

Name: _____ Block: _____

Date: _____

Unit 3: The Language of Poetry

Poetry Café

Introduction: Many contemporary poets don't write poems just for the page; they write poems with the intention of performing them aloud for an audience.

Some poems* can be light and filled with mirth, such as Billy Collins' reading of his poem "To My Favorite 17-Year-Old High School Girl." Others can be heavy and raise important social justice issues, such as Malcolm London does in his performance of "High School Training Grounds." Some are sweet (like Sarah Kay's "Tooth Brush to a Bicycle Tire"), inspirational (for example, "There are two types of people in this world..." by Suli Breaks), or just plain awesome (see Lin-Manuel Miranda's performance of "The Hamilton Mixtape" at the White House Evening of Poetry, Music, and the Spoken Word on May 12, 2009).

The point is: spoken word performance artists thrill their audiences with fresh, raw readings featuring their poetic prowess. We're soon going to share this experience with our own Poetry Café.

Poetry Café, A Spoken Word Experience: On _____, you will be performing a reading of a poem of your choice to the class. Here are the details:

1. **Find a poem.** It can be a published poem that you photocopy from a book you own, a book in the library, or that you find on the internet and print a copy of. It can be an original work that you've typed up and submit. Regardless of what poem you choose, your submission must include the poem's title and author (if that's you, you'd write your name) in addition to the full text of the poem. You also need to write your own name on the paper so I know whose submission it is.
2. **Poem requirements:**
 - a. Your submission must be at least 10 lines in length, but no more than 40 lines in length.
 - b. Choose (or write) a work that is "school appropriate." If you aren't comfortable reading certain words aloud, or you would feel awkward reading it in front of the principal, choose a different poem. If you have questions about the "appropriateness" of your submission, see me!
 - c. Your poem can be funny and light or heavy and profound (or any other emotional combination); choose a poem that speaks to *you* that you would be willing to read to the class.
3. **Performance requirements:**
 - a. You do not need to memorize your poem! You will earn bonus points on this assignment if you do, though!
 - b. Your performance should not exceed 2 minutes.
 - c. Props and effective use of body language or movement is encouraged. Required: a positive attitude and lots of energy!

Grading: This assignment will be graded two separate assignments. Because the nature of this assignment is supposed to be a fun, let-your-hair-down poetry *experience*, the assignment and point values will be as follows:

1. Poem: homework grade of 25 points.
 - a. You have a poem: 10 points
 - b. It meets the length requirements: 10 points
 - c. It is appropriate for school: 5 points
2. Performance: participation grade of 25 points.
 - a. Your performance does not exceed 2 minutes: 10 points
 - b. Your performance demonstrates you practiced (don't even think about "winging" it!): 15 points

*You can find these performances on YouTube, and it is *strongly* suggested you view them to help you ascertain an idea of what a performance of poetry can look like. Links can be found on my website!