell students that this week THEY will be the poets!
<b>EXPLORE:</b>	Poems can be rhyming or not / in the form of a song / could have lines and stanzas or both / has to include something about their own culture and citizenship / could include anything about patriotism / equality / or any of the ideas they have learned about / could mention a poet by name or be themed after one of the weeks (Self/Dreams/Beat of your own Drum/Civil Rights)
<b>ELABORATE:</b>	Students have until Friday to create and turn in this assignment. They may add illustrations or art to accompany their poems.
<b>EVALUATE:</b> <b>Appendix #9 - Writing Rubric</b>	Use writing poetry exemplars for ideas and grading rubric for assessment.

## Teaching Activity Week 6:

Hand out / show these examples of the different styles and types of poems, as they prepare to create their original poem about CITIZENSHIP! They may use these to help them think of HOW and WHAT to write when writing their own poem!

### A Shape Poem

#### In a twist

We felt the rain, wind, and hail, and  
Then the thunder and lightning came.  
The winds gathered up and began to spin  
Like a spinning top, sucking up dust like a vacuum cleaner.  
The twister went around and around, like a merry-go-round.  
The gusts of air were picking up dust.  
It continued to roar loudly,  
Destroying everything  
Along the way.  
Soon it was  
Gone.

STARS ARE SO BRIGHT, SHINING ABOVE US ALL. MILLIONS  
AND BILLIONS SHINING FROM  
DUSK TO DAWN. WITH SILVER LIGHT, SO PRETTY.



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## Prose Poem Examples

Jumping on the merry-go-round, I scramble for a place to sit. There are kids scampering under my feet as the ride makes its first jerk ahead. The ride makes the dust come alive while slowly turning circles.

Jumping on the merry-go-round  
I scramble for a place to sit.  
Kids jostle and push  
As the ride jerks ahead.  
Dust dances delightedly and  
the ride turns round and round.

# Example of Stanzas

## My Dog Ate My Essay


My doggy ate my essay,  
he picked up all my mail.  
He cleaned my dirty closet  
and dusted with his tail.

He straightened out my posters  
and swept my wooden floor.  
My parents almost fainted when  
he fixed my bedroom door.

I did not try to stop him.  
He made my windows shine.  
My room looked like a palace.  
My jackets smelled like pine.

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## Free Verse Poem



Nature  
It's a beautiful thing  
We go outside and it's right there  
But we do not seem to notice it  
With trees growing all around us  
Birds soaring in the air  
Flowers of many colours with sweet scents  
Animals resting in the shade  
Water flowing through rivers, lakes, seas and oceans  
Fish swimming in the flowing water  
Forests growing high into the sky  
We all must try to keep it so  
It's a beautiful thing  
Nature

Teaching Assessment - Week 6  
Poetry Grading Rubric

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Poetry Rubric

	4	3	2	1
Title of Poem	Presents creative titles related to the poem	Presents some creative titles related to the poem	Presents titles with little creativity	There are no clear titles
Follow Poetry Directions	All poems are written correctly according to directions	Most poems are written correctly according to directions	Some poems are written correctly according to directions	Little or no evidence of following poetry directions
Creativity	Wow! Very creative ideas and illustrations!	Has many creative ideas and illustrations.	Has some creative ideas and illustrations	Shows little or no creativity
Conventions	Evidence of strong grade-level grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling	Evidence of adequate grade-level grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling	Evidence of limited grade-level grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling	Little or no evidence of grade-level expectations in grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling
Handwriting	Handwriting is neat with little visible eraser marks.	Handwriting is mostly neat with some eraser marks.	Handwriting is somewhat neat with many eraser marks.	Handwriting needs improvement.

Total points \_\_\_\_\_ Comments:

## **Appendix 1: Implementing Teaching Standards**

**RL.3.1** Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

**RL.3.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, identifying words that impact the meaning in a text.

**RL.3.5** Refer to parts of stories, dramas, and poems when writing or speaking about a text, using terms such as chapter, scene, and stanza; describe how each successive part builds on earlier sections.

**RI.3.1** Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

**RI.3.2** Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.

**RI.3.3** Describe the relationship between a series of historical events using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.

**RI.3.4** Determine the meaning of general academic and domain specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 3 topic or subject area.

**RI.3.6** Distinguish their own point of view from that of the author of a text.

**RI.3.9** Compare and contrast the most important points and key details presented in two texts on the same topic.

**RF.3.5** Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

**W.3.4** With guidance and support from adults, use digital tools and resources to produce and publish writing (using word processing skills) as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

**SL.3.2** Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

**SL.3.4** Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly in complete sentences at an understandable pace.

## List of Materials for Classroom Use

### Materials for Students and Teachers

This is a list of the books I have in regards to African American Poetry in my classroom library. I have added to it over the years, but I also the school's Media Center to have multiple copies when available for students to access and use throughout this unit, and the school year.

1. Some materials are already embedded in weekly lesson plans.
2. Adoff, Arnold. *My Black Me: A Beginning Book of Black Poetry*. Dutton Children's Books, 1974.
3. Bryan, Ashley. *Ashley Bryan's ABC of African American Poetry*. Scholastic Inc. by arrangements with Aladdin Paperbacks, 1997.
4. Rochelle, Belinda. *Words with Wings A Treasury of African American Poetry and Art*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2001.
5. Smith, Charles R. Jr. *I Am America*. Simon and Schuster
6. Smith, Charles R., Jr. *I Am the World*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2013
7. Graves Wilson, Edwin, Ph.D. *Poetry for Young People: Langston Hughes*. Sterling Children's Books, 2006
8. Graves Wilson, Edwin, Ph.D. *Poetry for Young People: Maya Angelou*. Sterling Children's Books, 2007
9. Giovanni, Nikki. edited. *Hip Hop Speaks to Children: A Celebration of Poetry with a Beat*. Sourcebooks, Inc. 2008
10. Giovanni, Nikki. *I Am Loved*. Simon and Schuster Children's Publishing Division, 2018.
11. Ubani, Eugene Perkins. *Hey Black Child*. Little Brown and Company, 2017
12. Hudson, Wade. *Pass It On: African American Poetry for Children*. Scholastic, Inc. 1993.
13. Hudson, Wade and Cheryl. *How Sweet the Sound: African American Songs for Children*. Scholastic, Inc. 1995
14. Dean Myers, Walter. *Harlem*. Scholastic Inc. , 1997.

### Resources for Students

These are the videos students should have access to outside the lessons to listen to and learn about Citizenship, African American poets, and the larger concept of civil rights, civil disobedience, and critical patriotism.

1. Some resources are already embedded in weekly lesson plans, and books listed above
2. Smith, Charles R., Jr. *About Me* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fA6qbtKRpJA>
3. Smith, Charles R., Jr. Allow Me to Introduce Myself  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vf2185xss6o&list=TLPQMTMwODIwMjAu\\_ZGO\\_R0ciYw&index=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vf2185xss6o&list=TLPQMTMwODIwMjAu_ZGO_R0ciYw&index=1)



4. Smith, Charles R., Jr. *I Am America* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOLpoOqFVqI&feature=youtu.be>
5. Smith, Charles R., Jr. *Why Read* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADEZcLaLDSI&feature=youtu.be>
6. Hughes, Langston. *Dreams* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ApCK-b5BHGE>
7. Hughes, Langston. *Dream Variations* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eu-4IcmvwZY>
8. Hughes, Langston. *Dream Deferred* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZIfdWiw3rU>
9. Giovanni, Nikki. *Love Is* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LP497BX--bg>
10. Giovanni, Nikki. *Drum* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBEUXWjCaJk>
11. Dove, Rita. *Lady Freedom Among Us* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=glRAiluTAY8>
12. Dove, Rita. *Rosa* <https://www.poetrybyheart.org.uk/poems/rosa/>
13. Dove, Rita. *Civil Rights and Rosa Parks* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXNF-foj-e4>
14. Understanding the First Amendment <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=puxdQRxlzWQ>

## Resources for Teachers

Here are some of the TED Talks included in my Content Research, as well as the promotional video for the documentary *On the Way to School* and other books/video mentioned.

1. Some resources are already embedded in weekly lessons – books, links and videos.
2. Documentary: *On the Way to School* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZsEvLaua4w&has\\_verified=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZsEvLaua4w&has_verified=1)
3. TED Talks: Sir Ken Robinson -Changing Education Paradigms [https://www.ted.com/talks/sir\\_ken\\_robinson\\_changing\\_education\\_paradigms](https://www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson_changing_education_paradigms)
4. TED Talks: Sir Ken Robinson -Bring on the Learning Revolution [https://www.ted.com/talks/sir\\_ken\\_robinson\\_bring\\_on\\_the\\_learning\\_revolution](https://www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson_bring_on_the_learning_revolution)
5. TED Talks: Sir Ken Robinson- Do Schools Kill Creativity [https://www.ted.com/talks/sir\\_ken\\_robinson\\_do\\_schools\\_kill\\_creativity](https://www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson_do_schools_kill_creativity)
6. *Out of Our Minds: Learning to Be Creative* – Ken Robinson Capstone Publishing Limited, 2001
7. TED Talks: Sugata Mitra 2010 – The Child Driven Education [https://www.ted.com/talks/sugata\\_mitra\\_the\\_child\\_driven\\_education](https://www.ted.com/talks/sugata_mitra_the_child_driven_education)
8. TED Talks: Sugata Mitra 2013 – Building a School in the Cloud [https://www.ted.com/talks/sugata\\_mitra\\_build\\_a\\_school\\_in\\_the\\_cloud?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/sugata_mitra_build_a_school_in_the_cloud?language=en)
9. Litro-Lab Podcast <https://www.litro.co.uk/interviews/conversation-with-claudia-rankine-by-mia-funk/>
10. Marshall, Dr. Tanji-Reed *Linking Instructional Power* June 2020 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSC8muonh8A>



11. Marshall, Dr. Tanji-Reed *Curriculum, Pedagogy and Power; Details of a Just Education*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTcJCcvuINM> UnboundEd - Summer Institute 2019,  
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