



EXPEDITIONARY
LEARNING

Grade 7: Module 3A: Unit 1: Lesson 12

How to Read a Poem: “The Negro Speaks of Rivers”



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Long-Term Targets Addressed (Based on NYSP12 ELA CCLS)

- I can analyze the impact of rhymes and repetitions of sound on a specific section of poetry. (RL.7.4.)
- I can determine the figurative meaning of words and phrases in literary text. (RL.7.4)
- I can analyze how a poem’s form or structure contributes to its meaning. (RL.7.5)
- I can analyze figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. (L.7.5)

Supporting Learning Targets

- I can identify common poetic devices, especially those that have to do with structure, figurative language, and repetition.
- I can read and reread a poem to find layers of meaning.

Ongoing Assessment

- Found Poem Draft 2 (from homework)
- Exit Ticket: Self-Assessment



Agenda	Teaching Notes
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Opening<ol style="list-style-type: none">A. Entry Task: How to Read a Poem (10 minutes)B. Previewing Learning Targets (5 minutes)2. Work Time<ol style="list-style-type: none">A. Reviewing the Poet’s Toolbox (5 minutes)B. Modeling How to Read a Poem (20 minutes)3. Closing and Assessment<ol style="list-style-type: none">A. Exit Ticket: Self-Assessment (5 minutes)4. Homework<ol style="list-style-type: none">A. Complete the Poet’s Toolbox Matching Worksheet.B. Continue reading your independent reading book.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In this lesson, students learn the process for reading poetry. Students may feel anxious about “getting” poetry, so consider how you can be encouraging and upbeat.• In Lessons 12–15, students will work extensively with the How to Read a Poem anchor chart, which gives them specific steps on reading and rereading poetry to find different layers of meaning. You will model those steps in this lesson. Remember to emphasize the need to cite textual evidence and consider how each choice the author makes contributes to the text’s overall meaning. Students should not be reading to find metaphors but rather to analyze how each metaphor contributes to the poem as a whole.• Students have an opportunity to share their Found Poem Draft #2. Alternatively, you could collect their homework during the entry task and share anonymously some of the strongest poems.• In this lesson, students read Langston Hughes’s poem “The Negro Speaks of Rivers.” You may wish to briefly review information about his life to share with students. Many resources exist on-line.• Collect and review the Exit Ticket: Self-Assessment to guide your instruction in the remaining lessons in this mini unit (Lessons 13–15). If you need to add another day of instruction on how to read poetry, consider using one of the suggested poems in the Unit 1 Overview.• Review: “The Negro Speaks of Rivers.” Be prepared to read this aloud with expression.• Post: Learning targets.



Lesson Vocabulary	Materials
figurative, literal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Entry Task: How to Read a Poem (one per student and one to display)• Document camera• Equity sticks• How to Read a Poem anchor chart, student version (one per student)• “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” (one per student and one to display)• Modeling the How to Read a Poem anchor chart (answers, for teacher reference)• Powerful Stories anchor chart (from Lesson 1)• Exit Ticket: Self-Assessment (one per student)• Poet’s Toolbox reference sheet (from Lesson 11, one per student)• Poet’s Toolbox Matching Worksheet (one per student)• Poet’s Toolbox Matching Worksheet (answers, for teacher reference)



Opening	Meeting Students’ Needs
<p>A. Entry Task: How to Read a Poem (10 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distribute one copy of the Entry Task: How to Read a Poem to each student and display one copy using the document camera.• Ask students to complete the Entry Task: How to Read a Poem individually.• After a few minutes, remind students that for the next couple of lessons they are studying a different kind of powerful, enduring story—the stories that poets tell.• Poems tell a story but not necessarily a story with a beginning, middle, or end. They explore an idea, just like a story, and do so in a beautiful and memorable way. As with a story, the reader is sometimes “tricked” into thinking about a big idea because the poem is so full of vivid images and so rhythmic that the reader can’t help finishing it.• Direct students’ attention back to their Entry Task: How to Read a Poem. Using equity sticks, call on one or two students to share what they drew.• Then ask:<ul style="list-style-type: none">* “What do these images have to do with the title?”• Model with the first image by saying something like this: “The speaker wants me to read a poem as I would look at a color slide when I hold it up to the light. When I do that, I look closely at the details and am struck with the intricacy of the image in the slide. Therefore, I will look closely at the details in a poem.” (You may wish to bring in a slide or transparency to illustrate this image.)• Ask students to think about the images they chose. Prompt them with questions like:<ul style="list-style-type: none">* “How can you read like a mouse in a maze? A water skier? A hand searching for the light?”• Ask volunteers to share. As they share, write key phrases on the board, such as: “look closely,” “listen to the sounds,” “have fun,” “keep reaching,” and “be curious.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion Appointments are a way for students to work with different classmates, leading to mixed-ability groupings. Mixed-ability groupings of students for regular discussion and close reading exercises will provide a collaborative and supportive structure for reading complex texts and close reading of the text.



Opening (continued)	Meeting Students’ Needs
<p>B. Previewing Learning Targets (5 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Direct students’ attention to the posted learning targets.• Ask a student to read the learning targets aloud to the class:<ul style="list-style-type: none">* “I can identify common poetic devices, especially those that have to do with structure, figurative language, and repetition.”* “I can read and reread a poem to find layers of meaning.”• Point out to students that they will focus on figurative language, repetition, and structure in this mini unit on poetry. Remind them that there are many ways to write a poem and, therefore, there are many ways to read a poem. Today they will pay particular attention to these features.	



Work Time	Meeting Students’ Needs
<p>A. Reviewing the Poet’s Toolbox (5 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for volunteers to share out their Found Poem Draft 2. • Remind students of the difference between figurative and literal. For homework, they added some figurative language to their poems. Today you will give them a process that will help them recognize the craftsmanship of a poem. 	
<p>B. Modeling How to Read a Poem (20 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because this is poetry, you’re going to explain the process of how to read a poem with a metaphor. • Students should think of poetry as a car. You may like the way a car looks, but the way a car looks is only a small part of what makes a car cool. It’s the engine of a car that you want to look at to appreciate the whole car. In this class, students are going to “pop the hood,” as they did in Lesson 11 with the Claude McKay lines, and look inside to see what makes a poem “move.” • Distribute one copy of How to Read a Poem anchor chart, student version and one copy of “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” to each student. Then display a copy of each using the document camera. • Direct students’ attention to the How to Read a Poem anchor chart, student version. Define the terms mood (the overall feeling), theme (the central idea or message of the poem), speaker (the persona of a poem), and any other words or phrases that are unclear to students. Remind students that they worked with these terms in Module 1. • Explain that you are going to model the process of how to read a poem with “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” by Langston Hughes. Briefly explain who Langston Hughes was (see Teaching Notes). • Explain that readers who are unfamiliar with poetry often try to read it as they would any other literature—silently in their heads. But poems are best understood when they are read aloud. So, the class is going to listen as you read the poem aloud. • Lead students in a 10-minute discussion of the poem, following the steps on the How to Read a Poem anchor chart, student version. Depending on the needs of your class, you may find yourself modeling more heavily or eliciting responses to the questions from your students. See Modeling the How to Read a Poem anchor chart (answers, for teacher reference) for suggested responses. Students may want to refer to the Poet’s Toolbox reference sheet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modeling provides a clear vision of the expectation for students. • Anchor charts provide a visual cue to students about what to do when you ask them to work independently. • To further support students in their analysis of this poem, provide them with their own copy of the texts in addition to displaying them on the document camera.



Work Time (continued)	Meeting Students’ Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be sure to draw students’ attention to the poem’s structure and repetition in particular. Also, during the discussion, model how to annotate the text of the poem on the projected version. Remind students that good readers often annotate complex texts, like poetry and Frederick Douglass, because they want to keep track of the thinking that a complex text requires. Invite students to annotate their texts as well. • You may wish to close the discussion by adding to the Powerful Stories anchor chart. Assign each pair of students to one column; give them a minute to discuss; then call on one pair per column to share out and scribe answers on the class anchor chart. 	
Closing and Assessment	Meeting Students’ Needs
<p>A. Exit Ticket: Self-Assessment (5 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students to complete the Exit Ticket: Self-Assessment individually. Encourage them to be specific so you can tailor your instruction to meet their needs. • Collect the exit tickets and use them as formative assessment to inform your instruction in Lesson 13. • Remind students that they will need to take the Poet’s Toolbox reference sheet home with them in order to complete the homework assignment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing self-assessment and reflection supports all students, but research shows it supports struggling learners most.
Homework	Meeting Students’ Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the Poet’s Toolbox Matching Worksheet. • Continue reading your independent reading book. 	



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Supporting Materials



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Entry Task: "How to Read a Poem"

Name:

Date:

Directions: Please read the following poem and sketch three separate images you can picture in your mind as you read.

Introduction to Poetry

Billy Collins

I ask them to take a poem
and hold it up to the light
like a color slide
or press an ear against its hive.
I say drop a mouse into a poem
and watch him probe his way out,
or walk inside the poem's room
and feel the walls for a light switch.
I want them to waterski
across the surface of a poem
waving at the author's name on the shore.
But all they want to do
is tie the poem to a chair with rope
and torture a confession out of it.
They begin beating it with a hose
to find out what it really means.

Collins, Billy. "Introduction to Poetry." Poetry 180: A Poem a Day for American High Schools, Library of Congress. <http://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/001.html>.



Entry Task: “How to Read a Poem”

Image 1	Image 2	Image 3



How to Read a Poem Anchor Chart, Student Version

Focus: Poems use figurative language, sound, and form to create meaning.

Step 1: Paint Job Read

Read it aloud once.

What is the *title*? What does it have to do with the poem?

Who is the *speaker*? How do I know?

What is the gist of the poem? What is the main idea of each *stanza* or section?

What is the overall feeling or *mood*? Does it change anywhere?

What is my first impression of the *theme* (or statement or observation the poem is making about the world or the human condition)?

Step 2: “Pop the Hood” Read

Read it aloud once.

What is the *title*? What does it have to do with the poem?

Who is the *speaker*? How do I know?

What is the gist of the poem? What is the main idea of each *stanza* or section?

What is the overall feeling or *mood*? Does it change anywhere?

What is my first impression of the *theme* (or statement or observation the poem is making about the world or the human condition)?

Step 3: Mean Machine Read

Read it aloud once.

What is the overall theme?

How do the sound, words, and shape of this poem work together to create meaning?



“The Negro Speaks of Rivers”
by Langston Hughes

I've known rivers:
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the
flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln
went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy
bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

Hughes, Langston. “The Negro Speaks of Rivers.” Poetry.org. Web. <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15722>.



Modeling the How to Read a Poem Anchor Chart
(Answers, for Teacher Reference)

Focus: Poems use figurative language, sound, and form to create meaning.

Step 1: Paint Job Read

Read it aloud once.

What is the **title**? What does it have to do with the poem?

Who is the **speaker**? How do I know?

What is the gist of the poem? What is the main idea of each **stanza** or section?

What is the overall feeling or **mood**? Does it change anywhere?

What is my first impression of the **theme** (or statement or observation the poem is making about the world or the human condition)?

Step 2: “Pop the Hood” Read

Read it aloud again. While reading, underline anything that “pulls” you.

What words stick out to me? How do they contribute to the mood?

What poetic tools does the author use?

What figurative language can I identify? How does each technique contribute to meaning?

What is emphasized through structure? Why?

What is emphasized through repetition? Why is this repeated?

Are there any patterns? Rhyme? Rhythm? When are they broken?

How does sound create mood? Why?

The title of the poem is setting up what it’s about—a man talking about rivers, both literal and figurative.

The speaker is someone who is proud, I think. He talks about things he has done and how his soul has grown.

The overall mood is proud and positive, reflective. Words like “grown,” “lulled me to sleep,” and “raised the pyramids” strike me as positive.

The word “rivers” is repeated a lot. It’s the main subject and inspiration for the poem. But I also notice some glowing words, or words associated with the closing of day—like “golden,” “sunset,” and “dusky.” I think this refers, literally, to the time Hughes saw the rivers but also the way his attitude toward them has grown. Just as the “muddy” waters turn golden in the sunset, as he reflects on what his soul and rivers have in common, he becomes more proud.



Modeling the How to Read a Poem Anchor Chart
(Answers, for Teacher Reference)

Focus: Poems use figurative language, sound, and form to create meaning.

	<p>I see allusions—to his African heritage, all through using famous rivers. And also to the story of Abraham Lincoln seeing slaves on the Mississippi. Because of this story, I wonder whether “singing” is positive or negative—like the sad singing of slaves. This is ambiguous.</p> <p>The speaker repeats “I” to show that even though he wasn’t technically there, because he has his ancestors’ blood, he can put himself in their place.</p> <p>The phrase “My soul has grown deep like rivers” is not only repeated but also separated in structure from the rest of the poem. I think this line is important, and he wants us to play close attention to it. This is a simile, too, so I’m going to really think what a soul and a river could have in common.</p>
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Modeling the How to Read a Poem Anchor Chart
(Answers, for Teacher Reference)

Focus: Poems use figurative language, sound, and form to create meaning.

Step 3: Mean Machine Read

Read it aloud again.

What is the overall *theme*?

How do the sound, words, and shape of this poem work together to create meaning?

The simile, which compares his soul to the rivers, helps us to get his theme—a person can feel proud of his heritage and the blood that flows through him.

Just like a river, his soul flows—not with water, but with “human blood.” And this blood is “ancient” and connects him to his past.

So when I think of the repetition, the structure, the allusion, the simile, and the vivid word choice, I see that the speaker’s soul, as he has reflected on his heritage and the different kinds of blood he has in his veins, is beginning to glow with the pride he has in his people.

I like this poem because it makes me think about my “blood” and my “heritage.” It makes me want to know more about my progenitors.

Exit Ticket: Self-Assessment

Name:

Date:

Directions: Please take a moment to reflect on the learning targets of today. Then use your Poet’s Toolbox reference sheet to complete this exit ticket.

1. List the three tools from the Poet’s Toolbox with which you are most familiar.

2. List the three tools from the Poet’s Toolbox on which you would like more instruction.

3. After seeing the teacher model today’s poem, what one specific thing do you think you will struggle with the most as you “pop the hood” on some poems?



Poet's Toolbox Matching Worksheet

Name: _____

Date: _____

Directions: Using your Poet's Toolbox reference sheet, match the following poetic lines with their poetic "tool." Remember that some of lines may use more than one tool.

Example: What? Like a goat, you ate that hat? simile, consonance

1. You are simply the sun in my sky _____
2. Death crept in like a thief and without a word, stole what was most dear to me.

3. Abraham Lincoln, what would you say today? _____
4. My mother was the rock of our family, my father was like the hot air balloon.

5. When will the winds of fall be still around the tall oak that fell? _____
6. Courage, we had and strength enough. _____
7. Wishy-washy _____
8. He came in, like a whirlwind. _____
9. He was like a modern day Moses. _____
10. I remember the burning ember of late September. _____
11. Seeing slithering snakes makes my spine shiver. _____
12. O, Life, why are you so hard? _____
13. While my elementary school was like picking at cotton candy, junior high was more like trying to eat a caramel apple with braces. _____
14. When I ran away, I ran fast, and I ran fearfully, and I ran far. _____
15. Bright, the sun and cool, the water at the beach that day. _____
16. She tried to not cry but eventually sighed and asked why. _____



Poet's Toolbox Matching Worksheet
(Answers, for Teacher Reference)

Directions: Using your Poet's Toolbox reference sheet, match the following poetic lines with their poetic "tool." Remember that some of lines may use more than one tool.

Example: What? Like a goat, you ate that hat? simile, consonance

1. You are simply the sun in my sky alliteration, metaphor
2. Death crept in like a thief and without a word, stole what was most dear to me. personification, simile
3. Abraham Lincoln, what would you say today? apostrophe, assonance
4. My mother was the rock of our family, my father was like the hot air balloon. Juxtaposition, metaphor, simile
5. When will the winds of fall be still around the tall oak that fell? consonance
6. Courage, we had and strength enough. poetic inversion
7. Wishy-washy onomatopoeia, alliteration
8. He came in, like a whirlwind. simile, assonance
9. He was like a modern day Moses. allusion, simile
10. I remember the burning ember of late September. assonance
11. Seeing slithering snakes makes my spine shiver. alliteration
12. O, Life, why are you so hard? apostrophe
13. While my elementary school was like picking at cotton candy, junior high was more like trying to eat a caramel apple with braces. Juxtaposition, alliteration
14. When I ran away, I ran fast, and I ran fearfully, and I ran far. repetition, alliteration
15. Bright, the sun and cool, the water at the beach that day. poetic inversion
16. She tried to not cry but eventually sighed and asked why. assonance