

**I HEAR MY CLASSROOM
SINGING:
WHITMAN, DICKINSON, HIP-HOP, AND
AMERICA**



TYLER BRADDY

DR. SMAGORINSKY
A FOUR-WEEK 50-MINUTE UNIT
1 1TH GRADE AMERICAN LITERATURE

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

CONTEXT FOR LESSON PLANS	3
PRIMARY MATERIALS/TEXTS	3
RATIONALE	4
UNIT GOALS	13
RUBRICS	24
DAILY LESSON PLANS	33
APPENDIX A	59
APPENDIX B	62
APPENDIX C	65
APPENDIX D	73

Context for Lesson Plans:

My unit is being implemented in an 11th grade on-level American Literature classroom. The class normally meets for 50 minute periods, though on Wednesdays periods 1, 3, 5, and 7 meet for 80 minutes, and on Thursday periods 2, 4, and 6 meet for 80 minutes, so the time and meeting date will depend on the day of the week.

Primary Materials / Texts:

Textbook: 11th Grade American Literature Textbook

- Many of the poems we read in the class will be contained in the textbook.

Technology: SmartBoard

- Since both Whitman's and Dickinson's works are all available in the public domain, they can be pulled up on the SmartBoard using the internet.

Technology: The Internet

- The internet will be used for a plethora of tasks, from songs and videos and lyrics from hip-hop artists to poems to any other task which requires the internet.
- The school grants unlimited access to the internet for teachers. The filters and pop-up blockers do not affect the navigability of the teacher.

Rationale:

THE POETRY: WHITMAN AND DICKINSON

In this four week unit, students would be studying the poetry of both Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson. The poems of each author are so varied in content that providing a "summary" would be futile, but the thematic concerns of each poet are talked about in the following sections, in relation to how they - the poets and the thematic concerns - will be approached.

The work of Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman is important because each poet's contribution to literature represents a watershed moment in American poetry, Whitman for his use of free verse and being controversial, and Dickinson because she is one of America's most prolific - and earliest - female poets. Students will benefit from studying the formlessness of Whitman and the attention to structure and form of Dickinson. The two poets are especially interesting to study in relation to one another because they are so different and yet both encompass American poetry. Talking about them as contrasting figures in ostensibly the same period helps to place them in a periodic and stylistic perspective.

Some poems to be read during the unit:

- Whitman, Walt. "I Hear America Singing"
- Dickinson, Emily. "I Heard a Fly Buzz When I Died"
- Whitman, Walt. "Song of Myself"
- Dickinson, Emily. "Because I Could Not Stop for Death"

THE APPROACH: WHITMAN, DICKINSON, AMERICA, & STUDENTS

Poet Diane Wakoski (n.d.) describes American poetry in the following manner:

"American poetry, like American painting, is always personal with an emphasis on the individuality of the poet. American poetry is always about *defining oneself individually*, claiming one's right to be different and often to break taboos" ("What is American", [n.d.]) Gilded Age poets Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson fall into those categories - one more than the other in some instances - and so studying their works through the lines of individuality and American identity are essential. One way to convey this to students is to give them some choice in how they interpret the poetry, because, just as an interpretation from a book depends on the reader, the interpretation of a poem depends on the reader...*as long as there is evidence to defend it.*

That is the one caveat: interpretation is not an entirely personal venture, because one's opinion cannot exist as an island in the poem, but it must interact with it and take something from it for interpretation. In that sense, the interpretation must be grounded in the words on the page and note merely the interpreter's sole personal inclination. For example, a person might see a face in a manhole cover - it is a psychological phenomenon called pareidolia - and point out the "eyes" and the "mouth" so that observers may be brought into the fold of seeing what the initial observer sees. In that instance, there is evidence for seeing a face in the manhole cover. So it is with evidence in poetry.

Single interpretation in poetry is flawed in that it perpetuates a largely traditional approach, developed by people mimicking science fields, rather than looking organically at what literature study demands. The result is a rote sort of *knowledge-out-of-context* method, meant to empower the teacher to "transmit" knowledge to students rather than allow them to make meaning of the text. It also constricts the significance of the work to a single meaning, which

allows no room for thought. Peter Smagorinsky (2008) talks about transmission in his work, *Teaching English by Design*: "This view of knowledge has been called the *transmission* view. Knowledge is thought to be a stable entity that can be transmitted like a baseball, thrown from one person to another, arriving in the same condition in which it began" (Smagorinsky, p. 6). If there is but one interpretation of the work, then there is little in the text for students to study. All it would take, then, is for the instructor to give the meaning of the poem/novel/play and move on.

Reading comes in many forms, not just in running the eyes across a line of text. We read the world everyday, mostly without noticing that we're even doing it at all. Furthermore, many students go through adolescence without knowing this, and so they come to the conclusion that they can't read well because they don't see through the teacher's lens. Becoming more aware of one's own dispositions to learning, and how these dispositions can be affected through awareness, can help in student achievement. In discovering this awareness, students can participate in a truer, more fulfilling discourse about the work, and students would be participating in a form of meaning-making that Applebee might call *knowledge-in-action*, rather than *knowledge-out-of-context*.

That being said, we should not go out of our minds with personal interpretation. As Bruce Pirie (1997) notes in his wonderful book, *Reshaping High School English*, "Whatever personal identity any of us has develops within a matrix of circumstances outside our psyches: our place in history, parents, social class, sex, race, educational opportunities, and all the other accidents of personal history" (Pirie, p. 10). So, in that regard, it should be noted that if exalting the personal to such a degree is unsavory, even counterproductive, then there can and should exist a healthy medium. Though we cannot account for every perspective under the sun, then at least a healthy number of perspectives can work their way into the classroom, so long as there is enough

evidence for them. What, then, I'm talking about is a certain level of ownership of the text, rather than a pandering to the individual. It is a fine line, but one which can be traversed safely.

It is perhaps for the existence of so many lines coursing through American poetry that it should be approached from various perspectives and use multiple themes, especially the personal (or individual) and how that personal relates to America, with America itself taking on another guiding theme.

Wakoski (n.d.) also describes American poetry in a way conducive to study of Emily Dickinson. She writes, "America may be a melting pot, but most American poets think of themselves as separate, different, and while very specially identified with some place in America or some set of cultural traditions, it is usually about the ways in which they discovered their differences from others and proudly celebrate them." It should be noted that what American poetry is, in addition to being personal, constantly re-shaping itself, in structure and form and tone and theme, with each successive generation improving upon or outright resisting the work of the past, while still acknowledging it.

It should be further noted that in its tumult, Whitman's poetry revealed how revolutionary literature can be for culture. The use of free verse in Whitman's poetry is only one way the "Good Gray Poet" broke with convention. A more contemporary equivalent would be the musical style of hip-hop, which is as much a "movement" of music as was, say, the Harlem Renaissance.

LENGTH OF STUDY - 4 WEEKS

Four weeks is indeed an extended time for the study of poetry, but considering the deficient amount of time spent studying the art and craft and historical development of poetry -

especially its revolutionary upheaval in the American tradition - then I would argue that a focused concentration on the subject would be a boon to student development.

Poetry is often seen as of lesser importance in the grand scheme of literary focus, but the Gilded Age is an exciting period for poetry study in America, since two of its greatest and most revered voices have had such a long-lasting influence on form and content.

Also, students would not be engaged in a mere study of poetry itself, but in analyzing literature as a whole, with a concerted focus on poetry. Students will be composing essays of comparison and contrast as an additional facet of learning throughout the unit. Studying the two poets is partially a means toward a greater end of knowing how to compare and contrast successfully.

MUSIC AND POETRY

Whitman himself owes much to music for his poetry. According to *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, "He went so far as to say that but for the 'emotions, raptures, uplifts' of opera he could never have written *Leaves of Grass*" (Baym, et al., 1995, p. 917). So, then, it is not such a stretch to include music in the study of late 19th century American poetry, at least as far as Whitman is concerned. Similarly, Emily Dickinson's meter style is extremely musical, and many of her poems can be sung to "The Yellow Rose of Texas" or the theme from "Gilligan's Island".

This unit will not focus on music per se but will use music as a codifying force in the study of poetry. The particular form of music we will study - hip-hop - I believe owes plenty to the courage of poets like Whitman and Dickinson, who paved the way for a distinct - and

distinctly American - kind of freedom of expression, in which all rules can potentially go out the window, if necessary.

HIP-HOP

One of the aims of this unit is for students to make connections between the modern world and the past, and talking about music is one of the best ways to achieve this goal. Because Walt Whitman defied convention and himself was presented as a controversial figure to the reading public, there are certain links between hip-hop music and himself. Basically, it can be argued that Whitman is to poetry what hip-hop is to popular music. While Whitman eschews form and formulated a new style to fit with his own personal expression, hip-hop originally "sampled" traditional song elements and made a new form of music. Whitman speaks of America often in his poems, just as hip-hop artists depict America in a culturally-poignant manner.

Hip-hop is perceived as possessing a checkered past and a plethora of maladies unsuitable for classroom study, but I am certain that similar things were probably said about Whitman in his day, as is evident in the *Boston Intelligencer* review of his book of poems Leaves of Grass: "The beastliness of the author is set forth in his own description of himself, and we can conceive of no better reward than the lash for such a violation of decency. The author should be kicked from all decent society as below the level of the brute. He must be some escaped lunatic raving in pitiable delirium" (Schnakenberg, 2008, p. 82).

The arguments against using supposedly obscene material are not new, and similar charges have been leveled against the likes of Tupac Shakur and others in the movement, though that shouldn't preclude studying the meaningful bond poetry and hip-hop share. And that

particular musical genre can have a positive and beneficial effect in the classroom, if the people at The Kennedy Center's ArtsEdge are to be believed: "Analysis of hip hop music and lyrics can provide students with a greater understanding of rhythm, form, diction, and sound in poetry" (Sotto, Theresa, n.d.). Hip-hop is an extremely influential force in the cultural landscape, and its proponents are gaining a manner of scholarly respect for this often-scathed art form.

Some hip-hop is of questionable value in the classroom, but that is no different than with any form of communication. Novels, short stories, poems, plays, and non-fiction pieces can be problematic for the high school classroom. It all depends on what works are chosen, and for what purpose. Works of literature are censored each year and advocates must fight for them to stay on the shelves, even for works generally considered canonical. The works I will use in the classroom have been scanned for sensitive material, and copies of the lyrics will be available for those with specific questions about the suitability of the content.

One problem, perhaps is that we, being members of the generation - or subsequent generation - that saw the rise of hip-hop are too close to the material to be able to judge it objectively. The purpose of this unit, in involving hip-hop, is to show how art forms can change, even their context and guiding themes, and is not a way of introducing the music for the sake of introducing it. The focus of the unit will always be placed on the poetry; hip-hop, in this sense, is merely a backdrop for talking about larger themes of individuality, freedom of expression, experimentation with art form (poetry and music), and the study of language. There is a wealth of knowledge in how both hip-hop artists and poets express themselves, and studying more contemporary art forms that play with language may create a situation in which students are more willing to play with the language themselves, or at least see how others use words powerfully.

Though hip-hop is often under fire for the content of its lyrics, as a cultural force it has been recognized by many members in the academic community for representing America and modern life in realistic and often complicated ways. It is an expression of youth culture as a whole and black culture in particular and deserves to be given sanction in our school for study, so that the past can be relevant and the present can be connected to the past. The distinct factors that bind Gilded Age poetry - and Whitman in particular - to that of modern hip-hop are many, and they can be sanctioned for discussion in classrooms.

Using hip-hop as a modern comparison to Gilded Age poetry is, in fact, a very small fraction of what will be studied throughout the unit, but since it is the most controversial, then it demands time here in the rationale.

ALTERNATIVE WORKS

The works of Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson are sometimes concerned with potentially "adult" themes - death and sex - so, in the event of any concerns, students will be allowed to read alternative texts from each author, ones that still encompass the poets' sensibilities without sacrificing content.

Alternative Works:

- Whitman, Walt. "O Captain! My Captain!"
- Dickinson, Emily. "If I Can Stop One Heart From Breaking"
- Whitman, Walt. "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer"
- Dickinson, Emily. "I'm Nobody! Who're You?"

Bibliography

- Baym, N., Franklin, W., Gottesman, R., Holland, L.B., Kalstone, D., Krupat, A., ...Wallace, P.B. (1995). *The Norton Anthology of American Literature: Shorter Fourth Edition*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company.
- Pirie, Bruce. (1997). *Reshaping High School English*. Mississauga, Ontario: NCTE.
- Schnakenberg, Robert. (2008). *Secret Lives of Great Authors*. Philadelphia, PA: Quirk Books.
- Smagorinsky, Peter. (2008). *Teaching English By Design: How to Create and Carry Out Instructional Units*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Sotto, Theresa. (n.d.) *The Poetics of Hip-Hop*. Retrieved September 29, 2009 from The Kennedy Center ArtsEdge Web Site: <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/3656/>
- What is American About American Poetry?* Diane Wakowski. (n.d.). Retrieved September 30, 2009 from Poetry Society of America Web site: <http://www.poetrysociety.org/wakoski.html>

Overall Unit Goals

The tentative title for my unit is "I Sing the Country Electric," and it involves major poems from Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson. The major themes or driving concerns revolve around art, the country, the individual, and issues of art "form". All of these ideas are broad and encompass many overlapping ideas, so one of the challenges of this unit will be selecting materials that simultaneously work in isolation and in a way that can meld together into a cohesive unit. On the basis of their experience with these works, the students should be able to make conscious, complex comparisons of disparate works and draw an educated, yet personal, hypothesis about their meaning and the works' places in the world.

Contradictions are everywhere around us, and we all make sense of them somehow. Eleventh grade students, in an American Literature class, should begin the process of examining all these overlapping ideas and how to address them. Thus, the students will engage with a plethora of texts and tasks which will challenge their ideas of form and reinforce or undermine the necessity of form. In context with music, all of this makes sense, as many musical artists, like poets, often work simultaneously in all of these arenas.

Assessment #1 - Personal Playlist

- Personal perspective can be important when looking at poetry. The reader and poem collide, and the reader's perspective cannot be discounted.
- Similarly, students should have a better grasp of what they know and how they know it. Often, they have a limited view of knowledge, of "you either know it or you don't," which is both patently untrue and often discouraging to struggling students. Each student learns in

different ways, and the sooner he/she becomes aware, the more impact it will have on future achievement.

- One way to gain this kind of knowledge is to reflect on the world surrounding oneself. Since music plays such a crucial role in so many students' lives - and can closely relate to poetry - students will be asked to take an inventory of their musical tastes and produce a 10-song personal playlist.

Goals

- The playlist will consist of 10 songs.
 - The title, artist, album, and release date of each song should be included and will function as the entry's title.
 - Students can decorate the page with the album's artwork or other image that further illustrates the point.
- Students will provide a half-page "rationale" for each song's inclusion.
 - Rationales should make connections to the self, to America, and/or to other themes in the poetry. A student can, for example, pick a song like "Dear Mama" by 2Pac, and, since the song deals with the problems of the inner city, discuss how it relates to the plight of the common American today. The student could also make connections to how the song's content about America differs from that of Whitman's.
 - Two rationales may be presented on a single sheet of paper.
- Two lines from each song should be presented with the rationale, either above or below it, and the lines should further illuminate song choice.
- Students are encouraged but not required to use lines from poetry to reinforce their points.

- Students can choose songs from different genres, artists, and use various topics.

SAMPLE TEXT

Artist: Tupac Shakur

Title: "Dear Mama" (1995)

Album: *Me Against the World*

Now ain't nobody tell us it was fair

No love from my daddy cause the coward wasn't there

I hung around with the Thugs, and even though they sold drugs

They showed a young brother love

The lines of "Dear Mama" show and represent a different America than Walt Whitman knew. As opposed to "I Hear America Singing", Tupac Shakur's "Dear Mama" talks about the problems of modern America, in which not everyone has a job and where poverty is rampant. There is a distinct contrast here because Tupac describes a world positively where there may not be much positivity, while Whitman, in "I Hear America Singing", describes positively the working class without acknowledging the downside. Tupac finds a way to connect to the world, even if it's with "thugs".

From creating this playlist, students will:

- Make connections - personal, political, and textual - to the poetry, combining newly encountered worlds with those with which they already have contact.
- Become more self-aware with regard to meta-cognition.
- Be active in choosing how and to what extent they interact with the texts.
- Learn that texts do not consist only of poetry and prose, that everything around them can become a source of inquiry.
- Create a personally satisfying product.

Accompanying GPS Standards:

ELAALRL1: B - The student: Identifies and analyzes patterns of imagery or symbolism.

ELAALRL1: C - The student: Relates identified elements in fiction to theme or underlying meaning.

ELAALRL1: D - The student: Analyzes, evaluates, and applies knowledge of the ways authors use techniques and elements in fiction for rhetorical and aesthetic purposes.

ELAALRL1: The student identifies and analyzes elements of poetry from various periods of American literature and provides evidence from the text to support understanding.

ELAALRL1: C - The student: Traces the history of poetic styles and forms in American literature.

Assessment # 2 - Comparison/Contrast Exam

- Over the course of the unit, students will often encounter texts to analyze, both formally and informally: pictures, web sites, and pieces of fiction or poetry. This, in essence, will give them ample opportunities to see that they already size-up the world around them; they just haven't been given the formal training on how it is done. An exam in this area would represent a summative assessment of their abilities to compare and contrast formerly unseen texts.
- The exam itself will focus on comparison and contrast, with an emphasis on explication. End-of-course standardized exams often rely on comparison/contrast as a means of assessment, so it is imperative that students have some practice in that area.

Goals

- The exam will consist of two poems not studied during the unit, presented side by side.
 - The belief is that explicating the poems in the absence of previous instruction will show if they have mastered the ideas and concepts of the unit.
 - The exam will not necessarily consist of a Whitman and a Dickinson poem. There could be two Whitman poems or two Dickinson poems or any combination.
- Students will be asked to explicate the poems, making any necessary markings on the poems themselves, and then write a brief essay (of no more than two pages) about one aspect of the poem. By this point, students will have been comparing and contrasting various sorts of media to prepare for the exam: poems, music, photos, videos, adverts, etc.
 - Students may write about a poem's theme, imagery, form, style, or any other topic we've discussed in class.

- Students will be given the entire period to finish the exam/essay.

Through taking this exam, students will:

- Showcase an understanding of two (or more) pieces of poetry through comparison and contrast, using unit-specific content language in a controlled setting. The two pieces of poetry, to encourage an analysis not entirely influenced by the teacher's opinions, will be two as-of-yet unstudied works, though one will likely be Whitman's and the other Dickinson's.
- Showcase *more* than an understanding of two randomly-selected poems. They will, in essence, be asked to "think on their feet" and analyze works ostensibly foreign to them, without much in the way of direct assistance. This format will encourage independence of thought and self-reliance.
- Be able to independently apply what they've learned to previously-unseen texts, ranging from the academic to the popular. Comparison/contrast need not be only a formal study, nor does it need to be used only at the behest of the teacher. Seeing how two (or more) things relate is an essential skill in life, as well as academia.
- Be able to produce a cohesive essay/bit-of-thinking based on their observations. It is important that they, in addition to working out the comparisons mentally, be able to organize and write something of substance and value based on their observations.

Accompanying GPS Standards:

ELAALRL1: The student identifies and analyzes elements of poetry from various periods of American literature and provides evidence from the text to support understanding.

ELAALRL1: A - The student: Identifies, responds to, and analyzes the effects of diction, tone, mood, syntax, sound, form, figurative language, and structure of poems as these elements relate to meaning.

ELAALRL1: B - Analyzes and evaluates the effects of diction and imagery (i.e., controlling images, figurative language, extended metaphor, understatement, hyperbole, irony, paradox, and tone) as they relate to underlying meaning.

ELAALRL5: The student understands and acquires new vocabulary and uses it correctly in reading and writing.

ELAALRL3: The student compares and contrasts specific characteristics of different genres as they develop and change over time for different purposes (i.e., personal, meditative Colonial writing vs. public, political documents of the Revolutionary era, or replication of traditional European styles [Bradstreet, Taylor] vs. emerging distinctive American style [Dickinson, Whitman] in poetry).

Assessment # 3 - "I Sing Myself" Collage

- Being able to visually represent one's ideas will give students more depth and range in thinking. Being able to organize those thoughts in some form through a collage will give visual learners a "canvas" for the visual learning style and will challenge students with other learning styles to adapt their thinking for this activity.
- The "I Sing Myself" collage is a way for students to connect visually to the texts of Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, themselves, and also to the country as a whole. Students will be required to construct a collage based on the multitude of parallel ideas coursing through the poems, on the multiple identities present in themselves and also of the poets studied throughout the unit. It represents an opportunity for students to reach for all these connections simultaneously and make sense of them, or at least try to.
- The structure of the collage is very loosely formulated. Students will be encouraged to include images from today's America - as understood by them - and a presentation/paper to explain today's America and how it differs from or relates to Whitman's and Dickinson's America.

Goals

- Students will create a collage of images gathered from magazines provided by the teacher (or printed online with permission). All materials will be provided.
- Students will have options in how to construct the collage. Students may:
 - make a collage that represents modern America.
 - make a collage that compares Whitman's America with modern America.

- make a collage that makes personal connections to America (local newspaper clippings, photos of family members, personal memorabilia, etc.).
 - Students are encouraged to combine these ideas in any way that makes sense.
- Students are encouraged to use as many forms of media as is necessary. In the collage students can use:
 - pictures from magazines
 - pictures from newspapers
 - newspaper clippings
 - American logos, brands, etc.
 - drawings
- Students will also be encouraged to think about how the images are arranged. A collage doesn't always have to simply depict random images. For example, the following collage consists of pictures of cats done in the shape of a heart, symbolizing love for the cats:



Through constructing a collage, students will:

- Make choices in how they visually represent the unit material. Like a well-executed film or painting, the more connected to the text - or else the more well thought-out the visual style - the better.
- Think about the multiplicity of the self and how all of these "selves" collide within the context of the world through a visual medium.

Accompanying GPS Standards:

ELAALRC4: The student establishes a context for information acquired by reading across subject areas.

ELAALRC4: A. Explores life experiences related to subject area content.

ELAALRC4: B. Discusses in both writing and speaking how certain words and concepts relate to multiple subjects.

ELAALRC4: C. Determines strategies for finding content and contextual meaning for unfamiliar words or concepts.

ELA11W3: The student uses research and technology to support writing. The student:

b. Uses supporting evidence from multiple sources to develop the main ideas within the body of a researched essay, a composition, or a technical document.

ELA11LSV2: The student formulates reasoned judgments about written and oral communication in various media genres. The student delivers focused, coherent, and polished presentations that convey a clear and distinct perspective, demonstrate solid reasoning, and combine traditional rhetorical strategies of narration, exposition, persuasion, and description.

Assessment # 4 - Notebook of Daily Activities

Through keeping a notebook, students will:

- Benefit from a more structured form of assessment, in which they see the amount of work they are completing throughout the unit. Through this notebook, they can see a progression of their understanding of the material and also have tangible material from which to study.
- Learn the value of organizing information for quick retrieval. Throughout their lives, students will be asked to maintain and keep track of a plethora of documents, papers, receipts, forms, etc., and hopefully a connection will be made between organization and success.
- Notebooks will likely contain:
 - journal entries
 - poems (drafts and final)
 - responses to readings
 - worksheets
 - vocabulary
 - copies of the unit's standards, if necessary
 - any other in-class activities

Accompanying GPS Standards:

ELAALRL4: The student employs a variety of writing genres to demonstrate a comprehensive grasp of significant ideas in selected literary works. The student composes essays, narratives, poems, or technical documents.

Rubrics:

Personal Playlist Rubric:

A grade of 'A' will be awarded to Personal Playlists:

- that clearly, thoroughly, and fully explain relevant connections to the music, whether personal, political, or textual. Every aspect is covered to the fullest extent possible.
- that contain ten song entries, with half-page rationales and two quotes for each song.
- that use appropriate language, including relevant vocabulary. The support for song choice is entirely logical.
- that go beyond meeting mere page and number requirements. These playlists will show an individual flare and much creativity and in-depth thinking about the subject.
- in which song choices are varied by artist or by genre or by range of topic. The playlist shows creativity not only in song choice but in the method of song placement within list.
- that are turned in on time.

A grade of 'B' will be awarded to Personal Playlists:

- that somewhat explain relevant connections. In some instances, a little more work needs to be done in order to strengthen or clarify the connections.
- that contain 9-10 song entries, with half-page rationales and two song quotes.
- that use some appropriate language, with few exceptions, to explain the choices, showing a fairly solid grasp of the vocabulary and using it accordingly. The support for song inclusion is only slightly less convincing or logical.

- that adequately meet all minimum requirements. The song choices are varied somewhat, though there may be too much repetition of any one element - theme, artist, type of personal connection - and could use some variation.
- that are turned in on time.

A grade of 'C' will be awarded to Personal Playlists:

- that adequately explain relevant connections to the music.
- that contain 7-8 song entries, with half-page rationales and 1-2 quotes from each song.
- that occasionally use appropriate language, showing some grasp of vocabulary. The arguments for song inclusion vary in cohesion and/or logic, and some choices could either be changed or revised for clarity.
- that meet most minimum requirements. The song choices are somewhat one-sided, limited by any of the one previously mentioned factors - genre, artist, topic, connection - and some of the work could be made more individualized.
- that are turned in no more than one day late.

A grade of 'D' will be awarded to Personal Playlists:

- that show some engagement with the task, though the relevant connections with the material may be difficult to see or are not present whatsoever.
- that contain 6 entries, with some half-page rationales and at least one song quote.
- that uses limited assignment-appropriate language. The logic for song inclusion is present somewhat or not at all, and lack the connections necessary to make a convincing argument.

- meet some minimum requirements. The song choices are one-dimensional in nature in most categories - genre, artist, personal connection.
- turned in no more than one day late.

A grade of 'F' will be awarded to Personal Playlists:

- that show little to no engagement with the task and have few to no relevant connections to the material.
- that contain 5 or fewer entries.
- that use no assignment-related language (references to readings, authors, common discussion threads, etc.).
- contain song choices with little relevance to the material, or else the connection is not presented in the rationale.
- turned in more than one day late.

Comparison Exam Rubric:

A grade of 'A' will be awarded to Comparison/Contrast/Explication Exams:

- that contain a clearly articulated thesis in the essay section, with paragraphs that support the initial thesis with appropriate language, using vocabulary and content-specific terms. The essay is coherent and thoughtfully written and contains strong textual evidence.
- that exhibit a solid grasp of interpreting poetry, with examples that are well-defined and well-argued. The claims are supported by solid evidence. The topic sentences and body paragraphs advance the thesis.

- that contain evidence that the student can synthesize knowledge about two formerly-unseen poems on sight. Comparisons and contrasts are well-articulated and logically sound.
- that exhibit a mastery of language, usage, and mechanics. Students will not be given an 'A' for this aspect alone.
- with a minimum of one-and-a-half pages, hand-written.

A grade of 'B' will be awarded to Comparison/Contrast/Explication Exams:

- that contain a somewhat clear thesis in the essay section, with paragraphs that support the initial thesis with appropriate language, using some vocabulary and content-specific terms.
- that exhibit a somewhat solid grasp of interpreting poetry, with fairly concrete examples that are mostly well-argued. The topic sentences and body paragraphs advance the thesis.
- that contain evidence that the student can work well with comparing and contrasting two previously unseen poems, though the comparisons/contrasts may benefit from some, but not much, clarification or articulation. The essay is somewhat coherent and thoughtfully written and contains moderately strong textual evidence.
- that exhibit a good grasp of language, usage, and mechanics. There are some, but not many, errors in this regard. Students will not be given a 'B' for this aspect alone.
- with a minimum of one-and-a-half pages, hand-written.

A grade of 'C' will be awarded to Comparison/Contrast/Explication Exams:

- that contain a thesis in the essay section, with paragraphs that sometimes support the initial thesis. The essay's language could use some work.
- that exhibit a limited but present grasp of poetry interpretation, with few relevant comparisons. The topic sentences and body paragraphs somewhat advance the thesis.
- that show little depth in the level of comparison in the two previously unseen poems.
- that exhibit a working grasp of language, usage, and mechanics. There are numerous errors in the essay's construction. Students will not be given a 'C' for this aspect alone.
- with a minimum of one page, hand-written.

A grade of 'D' will be awarded to Comparison/Contrast/Explication Exams:

- that do not contain a thesis in the essay section, or else the thesis is weak, unworkable, or unrelated to the paragraphs that follow.
- that exhibit little grasp of poetry interpretation, with few relevant comparisons or no comparisons at all. The arguments, if present, are difficult to discern.
- that show little-to-no depth in the level of comparison in the two unseen poems. The level of sophistication does not lend itself to the topic at hand or the topic has been ignored. The topic sentences and body paragraphs do not advance the thesis.
- that exhibit little grasp of language, use, and mechanics. Numerous errors are contained in the essay, many of which would require the essay to be reworked or begun again. Students will not be given a 'D' for this aspect alone.
- with less than one page, hand-written.

A grade of 'F' will be awarded to Comparison/Contrast Exams:

- that do not contain a thesis, or else the thesis is unworkable or has not been followed.
- that exhibit no grasp of poetry interpretation, with no relevant comparisons. There is no discernable argument. The topic sentences and body paragraphs do not advance the thesis.
- in which the topic has been all but ignored. There is no effective thesis statement.
- that exhibit no grasp in language, use, and mechanics. Students will not be given an 'F' for this aspect alone.
- with less than one page, hand-written.
- 'F' papers indicate that the essay did not meet most of the basic requirements such as length, addressing the writing option, passable thesis and organization, and minimal grammar/spelling/punctuation errors.

"I Sing Myself" Collage Rubric:

A grade of 'A' will be awarded to Collages:

- which show the student has assessed the assigned topic in a creative manner and has hit all the necessary learning goals, as described in the directions.
- that show the student went well beyond the assignment in terms of creativity, personal reflection, product cohesion, organization, or dedication to the project.
- that are well-organized and in perfectly good shape.
- turned in on time.

A grade of 'B' will be awarded to Collages:

- that are somewhat disorganized or sloppy but in relatively good shape. The product is relatively neat and organized and shows a competency of thought and visual sophistication.
- that show a great amount of dedication to the project. The collage is creatively constructed and exhibits in-depth thought with regard to the material. Some minor elements may be missing, but for the most part, everything is present in the collage.
- turned in on time.

A grade of 'C' will be awarded to Collages:

- that are complete but do not adequately assess the topic at hand. The collage or accompanying essay may lack creativity or in-depth thinking or probably a little of both.
- that exhibit only some connections to the topic, but those connections may be unclear, misrepresented, or missing in the required accompanying essay.
- that are sloppy or otherwise disorganized. Little dedication to the project is evident.
- that are turned in up to one day late, with valid excuse.

A grade of 'D' will be awarded to Collages:

- that are incomplete.
- that show little connection to the assigned topic, but exhibit the presence of some effort.
- that contain few, if any, of the necessary elements prescribed in the directions. The essay to go along with the assignment is either incomplete or nonexistent.
- Any work that is turned in is sloppy or disorganized.
- that are turned in one or more days late.

A grade of 'F' will be awarded to Collages:

- that are incomplete or not started at all. It is evident that little time has been put into the completion of the work.
- that show no connection to the assigned topic and exhibit little to no effort to complete the assignment.
- that contain few, if any, necessary elements prescribed in the directions. The essay to go along with the assignment is either incomplete or nonexistent.
- in which any work turned in is sloppy or disorganized.
- that are turned in two or more days late.

Notebook Rubric:

A grade of '3' will be awarded to notebooks:

- that include all pieces of relevant work
- in which all work is completed, including word and page minimums
- that have the work presented in the required order
- in which all work is contained in a 3-ring binder

A grade of '2' will be awarded to notebooks:

- that include all pieces of relevant work
- in which all work is mostly completed, though not entirely done
- in which the work is somewhat disorganized
- in which all work is contained in a 3-ring binder

A grade of '1' will be awarded to notebooks:

- that include some pieces of relevant work
- in which some of the work is completed, though not to a satisfactory degree in most cases
- in which there is little organization
- in which a few of the pieces are contained in the 3-ring binder

Daily Lesson Plans:

Note: For clarity's sake, **Appendix A** contains poem texts, **Appendix B** contains song lyrics, **Appendix C** contains PowerPoint slides, handouts, activities, worksheets, and **Appendix D** contains information and text related to the final assessments (collage, exam, and playlist).

Week One

Day 1 (Monday)

Before Class: The words "America" and "Poetry" will be written on the board and will be there when students arrive to class.

3 Minutes: Attendance and Housekeeping.

5 Minutes: Cultural Literacy Powerpoint (on SmartBoard)

Every Monday, a different cultural icon is presented to the students in order to enhance the level of their cultural literacy. The figure usually coincides in some way with the unit being studied. Sometimes it is a famous painter (e.g. Michaelangelo, Da Vinci) or historically significant figure (e.g. John Brown, Harriet Tubman). However, since we will be making connections to popular music in this lesson, the subjects of the PowerPoint presentations will be musicians/musical acts.

Week One: Robert Johnson

Robert Johnson (May 8, 1911-August 16, 1938) is a blues musician most well-known for supposedly selling his soul to the devil in exchange for becoming the best musician in the world, a legend enhanced by and cataloged in "Crossroad Blues".

Johnson's music and legacy relate to the sort of legends abundant in America, and his brief career had a lasting impact on later rock musicians of the 60s and 70s. He is a distinctly American figure, and modern Hip-Hop can trace its roots to people like Mr. Johnson.

Text copies of the slides can be found in **Appendix C**.

38-42 Minutes: Introductory Activity - Poetry Chalk Talk

3 Minutes: Explanation of the activity. Students will be given a hard copy of the activity guidelines outlined above, and any questions about how to proceed will be cleared up in that time period.

In this unit, we will be discussing what makes the poetry of America so "American", studying it through the lenses of the poets Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson. In addition, we will be making critical assessments of each author's poems through comparison and contrast. A "chalk talk" may help to get this conversation started, so we can see where we stand initially with regard to poetry in general, so let's get to work.

10-12 Minutes: Students will proceed with the chalk talk, and the activity's timing will depend on how much is written. Once the discussion peters out, the teacher will indicate the chalk talk's conclusion. The teacher will ask if anyone has any further comments to put on the board, and then once those are done, the activity will end.

2 Minutes: An explanation of small- and large-group discussion protocol will take place. The driving questions will be placed on the SmartBoard at this time.

Students will get into two-person groups and elaborate on the questions presented on the SmartBoard, taking them one at a time or going in-depth on any one of the questions. Once small-group discussion has ended, we will expand the discussion to include all students in a large-group discussion, focusing on small-group highlights and any other lingering questions from the chalk talk.

3-5 Minutes: Small-group discussion takes place, with the instructor moving from group to group to monitor discussion.

10 Minutes: Large-group discussion takes place. Each group will bring up the points discussed in small-group.

10-12 Minutes: Students will compose a paragraph (or half-page) reflection on the day's activities, using one of the discussion questions or general impressions as a guide.

Day Two - Tuesday

3 Minutes: Attendance and housekeeping

10-15 Minutes: Journal Entry

1 Minute: Students will retrieve a sheet of paper

2 Minutes: Students read and review Journal Topics and choose one.

Topic 1: "I exist as I am, and that is enough." ~Walt Whitman. In this unit, we will be making personal connections to works of poetry, seeing how they relate to our lives over one hundred years after publication. How true is Whitman's maxim today? Does "existing as you are" mean that you do not have to try to better yourself?

Topic 2: "I may be as bad as the worst, but, thank God, I am as good as the best." Could this possibly be true? Can someone be as bad as the worst and as good as the best at the same time? How so? Also, this sounds very much like something a rapper might say in a song today. Can you think of any other ways this statement might be expressed, or can you think of ways that other musicians *have* already expressed it? Name as many as you can.

Topic 3: Free-Write. Students may write on any topic they wish.

** Please keep in mind that I am required by law to share any thoughts or suggestions of violence, suicide, substance abuse, family abuse, or other harmful behavior with the school counselors.*

10 Minutes: Introduction to Walt Whitman

Includes a discussion of:

- Biography and Major Works
- His style of poetry (mainly free verse)
- Themes (America, The Self, Nature, Lifestyle, etc.)
- The culture surrounding his poetry (The Gilded Age)

12-15 Minutes: Reading Walt Whitman's "I Hear America Singing"

1 Minute: Students retrieve their books from bookbags

2-3 Minutes: Students quietly read "I Hear America Singing" individually

2 Minutes: Students write 2-3 questions about the meaning of the poem, specific words, etc.

- Students should ask questions or make comments about the poem (structure, tone, etc.).
- Students may consult one another in groups of no more than three to come up with questions.
- The questions cannot be answered with a simple yes/no.

7-10 Minutes: Whole-Group Explication

The whole class will discuss thoughts and questions written down during the post-reading period. If very few or no questions are brought up, class discussion will revolve around issues of theme (celebration of America), tone, America itself during the period, the poem's imagery and how it relates to theme and tone, and how free verse works.

7 Minutes: Closing Activity - Paragraph

Question: When discussing Whitman, we talked about what we "know" about the poem. How do we "know" things about poetry (or about literature in general)? How do you think we come to conclusions about what a poem "means"?

Day Three - Wednesday

80 Minutes - Periods 1, 3, 5, 7

3 Minutes: Attendance and housekeeping

10-20 Minutes: Vocabulary Quiz (from words given the previous week)

10 Minutes: Copying down new vocabulary. The vocabulary will be on the SmartBoard, and students will begin copying it down as soon as they turn in their vocabulary test.

10 Minutes: Pareidolia Activity - "It's All About the Evidence"

In this activity, students will be shown various images - an example of which can be viewed in Appendix A - and asked, "What do you see here? What is this an image of?" Students will be asked to take out a sheet of paper and write down what it is they see in each picture, as the teacher clicks through a collection of photos ranging from very abstract to very concrete, containing pictures of "Jesus in Toast" and "Faces in Places".

After it is over, for each picture a student will be called upon to explain the answer for that particular picture. Most students will comment on the literal picture (a box, an outlet, etc.), but a case will be made for it being or looking like a face.

The purpose is to get the students to think about evidence in interpretation. There is no single answer in how to interpret a poem, but what is apparent is that the interpretation/comparison must be derived from evidence found in the text.

10-15 Minutes: Introduction to Emily Dickinson

Includes a discussion of:

- Biography and major works
- Poetic style (quatrains of iambic pentameter, taken from church hymns)
- Themes (Death, Loneliness, Alienation)
- Culture surrounding her poetry (self-imposed isolation)

Students will read the Emily Dickinson chapter from the book The Dead Guy Interviews: Conversations with 45 of the Most Accomplished, Notorious, and Deceased Personalities in History (handout). It's a parodic "interview" with the poet.

14-20 Minutes: Reading Emily Dickinson's "I Heard a Fly Buzz - When I Died"

2-3 Minutes: Students will read the poem silently, repeating a reading if finishing early

5-7 Minutes: Students form into groups of no more than three (self-selected) and discuss the parts of the poem they found interesting, compelling, boring, etc.

Questions posted on the SmartBoard:

(These questions are not mandatory for discussion. They are there for students having trouble getting started. Students have a certain amount of leeway in discussion topics, as long as the discussion relates to the poem).

- Look at Dickinson's use of dashes in the poem. Why do you think she uses so many in "I Heard a Fly Buzz - When I Died"?
- Who is the "King" spoken of on line 7?
- What could the fly be, other than a fly? Could it be a metaphor?
- What is the rhyme scheme here? Is there a rhyme scheme?
- Does the picture in the book make for a good poem companion? Why/Why not?

7-10 Minutes: Large-Group Discussion

Each group will bring up one point, question, or observation about the poem, and the whole class will be asked to elaborate on the point or help make connections.

Then, the questions on the SmartBoard will be discussed in turn, unless they have been all already discussed during the small-group "presentations" at the onset of large-group discussion.

5 Minutes: Concluding Activity

Question: Today we discussed the idea of using evidence in interpreting poetry and pictures. Using one of the pictures, write a paragraph explaining how one might see a "face" or an "image" in the picture, instead of what is merely literally contained there.

You could also use one of the Rorschach images and explain what you see in the inkblot, using descriptions of the shapes in order to draw a conclusion about what you see.

Day 4 - Thursday

80 Minutes - Periods 2, 4, 6

3 Minutes: Attendance and housekeeping

10-20 Minutes: Vocabulary Quiz (from words given the previous week)

10 Minutes: Copying down new vocabulary. The vocabulary will be on the SmartBoard, and students will begin copying it down as soon as they turn in their vocabulary test.

10 Minutes: Pareidolia Activity - "It's All About the Evidence"

In this activity, students will be shown various images - an example of which can be viewed in **Appendix A** - and asked, "What do you see here? What is this an image of?" Students will be asked to take out a sheet of paper and write down what it is they see in each picture, as the teacher clicks through a collection of photos ranging from very abstract to very concrete, containing pictures of "Jesus in Toast" and "Faces in Places".

After it is over, for each picture a student will be called upon to explain the answer for that particular picture. Most students will comment on the literal picture (a box, an outlet, etc.), but a case will be made for it being or looking like a face.

The purpose is to get the students to think about evidence in interpretation. There is no single answer in how to interpret a poem, but what is apparent is that the interpretation/comparison must be derived from evidence found in the text.

10-15 Minutes: Introduction to Emily Dickinson

Includes a discussion of:

- Biography and major works
- Poetic style (quatrains of iambic pentameter, taken from church hymns)
- Themes (Death, Loneliness, Alienation)
- Culture surrounding her poetry (self-imposed isolation)

Students will read the Emily Dickinson chapter from the book The Dead Guy Interviews: Conversations with 45 of the Most Accomplished, Notorious, and Deceased Personalities in History (handout). It's a parodic "interview" with the poet.

14-20 Minutes: Reading Emily Dickinson's "I Heard a Fly Buzz - When I Died"

2-3 Minutes: Students will read the poem silently, repeating a reading if finishing early

5-7 Minutes: Students form into groups of no more than three (self-selected) and discuss the parts of the poem they found interesting, compelling, boring, etc.

Questions posted on the SmartBoard:

(These questions are not mandatory for discussion. They are there for students having trouble getting started. Students have a certain amount of leeway in discussion topics, as long as the discussion relates to the poem).

- Look at Dickinson's use of dashes in the poem. Why do you think she uses so many in "I Heard a Fly Buzz - When I Died"?
- Who is the "King" spoken of on line 7?
- What could the fly be, other than a fly? Could it be a metaphor?
- What is the rhyme scheme here? Is there a rhyme scheme?
- Does the picture in the book make for a good poem companion? Why/Why not?

7-10 Minutes: Large-Group Discussion

Each group will bring up one point, question, or observation about the poem, and the whole class will be asked to elaborate on the point or help make connections.

Then, the questions on the SmartBoard will be discussed in turn, unless they have been all already discussed during the small-group "presentations" at the onset of large-group discussion.

5 Minutes: Concluding Activity

Question: Today we discussed the idea of using evidence in interpreting poetry and pictures. Using one of the pictures, write a paragraph explaining how one might see a "face" or an "image" in the picture, instead of what is merely literally contained there.

You could also use one of the Rorschach images and explain what you see in the inkblot, using descriptions of the shapes in order to draw a conclusion about what you see.

Day 5 - Friday

3 Minutes: Attendance and housekeeping

25 Minutes: KBAR (Kick Back and Read)

KBAR time allows students to read anything they wish - a book, magazine, newspaper, etc. - for an extended period of time. Students may not work on homework or talk, as KBAR time must be spent reading silently.

During KBAR, the weekly notebook check will be taking place.

Items in the notebook check will include:

1. Tuesday's Journal Entry
2. Tuesday's Closing Paragraph
3. Wednesday/Thursday Vocabulary Words
4. Thursday's Concluding Activity

18-22 Minutes: Reading Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself"

1 Minute: Students get their textbooks out, find the poem "Song of Myself" and turn to it

1-2 Minutes: Instructions

What we will be doing today is reading a poem and making claims about it, based on evidence from the text. Remember the activity we did yesterday/Wednesday regarding evidence. You can interpret the poem in many different ways, as long as you are able to support your interpretation using language from the text.

The textbook contains sections 1, 6, 9, 14, 17, 51, and 52 of the poem, and you may choose any two of the sections to explicate. You **do not** have to read all seven sections. Choose wisely, and explicate well! Think of how we have been uncovering and explicating the text so far.

Come up with 3-5 bullet points regarding the poem sections or discussions you had about the poem, using parts of the text to support your claims. Some areas you may consider

covering are: *theme, alliteration, imagery, rhyme scheme (or lack thereof), and/or what the imagery/theme might be saying about life in general.*

1-2 Minutes: Students form into groups of no more than three (self-selected).

10-12 Minutes: Students read the poem sections and work through their bullet list. The instructor moves from group to group to help tease out these ideas and form coherent lists.

5-7 Minutes (or until bell rings): Large-group discussion. Students present their bulleted list - it can be a single person from each group - and the class as whole discusses these ideas.

Week Two

Day 6 (Monday)

3 Minutes: Attendance and Housekeeping

5 Minutes: Cultural Literacy Powerpoint (music).

Week Two: Chuck Berry

One of the originators of Rock and Roll, the presentation of Chuck Berry shows how music further changed with the times, bringing music one step closer to the modern age of pop music.

Sample slides can be found in **Appendix C.**

10 Minutes: Introducing Hip-Hop as Poetry

13-15 Minutes: Blackalicious - "Alphabet Aerobics"

- **3 Minutes:** Play song. Song length - 2:13
- **10-12 Minutes:** Large-group discussion
 - Students will be given a handout regarding the aspects of a list poem.
 - Characteristics of a List Poem:
 1. A list poem can either be a list or an inventory of items, people, places, or ideas.
 2. It often involves repetition.
 3. It can include rhyme or not.

4. The list poem is usually not a random list.
5. The last entry is usually a strong, funny, or important item or event.

○ Questions:

- What makes this song a "list poem"?
- What literary technique is being employed in "Alphabet Aerobics"?
- Look at #4: The list poem is usually not a random list. How is 'Alphabet Aerobics' not just a random list?
- What makes interpretation difficult?
- What might increase understanding of this song?
- What does the lyrical style of 'Alphabet Aerobics' have to do with Walt Whitman?
 - Basic discussion of 'Brag Rap'
 - It's all about the personal.
 - There is evidence of a link, but you don't have to subscribe to it.
- Who is the speaker?
 - Why is it important that the speaker is the artist?
 - Why does he benefit from it being that way?

10 Minutes: Walt Whitman - "There Was a Child Went Forth Every Day"

For a copy of the poem, **See Appendix A.**

7-9 Minutes: Concluding Reflection.

- Answer the following question(s):
 - Using the handout on list poems, describe the factors that make "There Was a Child Went Forth Every Day" a list poem?

Day 7 (Tuesday)

3 Minutes: Attendance and housekeeping

10-15 Minutes: Journal Entry (posted on the SmartBoard between class periods)

- Topic: "If you done it, it ain't bragging." ~Walt Whitman. Judging by what we've read so far about the exploits of a single person and how they might be portrayed, what do you think Walt Whitman might make of the music we've used to compare his works to? Would he approve of them? Have the comparisons we've been making relate Whitman to modern Hip-Hop? How so? What things have you done in your life that, were you to talk about them, people might consider "bragging"?

* Please keep in mind that *I am required by law to share any thoughts or suggestions of violence, suicide, substance abuse, family abuse, or other harmful behavior with the school counselors.*

20 Minutes: Emily Dickinson - "Because I Could Not Stop For Death"

For a copy of the poem, **See Appendix A.**

10 Minutes: Text Rendering Activity

- In this activity, after reading the poem, students will choose one word, one phrase, and one sentence from the text.
- Each student reads his/her word. Then, each student reads his/her phrase. Finally, each student reads his/her sentence.
- Then students will form into groups of 3 or 4 students and discuss their choices.
- Some guiding statements/questions:
 - "I chose [insert word, phrase, sentence] because it..."
 - "The [word, phrase, sentence] stands out to me because..."
 - "The quote I chose reminds of a song called...because..."

10 Minutes: Large group discussion

- Guiding questions. They will mostly focus on the concept of death:
 - How do you think Dickinson views death? Why is "he" personified?
 - Does her view of death differ from other views of death you've seen in literature? Can you think of any?
 - What can you say about the imagery in the poem? What specific images give the poem its tone?

12 Minutes: Comparison of Two Poems

Comparison/Contrast Exercise

"Because I Could Not Stop for Death"

"Whispers of Heavenly Death"

For a copy of the poem, **See Appendix A.** The two poems themselves will be on the SmartBoard, or students may look in their textbooks.

Students will form into groups of **no more than two** and focus on discussing how each poem tackles the subject of death.

Guiding questions:

- What tone is created by the way the poets talk about death?
- Does the form of the poem influence the tone of the poem?
- How is the theme of death handled differently in each poem?

Day 8 (Wednesday) - 80 Minutes - Periods 1, 3, 5, 7

3 Minutes: Attendance and housekeeping

15-20 Minutes: Vocabulary Quiz

10 Minutes: Copying down new vocabulary

30 Minutes: Whitman, Talib Kweli, and America

3-5 Minutes: Poem: "I Hear America Singing", Walt Whitman

- Rather than make visual connections with the poem, this time around students will be looking at the content of Whitman's poem and how it relates to today's America.
- Questions:
 - What might a modern version of Walt Whitman be saying about America?
 - Who might that poet be? Who is the speaker for today's America?

9-10 Minutes: Video: "Get By", Talib Kweli

1-2 Minutes: Time needed to bring the video up onto the SmartBoard.

4 Minutes: [YouTube Video](#) (3:54)

- The lyrics are available in **Appendix B.**
 - Note: There is some profanity in the song. As it happens, the words occur at about each minute-mark, so that would be when I paused the song, asked

some questions about the song's theme and imagery, and then jumped ahead so as to miss the profanity.

5 Minutes: Large-Group Discussion.

Guiding Questions for Discussion:

- What specific images does the video bring up? What does the video portray about living in an urban environment?
- How do the lyrics and video coincide? How does the video support the song? How does it not?

9-10 Minutes: Video: "God Bless the USA", Lee Greenwood

1-2 Minute: Time needed to bring the video up onto the SmartBoard.

4 Minutes: [YouTube Video](#) (3:16)

5 Minutes: Large-Group Discussion.

Guiding Questions for Discussion:

- What specific images does the video bring up? What does the video portray about living in a rural environment?
- How do these two versions of America differ?
- How are they similar?
- Which do you think is more accurate? Are they both accurate? Why or why not?
- Which vision of America might Whitman enjoy? Why do you think so?
- How would you consider each "poet" to be celebrating America?

17 Minutes: Introduction to the final formative assessment:

2 Minutes: The teacher hands out the rubrics/directions for the assignments. The rubrics can be found in the **Rubrics** section, and more detailed instructions for the Personal Playlist can be found in **Appendix C**.

15 Minutes: Discussion of the assignments.

- Students will have a choice in their final activity for the unit - the comparison/contrast poetry exam is summative and non-negotiable - and a handout will be given to the students containing instructions.

- We will, as a class, go over the instructions and work through any questions students have about the final project. Students will be encouraged to begin thinking about which activity they would like to do.
- The instructions for the Personal Playlist (**in Appendix C**) contain an example of the final product for one entry in the playlist. As a class, we will go over that example, and the teacher will explain what else might constitute a satisfactory entry.
- Students often believe a collage is a mere collection of images without any theme or purpose. We, as a class, will try to dispel that by discussing how collages might be represented in different ways, pulling up examples from the internet in order to make the point.

Day 9 (Thursday) - 80 Minutes - Periods 2, 4, 6

3 Minutes: Attendance and housekeeping

15-20 Minutes: Vocabulary Quiz

10 Minutes: Copying down new vocabulary

30 Minutes: Whitman, Talib Kweli, and America

3-5 Minutes: Poem: "I Hear America Singing", Walt Whitman

- Rather than make visual connections with the poem, this time around students will be looking at the content of Whitman's poem and how it relates to today's America.
- Questions:
 - What might a modern version of Walt Whitman be saying about America?
 - Who might that poet be? Who is the speaker for today's America?

9-10 Minutes: Video: "Get By", Talib Kweli

1-2 Minutes: Time needed to bring the video up onto the SmartBoard.

4 Minutes: [YouTube Video](#) (3:54)

- The lyrics are available in **Appendix B**.
 - Note: There is some profanity in the song. As it happens, the words occur at about each minute-mark, so that would be when I paused the song, asked some questions about the song's theme and imagery, and then jumped ahead so as to miss the profanity.

5 Minutes: Large-Group Discussion.

Guiding Questions for Discussion:

- What specific images does the video bring up? What does the video portray about living in an urban environment?
- How do the lyrics and video coincide? How does the video support the song? How does it not?

9-10 Minutes: Video: "God Bless the USA", Lee Greenwood

1-2 Minute: Time needed to bring the video up onto the SmartBoard.

4 Minutes: [YouTube Video](#) (3:16)

5 Minutes: Large-Group Discussion.

Guiding Questions for Discussion:

- What specific images does the video bring up? What does the video portray about living in a rural environment?
- How do these two versions of America differ?
- How are they similar?
- Which do you think is more accurate? Are they both accurate? Why or why not?
- Which vision of America might Whitman enjoy? Why do you think so?
- How would you consider each "poet" to be celebrating America?

17 Minutes: Introduction to the final formative assessment:

2 Minutes: The teacher hands out the rubrics/directions for the assignments. The rubrics can be found in the **Rubrics** section, and more detailed instructions for the Personal Playlist can be found in **Appendix C**.

15 Minutes: Discussion of the assignments.

- Students will have a choice in their final activity for the unit - the comparison/contrast poetry exam is summative and non-negotiable - and a handout will be given to the students containing instructions.

- We will, as a class, go over the instructions and work through any questions students have about the final project. Students will be encouraged to begin thinking about which activity they would like to do.
- The instructions for the Personal Playlist (**in Appendix C**) contain an example of the final product for one entry in the playlist. As a class, we will go over that example, and the teacher will explain what else might constitute a satisfactory entry.
- Students often believe a collage is a mere collection of images without any theme or purpose. We, as a class, will try to dispel that by discussing how collages might be represented in different ways, pulling up examples from the internet in order to make the point.

Day 10 (Friday)

3 Minutes: Attendance and housekeeping

20-25 Minutes: KBAR (Kick Back and Read)

- Notebook check will occur during KBAR
- Items included:
 - Whitman Notes
 - Dickinson Notes
 - Personal Playlist/Collage Instructions
 - Journal Entry
 - Talib Kweli / Lee Greenwood Notes

19-22 Minutes: Students will begin work on formative assessments. They will choose topics and discuss their choices in small groups (self-chosen). They can begin research, start work on the collage, or continue reading. Today's work is preliminary, just to have the students begin the thought processes necessary to continue on with the work.

Week Three

Day 11 (Monday)

3 Minutes: Attendance and housekeeping

5-7 Minutes: Cultural Literacy Powerpoint:

- The Sugar Hill Gang
- Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five

This week's cultural literacy PowerPoint depicts the inception of hip-hop music as an art form. During it, we discuss how the concept of the American Dream and who could achieve it affected the tone of early hip-hop.

15-18 Minutes: Comparing Whitman and Dickinson - Form

Up to this point, form has been discussed somewhat, but we've been more focused on theme than form, so today the students will work in-depth with form as a construction.

2-3 Minutes: Students are given "A Noiseless, Patient Spider" by Walt Whitman and asked to explicate it. In this explication, they are looking at form. (Poem in **Appendix A**)

2-3 Minutes: Students are given a poem by Emily Dickinson and asked to explicate it. With this poem, too, the students are looking at form solely.

5 Minutes: Students gather into self-selected groups of three and discuss the differences in what they notice about the form. They write down the **three** biggest differences.

4-7 Minutes: Large-Group Discussion. We will discuss the distinct differences in free form and common meter.

5 Minutes: Common Meter / Free Form PowerPoint

A sample slide can be found in **Appendix C**.

21-27 Minutes: Writing a free form or common meter poem.

1-2 Minutes: Directions for the assignment.

Students can work alone or gather into groups of no more than **four**. Students will create a poem. They will make either a list poem, a common meter poem, or just a free form poem, using the poetry we've read thus far as a guide.

1-2 Minutes: Students gather into groups.

10 Minutes: Students write their poems. The teacher moves from group to group, answering any questions the students have.

9-15 Minutes: Students present their poems. After presenting the poems, students will be asked about the experience of writing a poem. They will be asked about how the presence or lack of form affected how they moved forward with writing the poem.

Day 12 (Tuesday)

3 Minutes: Attendance and housekeeping

10-15 Minutes: Journal Entry (posted on SmartBoard before school and between class periods)

Journal Topic #1: "Whatever satisfies the soul is truth." ~Walt Whitman. Try to make sense of this statement. Do you agree with it? Does Whitman give any indication of what "the soul" might be? What do you interpret the soul to be? What might satisfy it?

Journal Topic # 2: Free Write

* Please keep in mind that *I am required by law to share any thoughts or suggestions of violence, suicide, substance abuse, family abuse, or other harmful behavior with the school counselors.*

28-37 Minutes: Whitman, Hip-Hop, Race, and America

5-7 Minutes: The teacher will introduce today's class period by discussing racial relations in America. The topic needs to be broached sensitively so that students can feel comfortable discussing it. The implication, however, is that, though tensions may run high, respect for one another should always be on the forefront of everyone's mind.

1 Minute: Pulling up the YouTube video for "Astronomy" by Black Star

4-5 Minutes: Watching the video.

YouTube: [Black Star - Astronomy](#)

7-10 Minutes: Large-Group Discussion

Guiding Questions:

- What does the repetition of the word "black" accomplish in the song?
- What similes do you remember from the song? Why do you think Mos Def and Talib Kweli included them?
- What does this song have to do with America? How might Black Star's perspective differ from Whitman's
- Can you remember any instances of slant rhyme? Which ones?

1-2 Minutes: Re-reading "I Hear America Singing"

Students re-read "I Hear American Singing", thinking this time how it works in relation to the song by Black Star. Students should be thinking about jobs, America, race, and perspective.

10-12 Minutes: Large-Group Discussion

In the large-group discussion, the two perspectives will be discussed. Students will be asked specifically about race and America, discussing why Whitman might have left race out of his poem and why Black Star chose to focus so heavily on race in their song.

***5 Minutes:** If the discussion finishes early, students will be asked to write a paragraph response to the discussion which occurred that day.

Day 13 (Wednesday)- 80 Minutes - Periods 1, 3, 5, 7

3 Minutes: Attendance and housekeeping

15-20 Minutes: Vocabulary Quiz

10-15 Minutes: Copying down new vocabulary

20 Minutes: Slant Rhyme Activity

10 Minutes: Students will be given a long list of words that have no true rhyme. Students will get into groups of no more than four and make up as many rhymes as possible.

10 Minutes: Each group will present their rhymes to the class, discussing their thought processes and how they came to the answers they did (or did not) reach.

10-25 Minutes: Final Assessment work

Students have a range of options for working on their final projects. They can be looking through magazines and cutting out photographs, if they are doing the collage, or they may be on the computer, looking up songs to use in their playlist. The key is that they are working and thinking about the project.

7-12 Minutes: Closing Activity - Paragraph

Question: What most makes a song a song? Is it the lyrics? The instrumentation? Even though it can be both, try to think about which element is most important in a song.

Day 14 (Thursday)- 80 Minutes - Periods 2, 4, 6

3 Minutes: Attendance and housekeeping

15-20 Minutes: Vocabulary Quiz

10-15 Minutes: Copying down new vocabulary

20 Minutes: Slant Rhyme Activity

10 Minutes: Students will be given a long list of words that have no true rhyme. Students will get into groups of no more than four and make up as many rhymes as possible.

10 Minutes: Each group will present their rhymes to the class, discussing their thought processes and how they came to the answers they did (or did not) reach.

10-25 Minutes: Final Assessment work

Students have a range of options for working on their final projects. They can be looking through magazines and cutting out photographs, if they are doing the collage, or they may be on the computer, looking up songs to use in their playlist. The key is that they are working and thinking about the project.

7-12 Minutes: Closing Activity - Paragraph

Question: What most makes a song a song? Is it the lyrics? The instrumentation? Even though it can be both, try to think about which element is most important in a song.

Day 15 (Friday)

3 Minutes: Attendance and housekeeping

20-25 Minutes: KBAR (Kick Back and Read)

- Notebook Check will occur during KBAR
- Items in notebook include:
 - Slant Rhyme Activity
 - Tuesday Journal
 - Proof that they have been working on the final project

22-27 Minutes: More Poetry Explication

20 Minutes: Each student will choose any **three** Whitman/Dickinson poems from the textbook that we have not, as a class, studied, and the students will explicate all three of them, using the techniques we have used in class. They will be turned in at the end of class for a daily participation grade. The students will also be told that explicating the poems will help in the final playlist project (for those who are doing it)

***7 Minutes:** (Time permitting) We will, as a whole class, go over some of the poetry explications the students have done, making sure that the students have a grasp of the poetry.

Day 16 (Monday)

3 Minutes: Attendance and housekeeping

7-10 Minutes: Cultural Literacy PowerPoint

This week's cultural literacy PowerPoint will be somewhat different than the past three. It will feature a collection of artists, rather than one entity. The goal is to bring awareness of the newer artists in hip-hop without focusing on a single one.

The artists will include:

- Public Enemy/Chuck D, Tupac Shakur, Talib Kweli, Mos Def, and others.

37-40 Minutes: Final project work.

Students will spend the period working on their projects. By the end of the day, those participating in the playlist should have chosen at least five song and poem combinations, and collage workers should have picked out their conceptual design for the collage.

Day 17 (Tuesday)

3 Minutes: Attendance and housekeeping

10-15 Minutes: Journal Entry (posted on the SmartBoard between class periods)

Topic: Over the last three weeks, we have been studying music as poetry, and many of you have made personal connections between the music and the poetry. Have any of these works affected you emotionally? Do you believe there is power in literature in music? Can the ideas expressed in works of art help humanity? If so, how? If not, how not?

** Please keep in mind that I am required by law to share any thoughts or suggestions of violence, suicide, substance abuse, family abuse, or other harmful behavior with the school counselors.*

32-37 Minutes: Final Project Work

Students will work independently on their playlists for the remainder of the period. All available computers in the room can be used to look up lyrics or alternative poems, and students will be encouraged though not required to exchange at least one entry in their playlist for peer editing.

Day 18 (Wednesday)- 80 Minutes - Periods 1, 3, 5, 7

3 Minutes: Attendance and housekeeping

60-62 Minutes: Finishing up Projects

Today we will be meeting at the library. A sign will be posted on the classroom door for any student who forgets.

During this period, students will be finishing up their projects. By now, they should be writing the last of their playlist entries, polishing/editing their writing, and otherwise putting the final touches on the work to be turned in. Students are allowed to turn their projects in at the end of

the period (or as soon as they finish) if they wish. Those who finish early will be given time to study for the unit exam or read quietly. The teacher will be moving from computer to computer, available for any student who may need any assistance. Students may turn in their projects today, if they are done.

15 Minutes: "The Bluff Game"

The class will be broken up into halves for a game called "The Bluff Game". Since the students have played before, instructions and set-up will not take that much time.

How to play:

"The Bluff Game" is a review game that uses strategy as well as intellect to get the kids thinking about an upcoming assignment. The teacher organizes the class into two halves - usually split down the middle row into Team 1 and Team 2 - and asks each team in turn a content-related question. It is a silent activity, and the students are not supposed to talk or convey answers to one another. Each student on the team who knows the answer to the question stands up, and the opposing team picks someone - usually someone they are confident does NOT know the answer - to answer the question. If the person called on gets the answer, the team gets the points. If he/she does not, points are taken away.

This is where the bluff comes in. Students can stand up even if they don't know the question, and if one of the "bluffers" is not called on, the team gets the points. If that person happens to be called on, however, then they lose points. Ergo, the game is called "The Bluff Game". It's basically a modified form of Jeopardy. The questions for the game will be taken from the test itself.

Day 19 (Thursday)- 80 Minutes - Periods 2, 4, 6

3 Minutes: Attendance and housekeeping

60-62 Minutes: Finishing up Projects

Today we will be meeting at the library. A sign will be posted on the classroom door for any student who forgets.

During this period, students will be finishing up their projects. By now, they should be writing the last of their playlist entries, polishing/editing their writing, and otherwise putting the final touches on the work to be turned in. Students are allowed to turn their projects in at the end of the period (or as soon as they finish) if they wish. Those who finish early will be given time to study for the unit exam or read quietly. Students may turn in their projects if they are done.

15 Minutes: "The Bluff Game"

The class will be broken up into halves for a game called "The Bluff Game". Since the students have played before, instructions and set-up will not take that much time.

How to play:

"The Bluff Game" is a review game that uses strategy as well as intellect to get the kids thinking about an upcoming assignment. The teacher organizes the class into two halves - usually split down the middle row into Team 1 and Team 2 - and asks each team in turn a content-related question. It is a silent activity, and the students are not supposed to talk or convey answers to one another. Each student on the team who knows the answer to the question stands up, and the opposing team picks someone - usually someone they are confident does NOT know the answer - to answer the question. If the person called on gets the answer, the team gets the points. If he/she does not, points are taken away.

This is where the bluff comes in. Students can stand up even if they don't know the question, and if one of the "bluffers" is not called on, the team gets the points. If that person happens to be called on, however, then they lose points. Ergo, the game is called "The Bluff Game". It's basically a modified form of Jeopardy. The questions for the game will be taken from the test itself.

Day 20 (Friday)

3 Minutes: Attendance and housekeeping

Today, students who did not finish the Personal Playlist the day before will have an opportunity to turn the project in today. A clearly-labeled box will be placed at the front of the room for students to use.

5 Minutes: The test will be handed out and the instructions explained at length.

- Test instructions and procedures are on the test, which can be found in **Appendix D.**

42 Minutes: Students will spend the remainder of the period taking the exam. Those who finish early will read quietly for KBAR, as is usual on a Friday. The teacher will be available for any questions or to clarify the instructions for anyone.

Appendices:

APPENDIX A

Whitman, Walt - *I Hear America Singing*

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong,
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deckhand
singing on the steamboat deck,
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands,
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morning, or
at noon intermission or at sundown,
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or of
the girl sewing or washing,
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young fellows,
robust, friendly,
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

Whitman, Walt - *There Was a Child Went Forth Every Day*

THERE was a child went forth every day;
And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became;
And that object became part of him for the day, or a certain part of the day, or for many years,
or stretching cycles of years.

The early lilacs became part of this child,
And grass, and white and red morning-glories, and white and red clover, and the song of the
phoebe-bird,

And the Third-month lambs, and the sow's pink-faint litter, and the mare's foal, and the cow's calf,

And the noisy brood of the barn-yard, or by the mire of the pond-side,

And the fish suspending themselves so curiously below there—and the beautiful curious liquid,

And the water-plants with their graceful flat heads—all became part of him.

The field-sprouts of Fourth-month and Fifth-month became part of him;

Winter-grain sprouts, and those of the light-yellow corn, and the esculent roots of the garden,

And the apple-trees cover'd with blossoms, and the fruit afterward, and wood-berries, and the commonest weeds by the road;

Whitman, Walt - *A Noiseless, Patient Spider*

A noiseless, patient spider,

I mark'd, where, on a little promontory, it stood, isolated;

Mark'd how, to explore the vacant, vast surrounding,

It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself;

Ever unreeling them--ever tirelessly speeding them.

And you, O my Soul, where you stand,

Surrounded, surrounded, in measureless oceans of space,

Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing,--seeking the spheres, to connect them;

Till the bridge you will need, be form'd--till the ductile anchor hold;

Till the gossamer thread you fling, catch somewhere, O my Soul.

Dickinson, Emily - *Because I Could Not Stop for Death*

Because I could not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves
And Immortality.
We slowly drove, he knew no haste,
And I had put away
My labor, and my leisure too,
For his civility.
We passed the school, where children strove
At recess, in the ring;
We passed the fields of gazing grain,
We passed the setting sun.
Or rather, he passed us;
The dewes grew quivering and chill,
For only gossamer my gown,
My tippet only tulle.
We paused before a house that seemed
A swelling of the ground;
The roof was scarcely visible,
The cornice but a mound.
Since then 'tis centuries, and yet each
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised the horses' heads
Were toward eternity.

[Online Version of "Because I Could Not Stop for Death"](#)

Dickinson, Emily - *Whispers of Heavenly Death*

Whispers of heavenly death, murmur'd I hear;
Labial gossip of night - sibilant chorals;
Footsteps gently ascending - mystical breezes, wafted soft and low;
Ripples of unseen rivers - tides of a current, flowing, forever flowing;
(Or is it the plashing of tears? the measureless waters of human tears?)

I see, just see, skyward, great cloud-masses;
Mournfully, slowly they roll, silently swelling and mixing;
With, at times, a half-dimm'd, sadden'd, far-off star,
Appearing and disappearing.

(Some parturition, rather - some solemn, immortal birth:
On the frontiers, to eyes impenetrable,
Some Soul is passing over.)

[Online Version of "Whispers of Heavenly Death"](#)

Dickinson, Emily - *The Sky is Low, the Clouds are Mean*

The sky is low, the clouds are mean,
A travelling flake of snow
Across a barn or through a rut
Debates if it will go.

A narrow wind complains all day
How some one treated him;
Nature, like us, is sometimes caught
Without her diadem.

APPENDIX B

Talib Kweli - "Get By"

We sell, crack to our own out the back of our homes
We smell the musk at the dusk in the crack of the dawn
We go through "Episodes II," like "Attack of the Clones"
Work 'til we break our back and you hear the crack of the bone
To get by.. just to get by
Just to get by, just to get by
We commute to computers
Spirits stay mute while you eagles spread rumors
We survivalists, turned to consumers
Just to get by.. just to get by
Just to get by, just to get by
Ask Him why some people got to live in a trailer, cuss like a sailor
I paint a picture with the pen like Norman Mailer
Me Abuela raised three daughters all by herself, with no help
I think about a struggle and I find the strength in myself
These words, melt in my mouth
They hot, like the jail cell in the South
Before my nigga Core bailed me out
To get by.. just to get by
Just to get by, just to get by
We do or die like Bed-Stuy through the red sky
with the window of the red eye
Let the lead fly, some G. Rap shit, "Livin' to Let Die"

[Chorus: Background singers]

This morning, I woke up
Feeling brand new I jumped up
Feeling my highs, and my lows
In my soul, and my goals
Just to stop smokin, and stop drinkin
But I've been thinkin - I've got my reasons
Just to get (by), just to get (by)
Just to get (by), just to get (by)

Just to get (by), just to get (by)
Just to get (by by by by by by)

[Verse 2: Talib]

We keeping it gangster say "fo shizzle", "fo sheezy" and "stayin crunk"
Its easy to pull a breezy, smoke trees, and we stay drunk
Yo, our activism attackin the system, the blacks and latins in prison
Numbers of prison they victim black in the vision
Shit and all they got is rappin to listen to
I let them know we missin you, the love is unconditional
Even when the condition is critical, when the livin is miserable

Your position is pivotal, I ain't bullshittin you
Now, why would I lie? Just to get by?
Just to get by, we get fly
The TV got us reachin for stars
Not the ones between Venus and Mars, the ones that be readin for parts
Some people get breast enhancements and penis enlargers
Saturday sinners Sunday morning at the feet of the Father
They need somethin to rely on, we get high on all types of drug
When, all you really need is love
To get by.. just to get by
Just to get by, just to get by
Parents sing like John Lennon, "Imagine all the people watch"
We rock like Paul McCartney from now until the last Beatle drop

[Chorus]

Yoyoyo, yo
Some people cry, and some people try
Just to get by, for a piece of the pie
You love to eat and get high
We decieve when we lie, and we keepin it fly

Yoyoyo, yo
When, the people decide, to keep a disguise
Can't see they eyes, see the evil inside
But there's people you find
Strong or feeble in mind, I stay readin the signs

Lee Greenwood - Proud to Be an American Lyrics

If tomorrow all the things were gone,
I'd worked for all my life.
And I had to start again,
with just my children and my wife.

I'd thank my lucky stars,
to be livin here today.
' Cause the flag still stands for freedom,
and they can't take that away.

And I'm proud to be an American,
where at least I know I'm free.
And I wont forget the men who died,
who gave that right to me.

And I gladly stand up,
next to you and defend her still today.
' Cause there ain't no doubt I love this land,
God bless the USA.

From the lakes of Minnesota,
to the hills of Tennessee.
Across the plains of Texas,
From sea to shining sea.

From Detroit down to Houston,
and New York to L.A.
Well there's pride in every American heart,
and its time we stand and say.

That I'm proud to be an American,
where at least I know I'm free.
And I wont forget the men who died,
who gave that right to me.

And I gladly stand up,
next to you and defend her still today.
' Cause there ain't no doubt I love this land,
God bless the USA.

And I'm proud to be and American,
where at least I know I'm free.
And I wont forget the men who died,
who gave that right to me.

And I gladly stand up,
next to you and defend her still today.
' Cause there ain't no doubt I love this land,
God bless the USA.

APPENDIX C

ROBERT JOHNSON SLIDES (Text):



JOHNSON'S EARLY LIFE:

- Little is known about Johnson's early life. His folks moved around MS quite a bit.
- His early guitar style was a copy of Son House's, a prominent blues musician of the period.
- Dejected and unsuccessful, he disappeared for several months into rural Mississippi.
- This is where things get interesting.

THE LEGEND

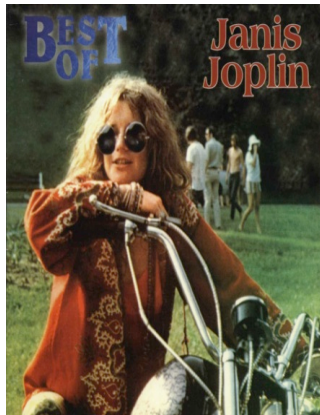
- R. Johnson came back months later, with a new style. It blew everybody's mind.
- Rumor has it he sold his soul to the devil (at the Crossroads) to play like he could.
- He even played with his back to the audience so no one could steal his style.
- He became successful enough to tour the Mississippi Delta region, incl. Chicago and Memphis.

THE MUSIC

- He only recorded about 30 songs, all of which are still accessible today.
 - Not too many, considering how important many think him to be.
- His most famous songs include:
 - Crossroads Blues (Eric Clapton's version is on 'Guitar Hero')
 - Hellhound on my Trail
 - Ramblin' on my Mind
 - Walkin' Blues

THE CURSE OF 27

- Robert Johnson died at the age of 27.
- Lots of musicians have died at that age, incl.:
 - Jimi Hendrix
 - Janis Joplin
 - Kurt Cobain
 - Jim Morrison
 - Brian Jones
- Some think it's a curse!



HIS INFLUENCE

- The 1960s and 1970s rock stars idolized him, including:
 - Eric Clapton (has an entire album of Johnson covers)
 - Jimmy Page (Led Zeppelin)
 - Keith Richards (The Rolling Stones)
- Even The White Stripes covered Johnson's song, 'Stop Breaking Down Blues'.
- We must not forget that the Blues are a precursor to Rock and Roll, as well as Hip-Hop.

CHUCK BERRY

- One of the earliest and most well-known Rock n Roll musicians.
- Brought country and Rockabilly to African-American audiences.
- Was in the first class inducted into the Rock n Roll Hall of fame in 1986.
- Listed # 5 on Rolling Stone's top 100 Greatest Artists of All-Time List.

THE EARLY YEARS

- Berry was born in St. Louis, MO in 1926.
- At 18, he was arrested for armed robbery for taking a car for a ride at gunpoint.
- When he got out, he moved to Chicago and began seriously pursuing his music career.

CAREER SUCCESS

- By the mid-1950s, Berry had begun to gain national recognition.
- He recorded his biggest hits during this period, including:
 - Maybelline
 - Johnny B. Goode
 - Rock and Roll Music
- Many of his songs were top-10 hits.

LEGAL TROUBLE AND CAREER DECLINE

- Berry became adept at business as well as music, opening a club called Berry's Club Bandstand.
- In 1959, Berry was arrested and sent to prison for five years.
- When he got out, his career enjoyed a brief resurgence due to the British Invasion, and he continues touring to this day.

THE LEGACY

“If you gave Rock and Roll another name, you might call it Chuck Berry.”

~ John Lennon, The Beatles

Personal Playlist Instructions

Most people would agree that songs are good examples of poetry. Since we are making connections between poetry and music - and connecting the past to the present - it would be a good opportunity to make some connections of your own.

REQUIREMENTS:

Choose at least **ten** songs that contain at least one of the following connections:

1. A song that relates in some literary way to the poems we have been reading.
2. A song that makes a connection between Whitman's America and today's America.
 - The song can be a contrast to the period, or it can be a comparison, as long as the connection is made clear. Think of protest songs of the 1960s or socially-conscious rock or hip-hop.
3. A song that encompasses your outlook on life. You must be able to connect the song to yourself and to a poem.
4. A song that contains many similar literary devices as one of the poems. The way each poet/artist uses the device must be explained or explored in the analysis.

You may combine the types of connections in any number of ways in one entry, but you **must** have an example of each type of connection presented. It must be explained thoroughly, using as much of the relevant literary language as possible.

For each song, write a **half-page** analysis, exploring why and how the song relates to one of the specific poems. Use literary devices, themes (America, solitude, Transcendentalist philosophy, celebrating the self), rhyme scheme, etc. If you can't find a poem that relates closely enough, you may use one of the principle characteristics of either Whitman or Dickinson to make your case.

The original plan was to pick **ten** songs, but I'd rather you think through your choices and have five quality songs, rather than ten hastily chosen ones. Make the five that you find count.

Lastly, lyrics should be school-appropriate. I realize plenty of modern music contains some expletive or another, but keep them to an absolute minimum. Songs should not have sexual, racial, ethnic, or homophobic slurs. I will be strict on intolerance of any kind. I reserve the right to hand back the work if it doesn't meet this final requirement. That being said, you will only pick a couple of lines that best make the connection to the poem you have chosen.

Hint: We have not and could not read every poem by Whitman and Dickinson in this class, so you may have to do some individual research. All the poems are available online for free.

Personal Playlist Sample/Model

Song Choice # 1 *I Will Follow You Into the Dark*, by Death Cab for Cutie, Plans

Poem Choice: *Because I Could Not Stop for Death*, by Emily Dickinson

Sample Lyrics:

"Love of mine someday you will die / But I'll be close behind / I'll follow you into the dark"

"The time for sleep is now / It's nothing to cry about / Because we'll hold each other soon"

Sample Poem Lines:

Use slashes to separate

"Because I could not stop for Death / He kindly stopped for me / The carriage held but just ourselves / And immortality"

Both *Because I Could Not Stop for Death* by Emily Dickinson and Death Cab for Cutie's *I Will*

Follow You Into the Dark are about death. What mostly separates them is the difference in tone. *I*

Will Follow You Into the Dark is much more solemn in nature and treats death with much

reverence, while *Because I Could Not Stop for Death* portrays death more apathetically. The

narrator in *Because I Could Not Stop for Death* is accompanied by Death itself in the poem, and

the narrator of *I Will Follow You Into the Dark* accompanies his love into death. The solitude that

Dickinson's narrator talks about in the poem reflects much of her poetry, and it differs from the

Death Cab for Cutie song in that there is a kind of hope for eternal love in the Death Cab song,

whereas in the Dickinson poem, there is only an accepting of fate. There is no choice in the

matter, only resignation. Both poems approach death in a non-literal way, using it as a person in

Because I Could Not Stop for Death (personification) or a destination in *I Will Follow You Into*

the Dark (Metonymy/Metaphor), and both works contemplate death deeply. However, despite

the bleak nature of death in *I Will Follow You Into the Dark*, it is a much more hopeful piece

because, unlike in the Dickinson poem, the narrator will spend eternity with his/her love.

COMMON METER - PowerPoint (Sample Slides)

Common metre is often used in [hymns](#), like this one by [John Newton](#). (see [hymn metres](#))

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,

That saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found,

Was blind, but now I see.

— from [John Newton's "Amazing Grace"](#)

(Wikipedia)

A modern example of ballad metre is the theme song to [Gilligan's Island](#). (Note that the first two lines actually contain [anapaests](#) in place of iambs; this is an example of how ballad metre is metrically less strict than common metre).

Just sit right back and you'll hear a tale,

a tale of a fateful trip.

That started from this tropic port,

aboard this tiny ship.

(Wikipedia)

APPENDIX D

Name: _____

Date: _____

Walt Whitman / Emily Dickinson Poetry Unit Exam

Part I. Multiple Choice. 10 Questions. Pick the best answer for each question.

1. Walt Whitman's biggest contribution to poetry is _____.
 - a. developing free verse and making it popular
 - b. being one of the first great American poets
 - c. disregarding form and using instinct to drive poetry
 - d. all of the above

2. Which was NOT one of Emily Dickinson's main poetic themes?
 - a. Transcendent power of love, brotherhood, and comradeship.
 - b. Death, Immortality, and Morbidity.
 - c. Flowers and Gardens.
 - d. Everlasting Solitude, Loneliness.

3. Free Verse is best defined as _____.
 - a. verse containing a strict, fixed metrical pattern with rhymed lines
 - b. verse composed of usually unrhymed lines with no fixed metrical pattern
 - c. verse consisting of unrhymed iambic pentameter
 - d. none of the above

4. Which of the following is an example of slant rhyme?
 - a. Dog / Bog
 - b. Man / Can
 - c. Roly / Poly
 - d. Glove / Prove

5. Which of the following is NOT an aspect of a list poem?
 - a. an inventory of items, people, places, or ideas
 - b. often involves repetition
 - c. always has a definite rhyme scheme
 - d. usually not a random list

6. American poetry differs from most other types of poetry in that:
- a. it celebrates the individual, especially the poet.
 - b. it is concerned with geographic landscapes.
 - c. poets often celebrate their bodies
 - d. all of the above
7. Which was NOT one of Walt Whitman's main poetic themes?
- a. Transcendent power of love, brotherhood, and comradeship.
 - b. Equivalence of body and soul and the unabashed exultation of the body and sexuality.
 - c. Belief in illustrative and regenerative powers of nature and its value as a teacher.
 - d. Death, Immortality, and Morbidity
8. "I dilly-dallied daily for a date with destiny" is an example of _____.
- a. repetition
 - b. metonymy
 - c. alliteration
 - d. stupidity
9. Walt Whitman differs from Emily Dickinson most obviously in that:
- a. very few of Whitman's poems contain any form whatsoever.
 - b. Whitman is almost always the speaker in his poems, and we are not always sure of the speaker's identity in Dickinson's poems.
 - c. both a and b.
 - d. neither a nor b.
10. What is the major difference between consonance and assonance?
- a. Consonance refers to the repetition of a consonant sound at the end of each word, while assonance refers to the repetition of a vowel sound within in each word.
 - b. Consonance refers to the order in which an author places his/her words, while assonance refers to the specific word choice that an author uses.
 - c. both a and b.
 - d. neither a nor b.

Part II. Multiple Choice. 5 Questions. Read the passage and answer the following questions.

POEM 1

A NOISELESS, patient spider,
I mark'd, where, on a little **promontory**, it stood, isolated;
Mark'd how, to explore the vacant, vast surrounding,
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself;
Ever unreeling them—ever tirelessly speeding them.

5

And you, O my Soul, where you stand,
Surrounded, surrounded, in measureless oceans of space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing,—seeking the spheres, to connect them;
Till the bridge you will need, be form'd—till the ductile anchor hold;
Till the gossamer thread you fling, catch somewhere, O my Soul.

*****promontory** = large hill or cliff overlooking a large area

11. What is the form of this poem?
 - a. Common Meter
 - b. Sonnet
 - c. Free Form
 - d. Fixed Form
12. What is the theme of the poem featured above?
 - a. Life is about searching, even if we don't find what we're looking for.
 - b. Life is very much like a spider web that traps us in its gossamer web.
 - c. The soul, like the spider, is never going to amount to anything.
 - d. Spiders are very, very, very dumb creatures.
13. The phrase "It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself" is a metaphor for
 - a. the time at which a person dies.
 - b. man's search for meaning.
 - c. the spider's happiness.
 - d. the author's love of nature.
14. Which line from the poem is an example of alliteration?
 - a. "Till the gossamer thread you fling, catch somewhere"
 - b. "And you, O my Soul, where you stand"
 - c. "A noiseless, patient spider"
 - d. "Mark'd how, to explore the vacant, vast surrounding"
15. This poem is an example of a lyric poem because it
 - a. tells a story from beginning to end.
 - b. alternates between an a and b rhyming scheme.

- c. describes the speaker's or author's feelings.
- d. has no fixed metrical rhythm.

Part III. Multiple Choice. 5 Questions. Read the passage and answer the following questions.

POEM 2

If you were coming in the fall,
I'd brush the summer by
With half a smile and half a spurn,
As housewives do a fly.

If I could see you in a year,
I'd wind the months in balls,
And put them each in separate drawers,
Until their time befalls.

If only centuries delayed,
I'd count them on my hand,
Subtracting till my fingers dropped
Into Van Diemen's land

If certain, when this life was out
That yours and mine should be,
I'd toss it yonder like a rind,
And taste eternity.

But now, all ignorant of the length
Of time's uncertain wing,
It goads me, like the goblin bee,
That will not state its sting.

16. This poem is a good example of common meter because
 - a. it consists of four line quatrains
 - b. alternates between tetrameter (8 syllables) and trimeter (6 syllables)
 - c. the rhyme scheme is ABCB.
 - d. all of the above.
17. Which if the following is CLOSEST to an example of slant rhyme?
 - a. be / eternity
 - b. wing / sting
 - c. hand / land
 - d. by / fly
18. The speaker uses to the word "if" throughout the poem
 - a. because she's afraid of what might happen were he to show up.
 - b. to make it clear that the other person is probably not ever going to show up.

- c. to convince the other person that fall is approaching.
 - d. because she doesn't know what she's talking about.
19. Which of the following is an example of alliteration?
- a. "I'd count them on my hand"
 - b. "As housewives do a fly"
 - c. "That will not state its sting"
 - d. "If only centuries delayed"
20. Which of the following BEST describes the theme of the poem?
- a. Some people are immortal.
 - b. Solitude and loneliness can be everlasting.
 - c. The world is a harsh place for the unloved.
 - d. Revenge is a dish best served cold.

Part III. Multiple Choice. 5 Questions. Use BOTH poems from above - POEM 1 and POEM 2 - to answer the following questions.

POEM 1 = *A Noiseless, Patient Spider* / POEM 2 = *If You Were Coming in the Fall*

POEM 1

A NOISELESS, patient spider,
I mark'd, where, on a little **promontory**, it stood, isolated;
Mark'd how, to explore the vacant, vast surrounding,
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself;
Ever unreeling them—ever tirelessly speeding them.

5

And you, O my Soul, where you stand,
Surrounded, surrounded, in measureless oceans of space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing,—seeking the spheres, to connect them;
Till the bridge you will need, be form'd—till the ductile anchor hold;
Till the gossamer thread you fling, catch somewhere, O my Soul.

*****promontory** = large hill or cliff overlooking a large area

POEM 2

If you were coming in the fall,
I'd brush the summer by
With half a smile and half a spurn,
As housewives do a fly.

If I could see you in a year,
I'd wind the months in balls,
And put them each in separate drawers,
Until their time befalls.

If only centuries delayed,
I'd count them on my hand,
Subtracting till my fingers dropped
Into Van Diemen's land

If certain, when this life was out
That yours and mine should be,
I'd toss it yonder like a rind,
And taste eternity.

But now, all ignorant of the length

Of time's uncertain wing,
It goads me, like the goblin bee,
That will not state its sting.

21. In contrast to *If You Were Coming in the Fall*, the poem *A Noiseless, Patient Spider*
 - a. has a hopeful, upbeat tone overall.
 - b. has a very bitter tone.
 - c. has a humorous tone.
 - d. has a sad tone.
22. The major difference in form between the two poems is that
 - a. *A Noiseless, Patient Spider* is written in common meter, while *If You Were Coming in the Fall* has no fixed metrical pattern.
 - b. *A Noiseless, Patient Spider* has no fixed metrical pattern, while *If You Were Coming in the Fall* is written in common meter.
 - c. Both poems have the exact same form.
 - d. None of the above.
23. What literary element does both poems share?
 - a. They are both distinctly "American", because they discuss the individual.
 - b. Both share a sense of questioning some aspect of life.
 - c. They are both lyric poems, because they discuss feelings.
 - d. All of the above.
24. Which of the following literary devices does *If You Were Coming in the Fall* have that *A Noiseless, Patient Spider* does not?
 - a. repetition
 - b. alliteration
 - c. simile
 - d. imagery
25. Which of the following literary devices does NEITHER poem have an example of?
 - a. alliteration
 - b. simile
 - c. end rhyme
 - d. hyperbole

EXTRA CREDIT (Woo-hoo!)

Short Answer.

WRITE THE ANSWERS ON THE GREEN PART OF THE SCANTRON!!!!

26. At what location did Robert Johnson supposedly sell his soul to the Devil?

DO NOT WRITE ON THE TEST

27. In the poem "I Hear America Singing", what kind of jobs did Walt Whitman feature?
(Hint: I'm not looking for specific jobs)

DO NOT WRITE ON THE TEST

28. In what century did Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson write their poems?

DO NOT WRITE ON THE TEST