

TEACHERS' EDITION

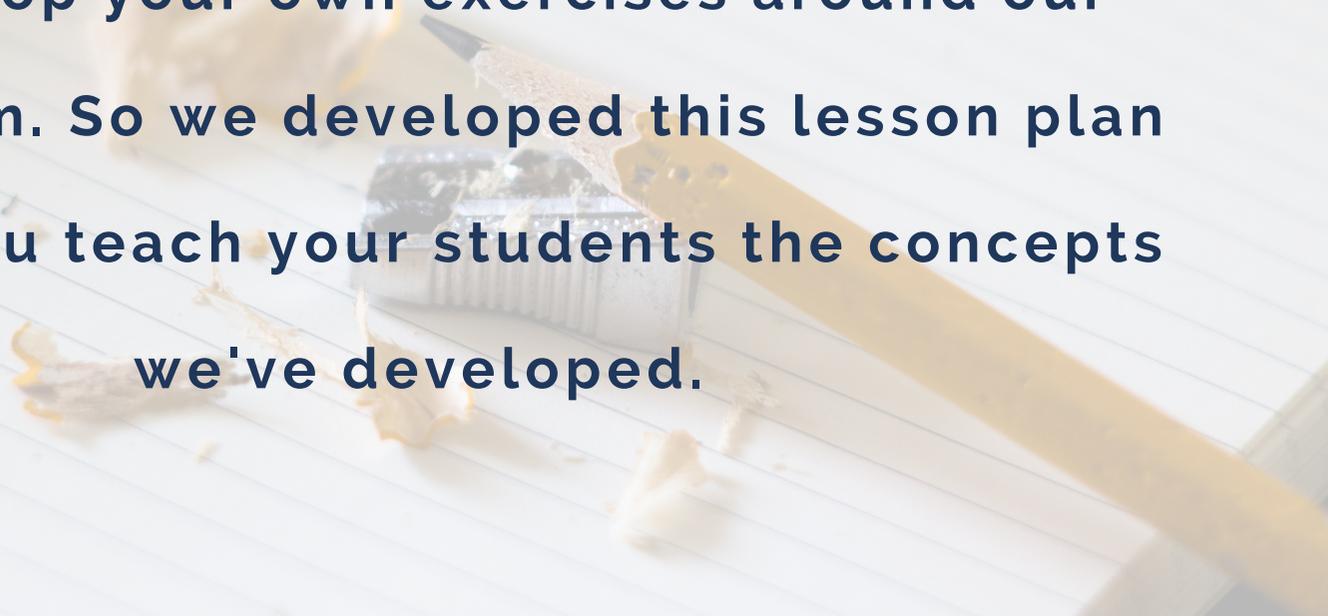


**WRITTEN, SPOKEN,
RAPPED LESSON**

**A five-day lesson plan to go
deeper into our three genres**

WE'RE TEACHERS, TOO.

We understand you might not have the time to develop your own exercises around our curriculum. So we developed this lesson plan to help you teach your students the concepts we've developed.

A close-up photograph of a pencil sharpener on a lined notebook page. The sharpener is a small, silver, cylindrical device with a blue handle. It is surrounded by several pieces of yellow pencil shavings. A yellow pencil is partially visible, extending from the sharpener towards the bottom right of the frame. The background is a soft-focus view of the notebook's pages.

HOME WORK 1

Task: To prepare for your first class in the instruction of this course, assign the first two videos (“Four Elements of Excellent Poetry” and “Written, Spoken, Rapped”) together with all the craft and performance links that follow the videos. This will give your students a chance to consider the three options available to them as poets: poems for the page, spoken word poems, and rap.

CLASS 1

Review of the first two videos and the craft of free verse

After students have completed the homework assignment above, review the main points the two videos cover, then use your LCD projector to review the 10 tips for writing free verse in the link titled "Free Verse: A Background, with Tips To Help You Write It." Since free verse is the kind of poetry favored today by both poets of the page and spoken word poets, this link is very important for students to know. Following your review, try the exercise on free verse in the appendix of this message ("Exercise A"), which will help students apply the 10 tips.



HOME WORK 2

Task: Assign the last three excerpts of Exercise A. At the same time, distribute copies of the exercise on rap poetry in the appendix (“Exercise B”), reviewing the instructions for it and assigning this one as well.

Goal: Students will discover the dramatic contrast between the open forms of free verse (used by page and spoken word poets) and the structured rhymes and rhythms of rap.

CLASS 2

Bringing together our three kinds of poetry, with a focus on craft

a) Start the class by asking students to take out their follow-up Mary Oliver exercises and open their notebooks. Then read, slowly enough so they can copy down your words, the lines Oliver actually wrote in each of the three excerpts that have been printed as paragraphs. Pause after each excerpt and ask students to defend Oliver's line breaks.

b) Then turn to the rap exercise, calling for volunteers to read aloud, as rap, five or six of the excerpts. Make sure there are four strong beats in all the lines read, and look for readers willing to throw themselves into their poem's energy and rhythm, getting into the spirit of rap.



CLASS 2

(CONTINUED)

c) Finish the class by projecting, from our site, one or two samples each of rap in performance and spoken word in performance. Point out the following differences between the two genres:

Spoken word is a kind of free verse for the ear; its rhythm and rhyme are improvised. **By contrast, rap** is more structured, using a pattern of rhyme and a four-beat line. **Furthermore**, spoken word, while it involves gestures, limits the use of bodily movement in order to focus on language and its feeling. On the other hand rap, derived from the dance of hip-hop, often combines the poem's rhythms with bodily movement.



HOME WORK 3

Task: Reassign “Tips for Writing and Performing Rap” and “Tips for Writing and Performing Spoken Word,” telling students to observe performing techniques. Assign also the following free-verse poem by James Laughlin, asking students to spend some time with it, figuring out why the poet breaks lines and stanzas as he does.

Goal: Students will increase their skills in all three genres of poetry.

THE CHILD

in his little bed in
the dark room clutches

the fluted columns at
the head of the bed his

fists are rigid and he
can't sleep he is think-

ing about how some day
he will not be alive

he will not be a per-
son he will not be him-

self anymore he won't
be it is terror to him

CLASS 3

Getting started: A showing of Video 3 with student helps, then on to the first draft

Begin this class by asking students which genre of poetry they want to try – at least for their first poem. Once they've made their choices, show on the LCD projector the third video, "How Do I Get Started?"; then show and discuss the video's related links for getting started (the ones about stealing first lines or themes from other poems), asking them to choose one of the recommended options and write the first draft of a poem in class.



HOME WORK 4

Task: Ask students to watch Video 4 and read the printed overview of Video 4, which lists a range of suggestions for revision. Afterward, students should finish their work by rewriting their first-draft class poems for the next class. Ask that they bring to the next class both their revised poem and their copy of the printed overview, which they'll need to consult during group work.

Goal: Students will learn the principles of revision by applying them to their own work.

CLASS 4

The revision process: group work with suggestions for poems in draft

Break your class up into groups of three, and making sure everyone has a copy of the printed overview of Video 4, ask that students in each group read their poems aloud to each other and offer suggestions where needed based on the overview of Video 4. Circulate to guide and prod. If time remains, students can begin their overnight assignment below.



HOME WORK 5

Task: Tell students to revise their poems and start another poem based on one of the prompts listed in the craft links for Video 3. They should print off enough copies of their revised poem for all class members and the teacher. Ask also that they bring their printed overviews of Video 4 to the next class for workshop discussion.

Goal: Through class 4 and the homework assignment that follows it, students are learning the process of writing poems in drafts. And as they start their new poem, they'll also enter the rhythm of revising old poems and writing new ones that will continue to the end of their poetry unit.

CLASS 5

The first workshop

Now that your students know a bit about revision, make a circle of chairs for a workshop discussion. The discussion, which you should lead, will be based on Video 4's revision tips.

After students have passed around their poems and collated them in the same order, start discussing the top poem and making your way down through the stack. Authors should start the discussion of their poems by reading them aloud. Care must be taken to avoid bad feelings about critical feedback. As facilitator, always start by asking for aspects of the poem that deserve praise, then for constructive suggestions about areas where improvement might be needed. Remember that the more students critique the poems of others, the more they learn about writing and revising their own work.



HOME WORK 6

Task: Now that you've started the workshop process, we'd advise continuing it, with the long-range goal of 3, 4, or 5 completely revised poems – the number depending on how short or long your unit is.

Try turning once in a while to small-group discussions of poems in progress for a variation of format. Small group discussion is an ideal way to start the process of revision with first drafts. And whenever you sense that students need a refresher about any area of craft, or even about the basic elements of all poetry, be sure to reassign the relevant videos and craft helps!

Goal: By challenging your students to become teachers through their contributions in workshop discussions, you'll increase their critical awareness of their own work. Be sure to let them know how many poems you expect them to write and workshop in your poetry unit or class. That way, they'll begin to determine their own homework assignments, starting new poems or revising old ones according to what's being done in class, as they fall into the workshop rhythm.

FINAL NOTE

Why not conclude your work in this course by featuring the best poems in a reading for your whole school? Yes, the written poets can participate, too! Simply counsel them to read their poetry with expression, vocal tone, and feeling, just as the spoken word poets do.



APPENDIX

EXERCISE A: From prose to free verse

Below are six excerpts from free verse poems written out as prose. The excerpts all come from the Mary Oliver collection, *American Primitive*. Type up the prose excerpts, together with their accompanying clues, and pass them out to your class -- withholding the originals printed below for now! Take up the first 2-3 excerpts one by one, asking students in each case to follow the clue and try to reconstruct the original lines as Oliver wrote them. The rest of the excerpts are for homework.

1. **Prose excerpt:** The blacksnake climbing in the vines halts its long ladder of muscle. -- From "Rain in Ohio."

Clue for students: In the original, this is a stanza with three lines (or a tercet).

Original:

The blacksnake climbing
in the vines halts
its long ladder of muscle.

Teaching help: After class members have finished with their reconstructions, ask various students to read the results aloud, crediting successes with individual lines, until you find someone who breaks lines just as Oliver does. Ask readers to defend their line choices and invite others to disagree, so everyone learns from the process. In your discussion emphasize the principle of breaking lines to *stress action*. You might also mention the musical device of alliteration in the last line.

EXERCISE A: (From prose to free verse)

2. **Prose excerpt:** Look, the trees are turning their own bodies into pillars of light. -- From "In Blackwater Woods"

Clue: In the original, this excerpt includes a stanza of four lines (or a quatrain), followed by a stanza division, followed by a fifth line.

Original:

Look the trees
are turning
their own bodies
into pillars

of light...

Teaching help: Once students are finished with their writing, canvas the room, ask three or four students to read their entries. If it turns out nobody imitates Oliver's version, read the original aloud yourself – slowly, line by line, asking students to copy it down as you read and "learn through their pens." Then discuss what they've learned from the line breaks as you've read them. Once again, emphasize how the lines stress action – not only the action of looking, but the action of what's being looked at.

EXERCISE A: (From prose to free verse)

3. **Prose excerpt:** All night I float in the shallow ponds while the moon wanders... – From “White Night”

Clue: In the poem, this is a stanza of four lines – or a quatrain. (Teachers: Don't mention the indentation of the poem's lines until later – see teaching help below!)

Original:

All night

I float

in the shallow ponds

while the moon wanders...

Teaching help: As before, go around room for responses, crediting partial successes. Be ready to step in, if need be, with Oliver's original. Emphasize here the principal of breaking lines to stress both action and music (there are approximate rhymes in the first two lines and in the last two as well – with “ponds” and “wanders.”) Then tell them about the little extra Oliver has added to her form in the arrangement of her lines – that is, the three-space indentations in the left margin. Have students write the excerpt out this way if you wish. Discuss the effect.

The remaining excerpts are to be done for homework

4. **Prose excerpt:** I tied together a few slender reeds, cut notches to breathe across and made such music... –
From “Music”

Clue: This is one four-line stanza (quatrain).

Original:

I tied together
a few slender reeds, cut
notches to breathe across and made
such music...

5. **Prose excerpt:** Under the leaves, under the first loose levels of earth they're there – quick as beetles, blind as bats, shy as hares...

Clue: Original is in seven lines.

Original:

Under the leaves, under
the first loose
levels of earth
they're there – quick
as beetles, blind
as bats, shy
as hares...

6. **Prose excerpt:** Like large dark lazy butterflies they sweep over the glades looking for death, to eat it... – From “Vultures”

Clue: Six lines.

Original:

Like large dark
lazy
butterflies they sweep over
the glades looking
for death,
to eat it...

EXERCISE B: From written text to rap

Try rapping any seven of the following quatrains (four-line stanzas) aloud until you find the four stressed syllables in each line. Then circle the stressed syllables.

1.

Money is the key to end all your woes
Your ups and your downs, your highs and your lows
Won't you tell me last time that love bought you clothes?
It's like that, and that's the way it is
--Run DMC, "It's Like That"

2.

Hard times spreading just like the flu
Watch out homeboy, don't let it catch you
P-p-prices go up, don't let your pocket go down
When you got short money you're stuck on the ground
-- Run DMC, "Hard Times"

EXERCISE B: From written text to rap

3.

My nephew died in the car I bought,
So I'm under the belief it's partly my fault.
Close my eyes and squeeze, try to block that thought,
Place any burden on me, but please, not that, Lord.
-- Jay Z, "Lost One"

4.

Now, once upon a time up on this mic
MCs be really workin' on what they write
With the sound delight, we rock all night
And yes, we're gonna party for the right to fight
-- The Beastie Boys, "Right Right Now Now"

5.

My brother's doin' bad, stole my mother's TV
Says she watches too much, it's just not healthy
All My Children in the daytime, Dallas at night
Can't even see the game or the Sugar Ray fight.
-- Grandmaster Flash, "The Message"

EXERCISE B: (From written text to rap)

6.

Mirror, mirror on the wall

Tell me, mirror, what is wrong?

Can it be my De La clothes

Or is it just my De La song?

--De La Soul, "Me, Myself, And I"

7.

Finally, someone let me out of my cage

Now time for me is nothing 'cause I'm counting no age

Now I couldn't be there, Now you shouldn't be scared

I'm good at repairs, And I'm under each snare

-- Gorillaz, "Clint Eastwood"

8.

Once upon a time not long ago

When people wore Adidas and lived life slow

When laws were stern and justice stood

And people was behaving like hip-hop was good

-- Mos Def, "Children's Story"

EXERCISE B: (From written text to rap)

9.

That's true, that's why we never have no beef,
So then I washed off the soap and brushed the gold teeth.
Used "Oil of Olay" cause my skin gets pale.
Then I got the files, for my fingernails.

--Slick Rick, "La Di Da Di"

10.

First got it when he was six didn't know any tricks
Matter fact first time he got on it he slipped
Landed on his hip and busted his lip
For a week he had to talk with a lisp like this

-- Lupe Fiasco, "Kick Push"

EXERCISE B: Answers in bold

1.

Money is the **key** to **end** all your **woes**

Your **ups** and your **downs**, your **highs** and your **lows**

Won't you **tell** me last **time** that **love** bought you **clothes**?

It's **like** that (pause stressed) and that's the **way** it is

--Run DMC, "It's Like That"

2.

Hard **times** **spreading** **just** like the **flu**

Watch **out** home**boy**, don't let **it** catch **you**

P-p-**prices** go **up**, don't let your **pocket** go **down**

When you **got** short **money** you're **stuck** on the **ground**

-- Run DMC, "Hard Times"

EXERCISE B: (Answers in bold)

3.

(pause stressed) My nephew **died** in the **car** I **bought**,
So I'm **under** the **belief** it's partly my **fault**.

Close my eyes and **squeeze**, try to **block** that **thought**,

Place **any** burden on **me**, but please, **not** that, **Lord**.

-- Jay Z, "Lost One"

4.

Now, **once** upon a **time** up **on** this **mic**

MCs be really **workin'** on **what** they **write**

With the **sound** **delight**, we **rock** all **night**

And **yes**, we're gonna **party** for the **right** to **fight**

-- The Beastie Boys, "Right Right Now Now"

5.

My **brother's** doin' **bad**, stole my **mother's** **TV**

Says she **watches** too **much**, it's just **not** healthy

All My **Children** in the **daytime**, **Dallas** at **night**

Can't **even** see the **game** or the **Sugar Ray** **fight**

-- Grandmaster Flash, "The Message"

EXERCISE B: (Answers in bold)

6.

Mirror, mirror on the **wall**

Tell me, mirror, what is wrong?

Can it be my De La clothes

Or is it just my De La Soul?

--De La Soul, "Me, Myself, and I"

7.

Finally, someone let me **out** of my **cage**

Now **time** for me is **nothing** 'cause I'm **counting** no **age**

Now I **couldn't** be **there**, Now you **shouldn't** be **scared**

I'm **good** at **repairs**, And I'm **under** each **snare**

-- Gorillaz, "Clint Eastwood"

8.

Once upon a **time** not **long ago**

When **people** wore **Adidas** and **lived** life **slow**

When **laws** were **stern** and **justice stood**

And **people** was **behaving** like hip-**hop** was **good**

-- Mos Def, "Children's Story"

EXERCISE B: (Answers in bold)

9.

That's **true**, that's **why** we never **have** no **beef**,
So then I **washed** off the **soap** and **brushed** the gold **teeth**.
Used "**Oil** of **Olay**" cause my **skin** gets **pale**.
Then I got the **files** for **my** fingernails.

--Slick Rick, "La Di Da Di"

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Matter **fact** first **time** he got **on** it he **slipped**
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-- Lupe Fiasco, "Kick Push"