

The Beats in Poetry and the Poetics in Rap: Learning the Elements of Poetry through Rap Lyrics and Applying Those Learned Elements to Poetry

by
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Rationale

There is a difficult challenge schools face each day: asking students to keep their electronic devices away! Even though some schools ban all electronic devices or even confiscate them, without fail you will be sure to see at least one student with an earbud attached to a device full of lyrics and beats stuck in his ear. Students argue that the music they listen to helps them stay focused and complete their work; teachers argue that the music their students listen to distracts them and makes their work unsatisfactory. So, how should educators fight this war? Many teachers dislike arguing, so they allow their students to listen to the music or even play it for them. Others stand true to their beliefs and refer a student with the banned electronic device to the principal's office, but some decide the lyrics their students are engulfed in are worth teaching. I would consider myself to be a part of the "some" category, but the never-ending question of how to teach these lyrics in relation to poetry is one most of us cannot answer. This unit will bring together my students' favorite lyrics with history's favorite poems to instill a fond appreciation for poetry's words on a page, which can be given a beat and become the words pumping through the earbuds my students refuse to remove from their ears. Poetry, like rap, creates an inherent beat due to the chosen words and the creative placement of those words. If students can begin to hear the beat the words alone make in rap, they will be able to then hear a poem's beat, and so they will no longer need the computerized sounds or instrumentals to accompany the words.

I teach under-credited and overage "juniors" and "seniors" at New Horizons School for Higher Achievement in New Haven, Connecticut. My students have been placed in our alternative high school for reasons of truancy, criminal records (court-ordered students), childcare issues, and serious behavior issues. Most of them live in poverty-ridden neighborhoods and find school to be their only "safe-haven," but fall way below their reading/writing grade levels, so schoolwork is difficult and frustrating. My job is to teach the New Haven junior and senior curriculum at an appropriate level, so none of my students feels over- or under-challenged, which is quite difficult when I have a class of fifteen students and reading/writing levels vary from "grade 2" through "post-high school." Another huge challenge is their truancy issues. In my class of fifteen I may only see the same three students every other day, so the units and lessons I plan cannot span over a couple days because I will only be forced to play "catch-up" each day with the students who walk into the classroom after three days of being absent.

My students love and live for music. They want their favorite music to be playing at all times and have most rap songs memorized. Some of my students enjoy writing their own lyrics or free styling to beats, but find no real connection to poetry, for the idea of poetry seems so far from the lyrics they love.

This unit will ask my students to look at their favorite rap lyrics and compare them to poetic lyrics. I believe my students love these rap lyrics because of the creative word use, but do not take the time to think about the effects of the artist's choice of words. I often hear students reciting their favorite artists' lyrics, and for reasons they are not aware of, are able to remember the lines and spew them out effortlessly. For example, in "Dumb it Down," Lupe Fiasco sings: I'm fearless, now hear this, I'm earless (less)/and I'm peerless (less), which means I'm eyeless/ which means I'm tearless, which means my iris/resides where my ear is,/ which means I'm blinded."¹ The constant rhyme allows for listeners to quickly pick up on the words. Not only are there the obvious repetition and rhyming of the "less" in his song, but all the surrounding words enhance that rhyme. The "this," "Iris," and "is" help punctuate the strong rhyming. Also, in Souls of Mischief's song "Disseshowedo," Tajai's lines "In battles I rip it and it gets hectic after/ I flip the script like a dyslectic actor/ you're no

factor" allow for creative wordplay.² His message gets across by creating a strong simile and rhyming the words "after," "actor," and "factor." The strong simile allows for his listeners to image just how "hectic" it gets when he battles and the rhymes help to make the song catchy. My students encounter a lot of violence in their daily lives, but rap battles allow for a fight between two people without fists or guns. My students enjoy rap battling because the only weapons are words and they can "dis" each other without it ending violently.

These literary elements are already a part of my students' lives and their love for rap, but my job is to point out the literary elements, so my students can identify them in new songs they listen to, sing, or produce and transfer their knowledge to more "traditional" poetry. Their favorite rappers already use the tools I will teach my students, so through these rappers' lyrics, I can teach the craft of poetry to my students. Most of them do not realize that the words written on a page in a certain manner create a rhythm and rhyme without any music at all. Many rap artists use a specific form in which they write lyrics, just like poets, but my students do not recognize or do not have the experience to see this craft taking place. Lyrics, like poetry, use wordplay, signifying, and storytelling to send a message to their audience; that rap's message can be incredibly similar to a poem's, which is why I will ask my students to read and closely look at rap lyrics on paper next to a poem on paper.

In order to create this connection, we must first give our students what they want: lyrics. Through the lyrics created by Tupac (rapper), Eminem, Jay-Z, Notorious B.I.G., Lil'Kim, Snoop Dogg, Lil Wayne, and others, poetic elements can be taught and then transferred to poetry, which has not been given a formal beat or made it to the top hits playlist. This unit is designed for 9-12th grade students who have a particular love for rap lyrics, but can be modified for the 7-8th grade level. It can also be modified to use a different genre of lyrics coupled with various poets. This unit will encourage students to make poetry to lyric connections (text to text), text to self, and text to world connections, while teaching the poetic elements found in poetry written by Langston Hughes, Maya Angelou, Nikki Giovanni, Tupac (poet), and others. Students will have the opportunity to hear rap songs and written poetry performed, and they will also be given the opportunity to perform a poem (original or famous) to bring the words on a page to life. Elements of poetry, which create memorable raps and poems, will be learned about through Adam Bradley's *Book of Rhymes The Poetics of Hip Hop*³

Most of the lyrics and poems chosen will relate in theme, but will also have similar poetic elements. For example, Hughes's *Mother to Son* poem will be taught parallel to Tupac's *Dear Mama* lyrics. The theme of mother and son will be the focus, while the elements of storytelling, rhythm, and rhyme used to create the beautiful flow of both texts can be learned and appreciated.



Choosing the Lyrics and Poems

While teaching these under-credited and over-aged juniors and seniors, I have found it is important to ask them what it is they are interested in. If the students can feel a sense of ownership over their education, they will be more willing to participate in class discussions, in- and out-of-class activities, and projects. This unit will easily allow for my students to have some choice over what they read. I will ask them to make a classroom list of their favorite rap artists and songs; then based on this list I can choose the lyrics I will ask my students to "analyze."

Prior to asking my students for their input, I will already have a set of lyrics put together, which I know they will enjoy based on my experience with them. A helpful resource will be *The Anthology of Rap* edited by Adam Bradley and Andrew DuBois.⁴ Within this anthology, I can find a slew of song lyrics written by most every well-known rap artist from the beginning of rap all the way to current time.

Since most of my students have not had much experience with poetry, it will be my job to help them put together the list of poems that will best interest them. A helpful way to start is to research the rap artists my students love and find out who their favorite poets are. This becomes helpful because a lot of rap artists' idols are well-known poets and their poetry deals with similar themes and cultural experiences as the rap artists' lyrics. To do this, I will offer biographical information on some of the rappers chosen to be in this unit. Within this biographical information, we can extract some poets' names and start creating a list to work from. Some great resources in finding poetry to complement rap lyrics are http://www.poemhunter.com/i/ebooks/pdf/langston_hughes_2004_9.pdf,⁵ <http://www.ctadams.com/famous1.html>,⁶ Tupac Shakur's *The Rose that Grew from Concrete*,⁷ and Nikki Giovanni's *The 100 Best African American Poems*.⁸



How to Choose Artists and Themes

Within my classroom, I have a majority of male students. I also have a variation in races and ethnicities. In order for my students to feel connected to this unit, I must choose artists that speak about topics they can relate to, especially when dealing with poetry, and artists who represent my students. For this reason, I have chosen artists of different ethnicities and an even amount of male and females. While I do not have many females in my classes, the female voice should be heard in this unit, so an appreciate for female talent, especially in the rap industry, can be motivated.

Many people dislike rap music or ban it for reasons of vulgar language and talk of drugs, sex, pimping, violence, and misogyny. While these issues do exist in rap, rap should not be banned from the classroom. In fact, rap lyrics should be invited into the classroom as literature to read and discuss. This unit will not encourage these unlawful and immoral issues, but address them and heighten my

students' awareness of what these artists are saying. From there, we can, as a class, discuss whether or not we agree with the artists' views and have a debate about these social issues.

This unit is not designed to question students' morals and/or values, but if a specific rap lyric brings up conversation on something unlawful or immoral, I will not shy away from opening up a discussion on the given topic. For example, in some of the rap lyrics I chose for this unit, the male artist refers to women as "bitches." This small example of how rap can be misogynistic can lead to a discussion in my classroom about whether or not referring to a woman as a "bitch" is appropriate or not. My students will listen to their favorite music regardless, so why not use this music as an entryway into great classroom lessons and discussions? We might just invite students to question if they like what they are choosing to listen to or not.

On the other hand, I had to choose poetry for my students to read and write about. There are some poems, such as Tupac's poems, which will be easier for my students to identify with since they are written by one of their favorite rappers, but there are other poems written by artists they have not heard of. These new artists will have to win the respect of my students, if I want my students to enjoy poetry and feel a strong tie to it the way they feel tied to rap. It is my job to choose poems that speak to my students; I cannot choose poems with topics irrelevant to my students, for most of my students are extremely egocentric and believe if something does not directly apply to them, they do not have the time to waste on it. While this might be a sad reality, it is important to know your audience (your students) and entertain them the best you can while giving them the opportunity to learn.



Why Poetry?

There are many reasons this unit needs and incorporates poetry. First, rap lyrics are a form of poetry. If a teacher, like myself with inner-city students who listen to nothing but rap, truly wants to have a high percentage of student engagement in her class, then allowing the students' interests to enter into the classroom's curriculum is the best way possible.

Second, "traditional" poetry looks like rap to our students. They are both short, have distinct elements, such as rhyme and/or wordplay, and have a huge message to send in few words. While longer pieces of literature have some of the shared literary elements, novels or even short stories can lose the interest and attention of students if they feel the author is taking too many pages to express only a couple of main ideas.

Thirdly, one of the most important reasons this unit uses poetry is because of daily planning. Each class's focus can be a new poem or rap lyric. This keeps each class exciting and new to my students, but also makes my planning easier. Teaching in a school with extremely high truancy rates means I do not see the same students every day, which makes it hard to live out an ongoing lesson or novel because I am constantly trying to catch students up. This takes a lot of time and bores other students who might have not been absent. While some poems can be long and extensive, it will best benefit my students to choose a poem of average length for any one given class period. However, it is important to note that this unit does progress over a long period of time, so while students will not miss too much if they miss one class on one given day, if they are frequently absent, they will not learn the fundamentals well enough to complete the increasingly challenging assignments. This unit is by no means an easy unit for students, but simply complements a classroom with truancy issues well.



How to Move From Rap to Poetry

Once I have introduced the poetic elements this unit will focus on and students have identified these elements in rap lyrics such as "Dumb It Down" and "Disseshowedo" (lyrics already identified for using wordplay and rhyming), I will provide poems with examples of similar poetic elements.

For example, in Tupac's poem *In the Event of my Demise* he says, "I will die before my time," which is an example of irony⁹. While irony is not playing out directly in this poem, we know Tupac did die before his time and Tupac having written this poem is quite ironic. Students will be able to quickly pick up on this irony, for they know Tupac's life story very well and many things that he rapped and wrote poetry about foreshadowed what would happen to him—he was shot and killed at the age of 25.

Also, in Kevin Young's poem *Expecting*, he says, "...the doctor searches early for your heartbeat, peach pit, unripe plum—pulls out the world's worst boom box, a Mr. Microphone, to broadcast your mother's lifting belly."¹⁰ These words are a great example of wordplay. Young is referring to the unborn baby as a peach pit and unripe plum. Then he creates a metaphor for the ultrasound his wife is undergoing—"the world's worst boom box, a Mr. Microphone." The metaphor makes sense and creates a clear picture for his audience. An ultrasound allows for parents-to-be to see an image of the unborn baby and hear his/her heartbeat. This metaphor makes the poem powerful and creative.



Unit Objectives and Overview

By the end of this unit, all of my students should be able to recognize alliteration, rhyme, wordplay (including metaphors, similes, puns, and others), irony, imagery, and tone. They will not only be able to highlight these elements of poetry, but they should be able to write their own examples of these elements in their own original rap and/or poetry.

Also, my students should be able to understand theme within lyrics or poetry and make text-to-text connections, text-to-self connections, and text-to-world connections. These connections also highlight the necessary skills my students need to have in March when they are taking CAPT. I will ask my students to decide why a compacted, rhymed statement is more powerful than a longer, unrhymed paragraph, which will have them question how successful an author is at creating a good piece of literature/writing; this task also fits in perfectly with sections from CAPT. In the beginning of the unit, my students will mostly make these connections through writing. They will be given specific questions, such as "How does the message of this rap/poem make you feel? Do you agree with the message? Why or why not? How does this message connect to you or others you know? Explain in detail your answers." The foundation of this question is "text-to-self." There will be other questions that address different elements of writing about text as well.

As we become experienced readers/writers of rap and poetry, I will ask my students to not only write their responses, but to form literature circles and engage in whole class discussions. The purpose for this sequence is because in the past, my students feel more comfortable writing independently, whether it is due to fear of rejection or fear of being wrong, they historically do not discuss personal reactions well. I need to make sure my students have had practice with this material and have a chance to receive positive feedback from me before they can feel comfortable sharing as a class.

Also, throughout the unit, I will ask my students to write a line or few lines of rap/poetry and offer them a chance to share their work. Also, each one of my students will be asked to read aloud at least one rap or poem we will be working on each class period. I need to prepare them and allow them time to become comfortable performing before asking them to complete their final assessment, which will be to write their own poem/rap and perform it in front of a larger audience at the very end of this unit.



Incorporating Multimedia

It is important for teachers to know what they are up against teaching in the age of technology. Our competition, as teachers, are video games, YouTube, the Internet, computers, cell phones, social networking sites, music devices, the television, and so on and so on. Sitting in a classroom staring at a teacher or board all day cannot capture and hold on to our students' attention. We, as teachers, must offer more than worksheets and overhead projections. This unit can incorporate different multimedia to keep class new, exciting, and attention grabbing.

Television—HBO has an amazing series *Brave New Voices*, which features young adults who write and perform poetry. Not only are the poems powerful and emotional, but also the performances are captivating and intriguing. It is hard to look away when a young male/female is performing an original poem. This is a great tool to use in the classroom during this unit. The show can offer exciting new poems to discuss and analyze in the classroom and it can also serve as an inspiration to writing original poems for students.

YouTube—There are many different clips on YouTube which broadcast poetry slams, the spoken word, def jams, etc. This website is a great place to find clips of poetry in various different forms to show students as examples of poetry performances or as classroom discussion starters.

Movies—Movies, such as *Slam*, *Slam Nation*, and *8 Mile* all focus on the topic of poetry. These are great movies to show in full to students or movies to pull clips from to have students watch and discuss. Also, the characters in these movies are appealing to most high school students.

Music—This unit focuses heavily on rap lyrics, so the songs the rap lyrics accompany should be played in class when appropriate to pull students into the lesson. Just words on a page, no matter how interesting, can lose the attention of most students if they do not have various means of hearing those words.

While these are only some of the different ways to incorporate multimedia, the few suggestions given should most definitely be incorporated to compliment the unit. Students can become bored of the same reading and writing activities, so adding multimedia into the unit can help keep students wanting to come to class!



Sample Lessons

On days 1 and 2 of this unit, I will ask my students to learn the elements of poetry. A couple goals I will set out for these days will be for students to define the elements of poetry and to identify alliteration, rhyme, wordplay, irony, imagery, and tone. I will have my students take notes on these elements of poetry, identify these elements in rap lyrics, and create posters for each element to be hung around the classroom. These posters will serve as quick guides for each student during the unit.

On a different day during the unit, I will ask my students to meet the following goals: to be able to identify irony and imagery within a rap lyric and to be able to write about the lyric's theme and poetic craft. I will ask my students to read the lyrics aloud several times, identify all the elements of poetry they can find, and I will ask them to write about the effectiveness of the lyrics and the message of the lyrics.

An example of this lesson will focus on Tupac's *Changes* lyrics. I will play the song for my students and have them pay close attention to irony and imagery Tupac sets up in his song. Then, I will hand my students the lyrics to the song and have them read along while listening to the song again. This time, I will ask them to identify these two elements and highlight where they find them. Also, I will ask them to simply underline or bracket any part of the song they find interesting, confusing, intriguing, powerful, etc. As a class, we will discuss where irony and imagery were found. These two elements will be the focus for the class, but I will also encourage students to mention any other elements they found within the rap, for there are many different elements which can be found in any given piece of literature. Students will write about the effectiveness of the lyrics and make text-to-self and text-to-world connections. I will also allow time for any comments the students wish to make about different parts of the song and how they add to the effectiveness of the rap.

On a different day, further into the unit, I will ask my students to meet the following goals: to be able to identify rhyme and wordplay within rap lyrics and poetry and to be able to compare rap to poetry. I will ask my students to read rap and poetry aloud several times, identify all the elements of poetry within the rap lyrics and poem, and I will have students create a Venn Diagram comparing and contrasting the two works.

An example of this lesson will focus on Tupac's *Dear Mama* lyrics and Langston Hughes's *Mother to Son* poem. I will hand out the lyric and poem to each student. In pairs I will ask them to find the two poetic elements, rhyme and wordplay, which will be the focus for the day. They can also feel free to mark their poem and lyric with different comments they have, but they must spend most of their time searching for rhyme and wordplay. As a class, we will share what each pair of students found and discuss the effectiveness of each piece based on the poetic elements used. Students will be responsible for independently comparing and contrasting the poem and lyric. Their focus will be to make text-to-text and text-to-world connections.

On a different day, well into the unit, I will ask my students to meet the following goals: to be able to identify irony within a poem. I will ask my students to read aloud the poem several times and identify the poetic element within the poem. I will also ask them to make text-to-self connections.

An example of this lesson will focus on Nikki Giovanni's *I Wrote a Good Omelet* poem. I will hand out the poem to each student. I will ask them to independently find the irony within the poem. I will also ask them to make any other comments they wish to make about the poem in the margins. As a class, we will discuss the poem and the poetic element of irony. We will discuss whether or not irony helps make the poem more effective or less effective. We will discuss how Giovanni gets her message across in this poem. Also, the students will be responsible for writing a text-to-self connection.

These are just quick outlines of different snapshots in the unit, but it is obviously very necessary to start small and build upon the new knowledge the students are gaining. This unit should be fun, interactive, and challenging. It will ask students to come out of their comfort zone, try new things, and trust themselves, their teacher, and their peers.



Suggested Reading List

Poems

The Weary Blues Langston Hughes
Morning After Langston Hughes
Early Evening Quarrel Langston Hughes
As Befits a Man Langston Hughes
Mother to Son Langston Hughes
And 2morrow Tupac
In The Event of My Demise Tupac
The Rose That Grew From Concrete Tupac
When Ure Hero Falls Tupac
I'm Not Lonely Nikki Giovanni
Legacies Nikki Giovanni
And I Have You Nikki Giovanni
I Wrote a Good Omelet Nikki Giovanni
Make Up Nikki Giovanni
Human Family Maya Angelou
They Went Home Maya Angelou
Phenomenal Woman Maya Angelou
Fightin' Was Natural Maya Angelou
Hanging Fire Audre Lorde
White Lady Lucille Clifton
Mama I Remember Marilyn Nelson Waniek
Expecting Kevin Young
I Will Keep Broken Things Alice Walker

Raps

Dear Mama Tupac
Changes Tupac
Me Against the World Tupac
All Eyez On Me Tupac
Till I Collapse Eminem
Cinderella Man Eminem
Cleaning Out My Closet Eminem
Mockingbird Eminem
Stan Eminem
Young Forever Jay-Z
99 Problems Jay-Z
Empire State of Mind Jay-Z
Hard Knock Life Jay-Z
Big Pimpin' Jay-Z
Drop the World Lil Wayne
Lollipop Remix Lil Wayne
6 Foot 7 Foot Lil Wayne
How To Love Lil Wayne
Roman's Revenge Nicki Minaj
Don't Mess With Me Lil Kim
I Got A Story To Tell Notorious B.I.G
Who Am I Snoop Dogg
Game Of Life Snoop Dogg

What Do the Poems Teach?

Alliteration

The Weary Blues

Rhyme

When Ur Hero Falls

And 2morrow

And I Have You

Phenomenal Woman

Wordplay

The Weary Blues

Mother to Son

The Rose that Grew from Concrete

Expecting

Make Up

Hanging Fire

I Will Keep Broken Things

Irony

When Ur Hero Falls

In the Event of my Demise

Legacies

I Wrote a Good Omelet

White Lady

They Went Home

Fightin' Was Natural

Imagery

The Weary Blues

Morning After

As Befits a Man

Mama I Remember

Human Family

Tone

The Weary Blues

Early Evening Quarrel

Mother to Son

I'm Not Lonely

Legacies

What Do the Raps Teach?

Alliteration

Till I Collapse

Young Forever

Hard Knock Life

Who Am I

Rhyme

Dear Mama

Cinderella Man

99 Problems

Big Pimpin'

6 Foot 7 Foot

Wordplay

All Eyez On Me

Cinderella Man

Mockingbird

Drop the World

Lollipop Remix

6 Foot 7 Foot

Irony

Changes

Cleaning Out My Closet

Stan

I Got A Story To Tell

Imagery

Changes

Me Against the World

Empire State of Mind

How To Love

Don't Mess With Me

Game of Life

Tone

Changes

Till I Collapse

Mockingbird

Stan

Roman's Revenge



Implementing District Standards

Within the district curriculum the following significant tasks are noted: Making Student Voices Heard through Text Connections, Using the Reading/Writing Connection to Explore American Values, and Composing a Comparative Literary Analysis.

Through all the text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world connections I will be asking my students to make throughout this unit, "Making Student Voices Heard through Text Connections" will be made possible. Not only will my students share their connections through writing, but they will also share their connections through small group and whole group discussions.

I have chosen a long list of rap songs and poems, which reflect the ideas of American writers. Giving my students the opportunity to read these raps and poems, I can achieve the "Using the Reading/Writing Connection to Explore American Values" task. My students will be asked to read multiple different titles by various American artists and write about these texts. Through this writing, my students will be asked to identify themes and messages within the texts and compare and contrast the various artists' ideas and values.

While there will be small writing assignments all throughout the unit, towards the end of the unit, I will ask my students to compose a longer, more formal comparative literary analysis, in order to achieve the "Composing a Comparative Literary Analysis" task. This formal essay will ask my students to look deeper into the literature they have been reading and compare all the different themes and poetic elements they have been learning about.



Notes

1. Lupe Fiasco. "Dumb It Down," *Lupe Fiasco's The Cool*, 2007, 1st and 15th Atlanta.
2. Souls of Mischief. "Disseshowedo," *93 Til Infinity*, 1993, Jive Records.
3. Bradley, Adam. *Book of Rhymes: The Poetics of Hip Hop*. New York, NY: Basic Civitas Books, 2009. Print.
4. Bradley, Adam, and Andrew DuBois. *The Anthology of Rap*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010. Print.
5. "Classic Poetry Series." *PoemHunter*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Apr. 2011. www.poemhunter.com/i/ebooks/pdf/langston_hughes_2004_9.pdf.
6. "Famous African American Writers N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Apr. 2011. <http://www.ctadams.com/famous1.html>.
7. Giovanni, Nikki. *The 100 best African American poems: (*but I cheated)*. Naperville, Ill.: Sourcebooks MediaFusion, 2010. Print.
8. Shakur, Tupac. *The Rose that Grew from Concrete*. New York: Pocket Books, 1999. Print.
9. Shakur, Tupac. "In The Event of My Demise." *The Rose That Grew From Concrete*. New York: Pocket Books, 1999. 150. Print.
10. Young, Kevin, Poetry, "Expecting," *The New Yorker*, January 3, 2011, p. 42



Bibliography

8 Mile. Dir. Curtis Hanson. Perf. Eminem, Kim Basinger, Mekhi Phifer. Universal Studios, 2002. DVD. This movie offers great clips on rap battles, much like poetry slams. Bradley, Adam. *Book of Rhymes: The Poetics of Hip Hop*. New York, NY: Basic Civitas Books, 2009. Print. The craft of hip hop is explored. Various hip hop artists' songs are included in this text and all the creative poetic elements found within the lyrics are highlighted. A great teaching tool.

Bradley, Adam, and Andrew DuBois. *The Anthology of Rap*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010. Print. This anthology is made up of rap lyrics as poetry from various artists. The anthology is set up in historical fashion, for the very firsts rap lyrics are from the very beginning of rap and the anthology ends with rap lyrics from current time.

Brave New Voices. Simmons, Russell, and Stan Lathan. HBO. 2009. Television. A television series, which includes poetry slams and poetry performances is a great place to see young adults write poetry and perform it in a powerful, emotional way.

"Classic Poetry Series." *PoemHunter*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Apr. 2011. www.poemhunter.com/i/ebooks/pdf/langston_hughes_2004_9.pdf. Some of Langston Hughes's poetry is made assessable on this website.

"Famous African American writers, famous black poems, famous black poets, famous black poetry, famous African American authors, Welcome to Mr. Africa Famous Black Poetry Lounge." *Black Poetry, Black Poets, Black Poems, Black Poetry, African American Poetry, African American Poems, Def Poetry, African American Poets, Def Jam Poetry, Black Writer, Black Author, Ghetto Love Poem, Urban Poetry, Spoken Word, Hip Hop Poetry, Friendship*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Apr. 2011. <http://www.ctadams.com/famous1.html>. Some of America's famous black poets' work is made assessable on this website.

Giovanni, Nikki. *The 100 best African American poems: (*but I cheated)*. Naperville, Ill.: Sourcebooks MediaFusion, 2010. Print. Within this piece, poems from Langston Hughes, Nikki Giovanni, Kevin Young, and others are found. It is a great place to find some of America's favorite and most touching African American poets' poems.

Shakur, Tupac. "In The Event of My Demise." *The Rose That Grew From Concrete*. New York: Pocket Books, 1999. 150. Print. A poem, which offers a great opportunity to examine the poetic element of irony.

Shakur, Tupac. *The Rose that Grew from Concrete*. New York: Pocket Books, 1999. Print. This book is full of Tupac's memorable poems. On one side of the book, Tupac's handwritten poems are copied and on the other side the poems are typed, so reading them is made easier.

Lupe Fiasco. "Dumb It Down," *Lupe Fiasco's The Cool*, 2007, 1st and 15th Atlanta. A rap song, which offers a great opportunity to examine the poetic elements in rap lyrics.

Slam. Dir. Marc Levin. Perf. Saul Williams, Sonja Sohn, Bonz Malone. Lions Gate, 1998. DVD. A movie about the power of poetry. Great for showing specific clips that deal with writing and performing poetry.

Slam Nation: The Sport of Spoken Word. Dir. Paul Devlin. Perf. Mychele Dee, Craig Mums Grant, Taylor Mali. New Video Group, 1998. DVD. This movie has great poetry slam clips.

Souls of Mischief. "Disseshowedo," *93 Til Infinity*, 1993, Jive Records. A rap song, which offers a great opportunity to examine the poetic elements in rap lyrics.

Young, Kevin, Poetry, "Expecting," *The New Yorker*, January 3, 2011, p. 42 A poem, which offers a great opportunity to example the poetic element of wordplay.

YouTube - Broadcast Yourself. N.p., n.d. Web. 24 July 2011. <http://youtube.com> A place to watch various clips.

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