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| **At a Glance – “Dreams Deferred”**   * **Lesson Objective**: Create a poem that emulates Langston Hughes’s “Harlem.” * **In the Text:** This lesson is a culmination of the second week of the Poetry unit. Students will have an opportunity to practice writing their own poems in emulation of “Harlem” by Langston Hughes. The purpose of today’s lesson is to develop students’ comfort and confidence in the craft of poetry, particularly through the lens of imagery. These creative exercises help sharpen students’ eyes and ears for imagery and diction when they encounter them in future poems. * **Poem(s):** “Harlem” is available here: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46548/harlem>.“Dreams” is in the public domain and is printed in the student packet. * **Key Questions:** Questions 1, 2, 4, 5 and 8 are the most important questions of the day and should not be skipped. * **Words to Watch For:** n/a |
| **Agenda:**   * Do Now (10 minutes) * Cycle 1 – First Brainstorm (10-15 minutes) * Cycle 2 – AIR: Reread “Harlem” (20-30 minutes) * Cycle 3 – Poem Drafting (15-20 minutes) * Optional Cycle 4 – Poem Sharing (15-20) minutes |
| **Do Now (10 minutes)**   * Give students 7-8 minutes to read the article “Imagery” and answer the questions, then review using **Show Call, share out,** or a **brief discussion**. * **Q1: Read each phrase and label what type of sensory image is used (sight, touch, taste, etc…)**   + touch   + sight   + sound * **Q2: Try writing some imagery of your own. Complete the following sentences by modeling after the sentences above.**   + Responses will vary; students should be using sensory images in their sentences. |
| **Cycle 1 (10-15 minutes) — First Brainstorm**   * **Write:** Ask students to jot notes in response to **Q1**. * **Discuss**: **Share out** a few ideas from students’ responses. You might choose to have students **Turn and Talk** before sharing with the whole class. Be sure to respect students’ comfort levels about whether or not to share personal reflections.   + **Q1: What are some dreams you have for your life? These can be goals you want to achieve, hopes that you have for the future, or things that you want to change. Try to think of as many ideas as you can.**     - Responses will vary. Teachers may wish to share some of their own dreams (either from their childhood or ones they have currently). Teachers may also wish to call attention to the dreams mentioned in “Dream Variations” and how dreams can be about desires for how to live, rather than a specific goal or achievement. * **Write:** Ask students to respond to **Q2a**, then **Turn and Talk** about **Q2b**. * **Discuss: Share out** a few different ideas about **Q2.** Respect students’ comfort levels when sharing personal reflections.   + **Q2a: How would you feel if you were unable to achieve these dreams? Why?**      - Responses will vary. Students will likely share ideas of disappointment, discouragement, etc.   + **Q2b:**  **Consider the time that passed between Hughes writing “Dreams” and “Harlem.” How would you feel if you had not achieved some or all of your dreams in the span of twenty-five years? Why?**     - While these responses will probably be similar to responses in 2a, teachers should try to have students imagine the passage of time and how that would impact their feelings.     - ***Note:*** *Some potential vocabulary to give to students if they are struggling to identify any difference in feeling: remorse, regret, bitterness* |
| **Cycle 2 (20-30 minutes) – Reread “Harlem”**   * **Read:** Ask students to use **AIR** to reread “Harlem,” labeling the **rhyme scheme** (A/B/C/D/C/E/F/E/G/H/H).   + (If needed) Drop in a quick definition of rhyme scheme: Rhyme scheme is the pattern of rhymes that is used in the poem. Each rhyme receives a label (A, B, C, etc). * **Write:** Ask students to respond to **Q3**. * **Discuss:** **Share out** a variety of strong ideas about **Q3**.   + **Q3: Why do you think Hughes starts this poem with a question? Try to think of more than one idea.**      - He might have started this poem with the question to set up the ideas he wants to share through the rest of the poem. He may also be asking the question to provoke a response from readers, or he might be asking these questions to show that the speaker is asking them to himself, as though he is unsure of what happens. * **Write**: Ask students to **Turn and Task** to respond to **Q4a**, then independently jot ideas in response to **Q4b**. * **Discuss**: **Share out** and/or **Show Call** a variety of strong ideas about **Q4**.   + **Q4a: Throughout the poem, Hughes compares a dream deferred to festering, stinking, and crusting things, all related to the ideas of rot or decay. Brainstorm some other comparisons you might use to describe a dream deferred. Use the sentence starter, “A dream deferred is like….” to help you get started.**     - Responses will vary; students might draw on ideas from previously read poems (“a broken-winged bird”) or images of their own.   + **Q4b: Hughes uses verbs like dry, sag, and crust to convey his themes. Brainstorm some verbs that match your ideas and comparisons in 4a. You can use up to two of the verbs that Hughes uses.**      - Responses will vary; verbs might include fall, sink, rot, decay, etc. * **Write:** Ask students to complete the brainstorming table in **Q5**. * **Discuss: Share out** and/or **Show Call** a variety of strong responses.   + **Q5: In the space below, choose four of the verbs that you wrote in 4b, then write an image using that verb in the form a question. It may be useful to try and write more than one image with each verb.**     - Responses will vary. If students are struggling, prompt them to use the same language/structure as Hughes but replace his verbs with the verbs they chose. Teacher can also model using one of the verbs shared in 4b. * **Write:** Ask students to respond to **Q6**. * **Discuss:** **Show Call** a few student drawings, then **share out** a variety of responses to **Q6b**.   + **Q6a: Drawing is something that can help you develop your imagery. Reread lines 9-10, then draw a picture of what this image would look like.**     - ***Note:*** *Teachers may wish to model or draw their own version of these lines to guide students with the task. Teachers may also wish to use this earlier in the lesson for students who might be struggling to write their images.*   + **Q6b: Now, try to make two variations on this image by filling in the blanks with a strong word.**     - Responses will vary and should match the verb and/or noun. * **Write:** Ask students to respond to **Q7**. * **Discuss:** Lead a **brief discussion** of **Q7a**, then **share out** several strong responses to **Q7b** before asking students to choose a final line in **Q7c**.   + **Q7a: The last line of the poem is “Or does it explode?” How is this line a surprise or twist?**     - Instead of continuing the theme of slow decay or destruction, Hughes has the entire idea of a dream explode. No longer a slow process, this image is sudden and violent, and might cause damage beyond the dream itself. This is a disruption to the previous lines in the poem and a shift in the imagery that leaves the reader in suspense.   + **Q7b: Try to write your own last line to create a surprising to end your poem. Consider whether you want your line to be optimistic, pessimistic, complex, or even ambiguous. Experiment by writing several possible last lines.**     - Responses will vary; share lines that offer a variety of final moods.   + **Q7c: Choose the line you think best ends your poem and write down that line below.**     - Responses will vary. |
| **Cycle 3 (15-20 minutes) – Poem Drafting**   * **Write**: Ask students to draft their poems in the space provided in **Q8**. * ***Note:*** *For this first draft, students should focus on just writing their new lines. They should not worry about trying to match the structure of Hughes’s poem exactly, since this is an emulation, not a mimic exercise. The focus of the exercise is to see if students can write 5-6 images that are coherent and work together to answer the question in the first line.* * **Discuss:** Teachers may wish to have students share their first drafts with partners or read some examples out loud and have them write a new draft. The **Challenge** can be for students who believe they have “finished” their work or for students who do not wish to revise their original (this does not imply that the challenge revision has to be their final version).   + **Q8: Use the template below to write your first draft (you will use the same first line as Hughes for your poem).**     - Responses will vary.   + **Challenge: Try to revise your work using one of the following strategies: Try to make your poem follow the rhyme scheme that Hughes uses; Try to make your poem exactly 51 words.**     - The purpose of this challenge is to create some limitations on the structure of the poem, which can guide creativity. Adding rhymes will force students to think about word choice. Adding a word limit will force students think about clarity. |
| **Optional Cycle 4 (15-20 minutes) – Poem Sharing**   * **Read:** Ask students to **read aloud** their poems. * ***Note:*** *This cycle is unlike other reading cycles in that students will have the chance to share the poems they’ve just written out loud. Reading poetry expressively is an important part of developing an ear for poetry (things like rhythm, tone, inflection, etc). This may be a new system for your class, so here are things to keep in mind:*   + *Students should be given time to practice reading on their own (in a whisper/quiet voice) or with a partner. Teachers should read original poem aloud at least once more, calling to attention things like pausing at the end of each line, maintaining the same rhythm for each line, and changes in inflection.*   + *For students who are particularly shy, teachers may want to pre-call them (or even preview the activity prior to the day’s lesson).*   + *While the purpose of the activity is to share the poetry that students have written (and celebrate it!), teachers should also highlight or prompt students to notice things like:*     - *Interesting subject choices*     - *Creative or unique rhymes*     - *Creative use of question and answer in stanza 2*     - *Variations from the original poem’s structure that are pleasing, surprising, or even jarring.*   + *Teachers should also prompt students to respond to their classmates after they’ve read. Teachers may want to limit these responses to just one comment for pacing. Teachers should push students to root their responses in the poetic language they have been using over the past two weeks (rhyme, rhyme scheme, repetition, variation, etc).*   + *For pacing or in response to the needs of your students, you might choose to have students read to a partner or small group instead of to the whole class.* * **Write:** After students have shared their poems, ask them to respond to **Q9**. * **[Optional] Discuss:** If pacing allows, lead a **brief discussion** to reflect on the process of writing and sharing poetry.   + **Q9a: How did using a model poem help you write your own?**     - Responses will vary. Students might say it gave them a structure to help follow when writing their own poem, or that it helped them think about how to construct different images to create a feeling.   + **Q9b: What, if anything, was difficult about writing this poem?**     - Responses will vary. It might have been difficult to follow a particular structure or rhyme scheme, or to try to emulate such a famous poet/poem, etc.   + **Q9c: How did listening to your classmates’ poems affect the way you see poetry (or your own poem) now?**     - Responses will vary. Some possible responses:       * Even simple or similar poems can have a lot of variety.       * Poets can be creative even when they’re writing a simple poem or emulating another.       * Writing poetry is easier/harder than I thought. |

## Bibliography

**Imagery**

Arp, Thomas A and Greg Johnson. *Sound and Sense*. Boston, Ma: Heinle & Heinle, 2002.