



# PISCATAWAY TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

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## Contemporary Poetry: Voicing the American Ideal

**Content Area:** Language Arts and Literacy

**Grade Span:** 10 - 12th grade

**Revised by:** Christopher Hamas and Michelle Klastava

**Presented by:** Scott Hood

**Approval date:** August 2023

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## Contemporary Poetry: Voicing the American Ideal

<b>Description</b>		
<p>Now, more than ever, the many voices of America will not be silenced. This course is designed to embrace and celebrate these voices. Poetry has always been a forum for individuality and self-expression. Words are fluid, fast, and free, especially with the speed of today’s technology. Anyone can be a poet, and everyone has a voice. This course explores the diversity of American voices in the most recent poets and the most current issues in the struggle for equal, accurate, and dignified representation. It examines how gender, race, and psychology impact identity, and demonstrates the power of language to empower peaceful progress towards social change. Students will hear their voices echoed in contemporary writers and performers, and acquire the techniques and tactics to develop confidence and eloquence in expressing their own voices in written and spoken word.</p>		
<b>Goals</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop reading, writing, research, communication and critical thinking skills</li> <li>• Consider the ethics of traditional and non-traditional writing and media</li> <li>• Explore the various movements that comprise modern poetry, including key literary and theoretical terms related to the study of modern poetry.</li> <li>• Articulate how various contextual forces impact modern poetry.</li> <li>• Develop voice and style in writing and performance</li> <li>• Reproduce emotive performance</li> <li>• Utilize skills from poetry analysis and performance to promote social equality and change</li> </ul>		
<b>Scope and Sequence</b>		
<b>Unit</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Length</b>
Unit 1	He/She/They - Gender Identity in the Modern Age	9 weeks
Unit 2	Color Aware, Not Color Blind - Race and Ethnicity	9 weeks
Unit 3	Stigmas and Socialization - Mental Health and Wellness	9 weeks
Unit 4	Get in the Game! - Movements and Social Change	9 weeks
<b>Resources</b>		

Core Text: Titles include but are not limited to: *Perrine's Sound and Sense*; *How to Read Poetry Like a Professor* - Foster; *Stephen Fry, The Ode Less Travelled: Unlocking the Poet Within*

**Additional Resources:**

Poetry and supplemental readings may include portions from the works of various contemporary poets and performers. Academic articles, book chapters, newspaper articles, podcasts, commercials, television series and films will also be included in the course. Online resources such as LMS Voice, The Academy of American Poets, Common Lit, The Poetry Foundation, and Split this Rock will be utilized often.

## Unit 1: He/She/They - Gender Identity in the Modern Age

<b>Summary and Rationale</b>	
<p>This unit will focus on the role of gender identity, gender expression, sexism, and LGBTQA. Students will analyze the role of social constructs in defining societal roles and identities. They will consider the impact society has on gender identity. They will reflect on ways to make certain that gender is an inclusive rather than an exclusive construct.</p>	
<b>Recommended Pacing</b>	
9 weeks	
<b>NJ State Student Learning Standards</b>	
<b>Standard</b>	
NJSLSA. R1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences and relevant connections from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
NJSLSA. R2	Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
NJSLSA W 11-12.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
NJSLSA W 11-12.6	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, trying a new approach, consulting a style manual (such as MLA or APA Style), focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
NJSLSA.SL1	Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
NJSLSA.SL2	Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
NJSLSA.SL3	Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.
<b>Instructional Focus</b>	
<b>Unit Enduring Understandings</b>	

- Literature addresses universal themes of the human condition.
- Literature can reflect, clarify, and critique the time period it portrays.
- Writers often use literature as a means to uphold, critique, or rebel against society.
- Effective writers use techniques (style, diction, and organization) to better inform, persuade, and entertain.

### Unit Essential Questions

- Are writers influenced by their personal reactions to the events of an era?
- How have changing constructs in gender and identity influenced language?
- How can poetry give voice and recognition to all varieties of identity?
- How can poetry garner respect and equality?

### Objectives

*Students will know...*

- The degree to which literature is influenced by culture and politics of the era.
- The social, political, and cultural developments of the time period.
- The power of literature to influence moral and cultural decisions.
- Multiple forms of poetry with connection to meaning

*Students will be able to....*

- Analyze connections between literature and the culture in which it was produced.
- Cite textual evidence to support research and analysis.
- Analyze social, political, and cultural developments of a given time period.
- Incorporate a variety of media and communication tools in effective presentations.
- Interpret and analyze literary devices.
- Demonstrate command of Standard American English conventions.
- Apply sociological principles to poetry
- Identify various forms of poetry and lyrical structure, ranging from sonnet to free verse to rap and spoken word
- Analyze connections between form and meaning
- Analyze and imitate voice and style
- Develop individual voice and style

### Resources

**Fiction:**

“Dear Beth” by Andrea Cote-Botero

“After all references to transgender Americans are scrubbed from government websites...” by heidi andrea restrepo rhodes.

“One Pulse, One Poem” by Richard Blanco

“I Invite My Parents to a Dinner Party” by Chen Chen

“Your Personality” by Christopher McCurry

“The Distant Moon” by Rafael Campo

“ Things Haunt” by Joshua Jennifer Espinoza

“ My Lover Is a Woman” by Pat Parker

“On Trans” by Miller Oberman

“Dreaming of Lesbos” by Tatiana De La Tierra

“Three a.m.” by Jill McDonough

**Non-Fiction:**

Nonbinary: Memoirs of Gender and Identity Edited by Micah Rajunov and Scott Duane.

“sam sax: “LISP”: A queer childhood and the demand to “sound straight.” by Jeffrey Careyva

**Film/Media:**

*PERFORMANCE:* Allen Ginsberg Sings "A Western Ballad"

*PERFORMANCE:* “Home” by Warsan Shire

*PERFORMANCE:* “A Love Poem for Lonely Prime Numbers” by Harry Baker

*TED TALK:* On What it Feels Like to be Transgender by Lee Mokobe

*PERFORMANCE:* “High School Training Ground” by Malcolm London

*PERFORMANCE:* “What I Will” and “break (clustered)” by Suheir Hammad

*PERFORMANCE:* “Dear Straight People” by Louise Frohman

*PERFORMANCE:* “Falling in Like” by Big Poppa E

*PERFORMANCE:* “The Type” Sarah Ka

## Unit 2: Color Aware Not Color Blind - Race and Ethnicity

<b>Summary and Rationale</b>	
<p>This unit will focus on the role of race, ethnicity and racism in contemporary poetry. Students will analyze the role of social constructs in defining societal roles and identities. They will consider the impact of systemic racism on identity, equality, and self-respect. They will reflect on ways to ensure that race can be a unifying instead of a divisive force in the world.</p>	
<b>Recommended Pacing</b>	
9 weeks	
<b>NJ State Student Learning Standards</b>	
<b>Standard</b>	
NJSLSA. R1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences and relevant connections from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
NJSLSA. R2	Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
NJSLSA W 11-12.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
NJSLSA W 11-12.6	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, trying a new approach, consulting a style manual (such as MLA or APA Style), focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
NJSLSA.SL1	Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
NJSLSA.SL2	Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
NJSLSA.SL3	Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.
<b>Instructional Focus</b>	
<b>Unit Enduring Understandings</b>	

- Literature addresses universal themes of the human condition.
- Literature can reflect, clarify, and critique the time period it portrays.
- Writers often use literature as a means to uphold, critique, or rebel against society.
- Effective writers use techniques (style, diction, and organization) to better inform, persuade, and entertain.

### **Unit Essential Questions**

- Are writers influenced by their personal reactions to the events of an era?
- How has race been a determinant of social, economic, and political hegemony?
- How can poetry empower the movement towards social justice?
- How can poetry provide a medium to raise awareness of, and combat, systemic racism?

### **Objectives**

*Students will know...*

- The degree to which literature is influenced by culture and politics of the era.
- The social, political, and cultural developments of the time period.
- The power of literature to influence moral and cultural decisions.
- Multiple forms of poetry with connection to meaning

*Students will be able to...*

- Analyze connections between literature and the culture in which it was produced.
- Cite textual evidence to support research and analysis.
- Analyze social, political, and cultural developments of a given time period.
- Make connections and predictions about society.
- Incorporate a variety of media and communication tools in effective presentations.
- Interpret and analyze literary devices.
- Demonstrate command of Standard American English conventions.
- Apply sociological principles to fiction.
- Identify various forms of poetry and lyrical structure, ranging from sonnet to free verse to rap and spoken word.
- Analyze connections between form and meaning
- Analyze and imitate voice and style

### **Resources**



**Fiction:**

“23 Reasons Why Mexicanos Can Still Be Found in a Walmart” by Alessandra Narvaez Varela

“Mexican American Disambiguation” by José Olivarez

“Dinosaurs in the Hood” by Danez Smith

“Playground Elegy” by Clint Smith

“A House Divided” by Karl Dargan

“The Word for Gossip” by Eric Gansworth

“A Amazônia está queimando” by Ana Castillo

“Landless Acknowledgement” by Nate Marshall

“In her mostly white town, an hour from Rocky Mountain National Park, a black poet considers centuries of protests against racialized violence” by Camille T. Dungy

*The Poet X* - Elizabeth Acevedo

“Into the Racism Workshop” by Chrystos

“It’s Important I Remember that the Moral Arc of the Universe Bends—” by Cortney Lamar Charleston

“The Birthday Interviews” by Derrick Austin

“C.R.E.A.M.” by Danez Smith

“PROCESS” by Teri Ellen Cross Davis

**Non-Fiction:**

*Stamped from the Beginning* by Kendi, Dr Ibram X.

“How Words Fail - Does language reflect the world? Or is it a distorting mirror that never gets reality straight?” by Cathy Park Hong

“Talk It Out In *Finna*, Nate Marshall celebrates the power of Black vernacular.” by J. Howard Rosier

“Writing Like a White Guy On language, race, and poetry.” by Jaswinder Bolina

**Film/Media:**

“Louder Than A Bomb” (2010)

“THE DANGER OF A SINGLE STORY” by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

## Unit 3: Stigmas and Socialization - Mental Health and Wellnes

<b>Summary and Rationale</b>	
<p>This unit will focus on the role of philosophy and mental health in contemporary poetry. Students will analyze the role of social constructs in defining societal roles and identities. They will consider the many psychological conditions that define identity in society. They will reflect on ways to use poetry and performance to debunk psychological stigma and encourage more empowering constructs.</p>	
<b>Recommended Pacing</b>	
9 weeks	
<b>NJ State Student Learning Standards</b>	
<b>Standard</b>	
NJSLSA. R1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences and relevant connections from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
NJSLSA. R2	Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
NJSLSA W 11-12.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
NJSLSA W 11-12.6	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, trying a new approach, consulting a style manual (such as MLA or APA Style), focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
NJSLSA.SL1	Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
NJSLSA.SL2	Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
NJSLSA.SL3	Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.
<b>Instructional Focus</b>	
<b>Unit Enduring Understandings</b>	

- Literature addresses universal themes of the human condition.
- Literature can reflect, clarify, and critique the time period it portrays.
- Writers often use literature as a means to uphold, critique, or rebel against society.
- Effective writers use techniques (style, diction, and organization) to better inform, persuade, and entertain.

### Unit Essential Questions

- Are writers influenced by their personal reactions to the events of an era?
- Can poetry affect mental and psychological health?
- Can philosophy in poetry affect social change?
- Does poetry hurt as much as it heals?

### Objectives

*Students will know...*

- The degree to which literature is influenced by culture and politics of the era.
- The social, political, and cultural developments of the time period.
- The power of literature to influence moral and cultural decisions.
- Multiple forms of poetry with connection to meaning

*Students will be able to....*

- Analyze connections between literature and the culture in which it was produced.
- Cite textual evidence to support research and analysis.
- Analyze social, political, and cultural developments of a given time period.
- Make connections and predictions about society.
- Incorporate a variety of media and communication tools in effective presentations.
- Interpret and analyze literary devices.
- Demonstrate command of Standard American English conventions.
- Apply sociological principles to fiction.
- Identify various forms of poetry and lyrical structure, ranging from sonnet to free verse to rap and spoken word.
- Analyze connections between form and meaning
- Analyze and imitate voice and style

### Resources

**Fiction:**

“Obituary Generator” by Mariah Bosch

“OCD” by Neil Hilborn

“The Fury of Rainstorms” by Anne Sexton

“When the fat girl gets skinny” by Blithe Baird

“Tulips” or “Mad-Girls Love Song” by Sylvia Plath

“The Little Book of Cheerful Thoughts” by Jeffrey Harrison

“Gertrude: In the Rooms” by Kate Daniels

“Fire-Flowers” by Emily Pauline Johnson

“The King Is Dead, Long Live the King” by Julian Randall

“Yr Not Exotic, but Once Ya Wanted to Be” by Tarfia Faizullah

**Non-Fiction:**

Creativity and mental health: A profile of writers and musicians by K. S. Pavitra, C. R. Chandrashekar,\* and Partha Choudhury\*

Mental illness and creative activity in female writers by A M Ludwig

**Film/Media:**

*TED TALK*: “Why People Need Poetry” by Stephen Burt

*TED TALK*: “On How Poetry Inspires Art” by Billy Collins

*PERFORMANCE*: OCD by Neil Hilborn

*TED TALK*: “Why Poetry is the Truest form of Writing and Why it’s Useful” by Sophie Sparham

*PERFORMANCE*: “Pursuit of Happyness” Ed Mabrey's

## Unit 4: Get in the Game! Movements and Social Change

<b>Summary and Rationale</b>	
<p>This unit will focus on the role of social movements and contemporary protest poetry. Students will analyze the role of social constructs in defining societal roles and identities. They will consider the impact of language and rhetoric in maintaining the status quo. They will reflect on ways to use poetry and performance to raise awareness of inequity and injustice, and to inspire progress through peaceful social activism.</p>	
<b>Recommended Pacing</b>	
9 weeks	
<b>NJ State Student Learning Standards</b>	
<b>Standard</b>	
NJSLSA. R1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences and relevant connections from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
NJSLSA. R2	Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
NJSLSA W 11-12.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience
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NJSLSA.SL2	Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
NJSLSA.SL3	Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.
<b>Instructional Focus</b>	
<b>Unit Enduring Understandings</b>	

- Literature addresses universal themes of the human condition.
- Literature can reflect, clarify, and critique the time period it portrays.
- Writers often use literature as a means to uphold, critique, or rebel against society.
- Effective writers use techniques (style, diction, and organization) to better inform, persuade, and entertain.

### Unit Essential Questions

- Are writers influenced by their personal reactions to the event of an era?
- How can language fuel action towards social justice?
- Is poetry an effective medium for peaceful protest?
- Are all poets protesters in their own ways?

### Objectives

*Students will know...*

- The degree to which literature is influenced by culture and politics of the era.
- The social, political, and cultural developments of the time period.
- The power of literature to influence moral and cultural decisions.
- Multiple forms of poetry with connection to meaning

*Students will be able to....*

- Analyze connections between literature and the culture in which it was produced.
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- Apply sociological principles to fiction.
- Identify various forms of poetry and lyrical structure, ranging from sonnet to free verse to rap and spoken word.
- Analyze connections between form and meaning
- Analyze and imitate voice and style

### Resources

**Fiction:**

“Anthropocene: A Dictionary” by Jake Skeets

“Ex(ile)” by Desiree C. Bailey

“This Has Always Been Our Active Shooter Drill” By Jason Reynolds

“Weather” by Claudia Rankine

"Custody" by Luisa A. Igloria

“Tonight, in Oakland” by Danez Smith

“A Song for Soweto” by June Jordan

“where our protest sound” by Lenelle Moise

“ For the Consideration of Poets” by Haki R. Madhubuti

“Pages 1-4, 'an excerpt from The Ferguson Report: An Erasure” by Nicole Sealey

“Vanishing” by Brittney Corrigan

**Non-Fiction:**

Nevertheless, We Persisted: 48 Voices of Defiance, Strength and Courage -foreword by Amy Klobuchar

**Film/Media:**

TEDTALK: “Using Your Voice is a Political Choice” - Amanda Gorman