



Introduction to Slam Poetry

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This lesson introduces students to slam poetry as an expressive form of performance poetry that combines elements of writing, performance, competition, and audience participation. It often addresses contemporary issues and personal experiences, presented in a powerful, emotive fashion. In this lesson, students will be introduced to the AWARE Framework for Poetry in order to engage with both viewing and discussion activities that challenge them to consider multiple viewpoints and recognize how language patterns reveal a speaker's purpose.

Learning Objectives

- Define characteristics of slam poetry
- Utilize steps in AWARE to guide small and whole-class discussion
- Identify how patterns of language establish tone
- Analyze word choices and patterns in slam poetry that reveal the speaker's point of view and purpose

Essential Questions

- What are the characteristics of slam poetry, and how does it differ from other forms?
- How can the AWARE framework help determine a speaker's point of view and purpose?
- How do place, others, and society influence our point of view?

Materials

- Selected slam poetry YouTube videos
 - "Totally Like Whatever, You Know" by Taylor Mali
 - "Like Totally Whatever" by Melissa Lozada Oliva
- Copies of the AWARE Framework for Poetry Analysis graphic organizer

Key Vocabulary Terms

- Repetition
 - Repetition in poetry emphasizes the impact of recurring phrases or themes.
- Tone
 - Tone refers to how a poem causes someone to feel certain emotions. Poetry is an emotional form of communication. Focus on how the poem feels before analyzing its meaning.
- Theme
 - The theme is a poem's underlying message that reveals a truth about life or human nature that can be applied to multiple situations.
- Pace
 - A poem's pace is how fast or slow the poet speaks. Pace can emphasize emotions or how serious the speaker considers the topic.
- Wordplay
 - Wordplay includes figurative language, multiple meanings of words, and words and phrases broken into syllables. Wordplay refers to patterns of language that can reveal the poem's theme.

Lesson Activities

PART ONE: INTRODUCE

- Introduce learning objectives and essential questions to students and have students record notes on key vocabulary terms in their notebooks.
- Then, introduce the AWARE framework poetry analysis.
 - Assert your opinion on the topic(s) addressed in the poem.
 - Wonder about the viewpoints and experiences of others.
 - Accept why someone might disagree with the ideas in the poem.
 - Respect other viewpoints enough to challenge your thinking.
 - Establish author's purpose and point of view.
- Hand out a graphic organizer with the table below so students can record notes.

	AWARE prompts	Sentence stems	Notes
Assert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the main idea the speaker asserts in the poem. Assert your opinion on the topic(s) addressed in the poem. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The speaker (suggests/claims/reflects on) ____. We should ____ because _____. I agree with ____ because _____, and I think _____. One reason I believe this is because _____. 	
Wonder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek to understand the viewpoints and experiences of others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can tell the speaker feels ____ (tone) about the topic because ____ (word choice). The speaker may feel this way because ____ (reason/background). 	
Accept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restate opinions with which you disagree. Consider why someone might disagree with the ideas in the poem. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I understand what the speaker (my classmate) says about _____. However, I disagree with the idea that _____. Some may argue that _____ because _____. 	
Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be open and calm when tensions arise. Be willing to challenge your thinking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I appreciate hearing the speaker's viewpoints on _____. One way to think of this topic from another perspective is to consider _____. 	
Establish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on learning goals and author's purpose. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The theme of this poem could be ____ because _____. I think the speaker wanted to communicate ____ because _____. 	

PART TWO: WATCH, LISTEN, AND DISCUSS

- Play “**Totally Like Whatever, You Know**” by Taylor Mali on YouTube. While students are watching, they should be taking notes using the AWARE Framework for Poetry Analysis.
- Call on students to verbally respond to the poem using the AWARE framework. Call on 2 or 3 students to discuss each question.
- Play “**Like Totally Whatever**” by Melissa Lozada Oliva. (This poem is a response to Mali’s poem.)
- Call on students to verbally respond to the poem using the AWARE framework. Call on 2 or 3 students to discuss each question.

Closing

Review the poetry terms introduced at the beginning of class. Verbally or as an exit ticket, ask students to reflect on how the terms apply to the poems they just viewed. Students can either identify an example of wordplay from one of the poems and explain how the phrase has multiple meanings, or they can identify a theme from one of the poems. Ask students how slam poetry compares with other forms of poetry with which they are familiar.

Common Core State Standards

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.3: Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1.d: Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.