Hello Students,

This resource packet includes a project that you can work on independently at home. You should also have project packets for some of the other courses you are enrolled in. These projects are standards-aligned and designed to meet the Remote Learning instructional minutes guidelines by grade band.

### 11-12th Grade ELA Project: Poetry Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated Time</th>
<th>225 minutes of project time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level Standards</td>
<td>RL.RI.11-12.2 Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>W.11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</td>
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<td>L.11-12.3 Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caregiver Support Option</td>
<td>Read the materials in this packet. Discuss poems with your student, especially poetry you may have shared when your student was young. (Itsy Bitsy Spider is a poem!) Consider why poetry is more “daily” for young children. What does poetry bring to a young person’s perspective on life? Encourage your student to observe specific details of his/her world. How can these experiences and details be expressed and understood with poems?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Materials Needed</td>
<td>Notebook or loose leaf paper, Pencil and Pen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questions to Explore</td>
<td>What is poetry? How is poetry relevant? How can poetry help me make sense of my world?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Directions</td>
<td>Please see below</td>
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“Without poetry, we lose our way.” Joy Harjo, U.S. Poet Laureate & Academy of American Poets Chancellor (2019– )

**Activity 1: Developing an Understanding of Poetry** - Most of us recognize a poem when we read one. They don’t usually take up the whole page on which they’re printed. Sometimes they’re written in funny shapes. Oftentimes, we feel intimidated or confused as we try to understand their language and meaning. They’re not usually direct. With all of this, why would anyone ever bother reading or writing a poem when plain, prose sentences seem a lot easier and more straightforward? When TV,
Poems Hold the Mysteries of the Present, Dreams of the Future

David Biespiel's  UPDATED 6/21/14

I write this by campfire light in the backcountry of British Columbia, cut off from the digital world and miles from the nearest town. Every society we’ve ever known has had poetry, and should the day come that poetry suddenly disappears in the morning, someone, somewhere, will reinvent it by evening.

Since ancient times, as long as we’ve had language, poetry has ritualized human life. It has dramatized and informed us with metaphors and figures of feeling and thought, mysteries and politics, birth and death, and all the occasions we experience between womb and tomb. As long as we’ve had language, poetry has ritualized human life, informed us with metaphors of feeling and thought, and all the occasions we experience between womb and tomb.

Poetic utterance ritualizes how we come to knowledge. In the same way that poems illuminate our individual lives, poems also help us understand ourselves as a culture. Or at least they spur us to ask the questions. Poetic utterance mythologizes our journey of being. Poetic utterance tells and interprets our stories. Poetic utterance shapes our perspective of the mysteries of the present moment and helps us imagine the next one.

Walt Whitman hails us to join the communion between poet and human aspiration when he writes, “And what I assume you shall assume, For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.”

In this way poetry connects us to our past, and poets unmask both private and civic memories, dreams, and urgencies. By harmonizing the body with the mind, serving both young and old, poetry is a guide to deliver us into a fresh engagement with our inner lives and with modernity.

If we care about order and disorder, then poetry matters because it is the art of the utterance of beauty and the grotesque.

If we care about the deepest aspirations of men and women across every community and culture, language and race, then poetry is always relevant because it is the art of the utterance of what we share in our innermost psyches. Since culture and society existed both before we live and after we die, poetry is a link to our passage through our own time and a record of poets’ perspectives throughout time.

We know that human beings are intrinsically connected to one another in how we assert our being. When we read a poem, we are in the presence of this link. We are open to the metaphors of our shared natures.

Because poets have the highest faith that every word in a poem has value and implication and suggestion, a poem orients us in both our inner and outer existence. No matter what language we speak, we follow the guidance of poetry to better perceive sorrow and radiance, love and hatred, violence and wonder. No matter what continent we call home, we read poetry to restrict us in time
and to aspire toward timelessness — whether we are in our most vibrant cities or in the remote woods.

Does poetry matter? Yes. Can poetry be more relevant? No. It is the song of song, the language of language, the utterance of utterance and the spirit of spirit. [Link to article]


WE live in the age of grace and the age of futility, the age of speed and the age of dullness. The way we live now is not poetic. We live prose, we breathe prose, and we drink, alas, prose. There is prose that does us no great harm, and that may even, in small doses, prove medicinal, the way snake oil cured everything by curing nothing. But to live continually in the matter of ill-written and ill-spoken prose is to become deaf to what language can do.

The dirty secret of poetry is that it is loved by some, loathed by many, and bought by almost no one. (Is this the silent majority? Well, once the “silent majority” meant the dead.) We now have a poetry month, and a poet laureate — the latest, Charles Wright, announced just last week — and poetry plastered in buses and subway cars like advertising placards. If the subway line won’t run it, the poet can always tweet it, so long as it’s only 20 words or so. We have all these ways of throwing poetry at the crowd, but the crowd is not composed of people who particularly want to read poetry — or who, having read a little poetry, are likely to buy the latest edition of “Paradise Lost.”

This is not a disaster. Most people are also unlikely to attend the ballet, or an evening with a chamber-music quartet, or the latest exhibition of Georges de La Tour. Poetry has long been a major art with a minor audience. Poets have always found it hard to make a living — at poetry, that is. The exceptions who discovered that a few sonnets could be turned into a bankroll might have made just as much money betting on the South Sea Bubble.

There are still those odd sorts, no doubt disturbed, and unsocial, and torturers of cats, who love poetry nevertheless. They come in ones or twos to the difficult monologues of Browning, or the shadowy quatrains of Emily Dickinson, or the awful but cheerful poems of Elizabeth Bishop, finding something there not in the novel or the pop song.

Many arts have flourished in one period, then found a smaller niche in which they’ve survived perfectly well. A century ago, poetry did not appear in little magazines devoted to it, but on the pages of newspapers and mass-circulation magazines. The big magazines and even the newspapers began declining about the time they stopped printing poetry. (I know, I know — I’ve put the cause before the horse.) On the other hand, perhaps Congress started to decline when the office of poet laureate was created. The Senate and the House were able to bumble along perfectly well during the near half century when there was only a Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress — an office that, had the Pentagon only been consulted, might have been acronymized as C.I.P.L.O.C. instead of being renamed.

Poetry was long ago shoved aside in schools. In colleges it’s often easier to find courses on race or class or gender than on the Augustans or Romantics. In high schools and grade schools, when poetry is taught at all, too often it’s as a shudder of self-expression, without any attempt to look at
the difficulties and majesties of verse and the subtleties of meaning that make poetry poetry. No wonder kids don’t like it — it becomes another way to bully them into feeling “compassion” or “tolerance,” part of a curriculum that makes them good citizens but bad readers of poetry.

My blue-sky proposal: teach America’s kids to read by making them read poetry. Shakespeare and Pope and Milton by the fifth grade; in high school, Dante and Catullus in the original. By graduation, they would know Anne Carson and Derek Walcott by heart. A child taught to parse a sentence by Dickinson would have no trouble understanding Donald H. Rumsfeld’s known knowns and unknown unknowns.

We don’t live in such a world, and perhaps not even poets alive today wish we did. My ideal elementary-school curriculum would instead require all children to learn: (1) the times tables up to, say, 25; (2) a foreign language, preferably obscure; (3) the geography of a foreign land, like New Jersey; (4) how to use basic hand tools and cook a cassoulet; (5) how to raise a bird or lizard (if the child is vegetarian, then a potato); (6) poems by heart, say one per week; (7) how to find the way home from a town at least 10 miles away; (8) singing; (9) somersaults. With all that out of the way by age 12, there’s no telling what children might do. I have thieved a couple of items from W. H. Auden’s dream curriculum for a College of Bards. If my elementary school students are not completely disgusted by poetry, off they could go one day to that college, well prepared.

The idea that poetry must be popular is simply a mistake. Yet who would have suspected that the Metropolitan Opera and the National Theatre in London would now be broadcast to local movie theaters across America? The cigar-chewing promoter who can find a way to put poetry before readers and make them love it will do more for the art than a century of hand-wringing. He might also turn a buck.

You can live a full life without knowing a scrap of poetry, just as you can live a full life without ever seeing a Picasso or “The Cherry Orchard.” Most people surround themselves with art of some sort, whether it’s by Amy Winehouse or Richard Avedon. Even the daubs on the refrigerator by the toddler artist have their place. Language gainfully employed has its place. Poetry will never have the audience of “Game of Thrones” — that is what television can do. Poetry is what language alone can do. Link to Google doc of article

C. On a separate piece of paper, answer the reflection questions below:
   • What is the author’s argument? Summarize each author’s claim and cite two pieces of supporting evidence.
     ○ Article #1 and Article #2
   • Do you agree or disagree that poetry is essential and important? Why or why not?
   • Depending on whether you agree or disagree with the authors, cite the parts of the arguments that you find particularly convincing -- or that you most strongly disagree with.

Activity 2: Reading Poetry - On the next page, is a wonderful example of a poem that plays with both language and structure. In it, Kevin Young writes with a mix of formal poetic devices and everyday language. The effect is magical. Steps for Analysis: Please take your time here. Reading and understanding a poem of this complexity is not meant to be a quick process. You may want to take
breaks between the steps. Sit with the poem. Imagine its meaning. Then imagine an alternative meaning. Give yourself time.

1. Read and annotate the poem *Eddie Priest’s Barbershop & Notary*. You’ll find the poem below after the chart and questions.

2. As we’re considering the role poetry plays in our understanding of the word, it’s important to have some literary vocabulary. Below is a chart with a few basic poetic terms. Read and familiarize yourself with the definitions. Once you’ve read the poem, you’ll return to this chart to fill in examples and closely analyze the text. Source

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<tr>
<th>Poetic Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
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<tr>
<td>Caesura</td>
<td>This is a deliberate pause, break, or pivot within a line. Caesuras often appear in the middle of a poetic line but can appear near the beginning or end too.</td>
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<td>(Why might Young have used this poetic device?)</td>
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<td>Enjambment</td>
<td>Enjambment is the continuation of a sentence or phrase from one line of poetry to the next. You can spot this when you notice a lack of punctuation at the end of a line. In other forms of writing, a run-on sentence is considered a no-no. However, in poetry, if one line runs into the next, it’s simply an enjambment.</td>
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<td>Alliteration</td>
<td>Alliteration is a fun sound device to play around with. When used well, you can create a standout phrase in poetry. It is a simple yet effective repetition of initial consonant sounds.</td>
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<td>Rhythm</td>
<td>Rhythm is the beat or movement of a line. This includes the rise and fall of, say, an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable.</td>
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<td>Free Verse</td>
<td>Free verse is poetry that is free from limitations of regular meter or rhythm, and does not rhyme with fixed forms. Such poems are is music is men off early from work is waiting for the chance at the</td>
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<td>This stanza is an example of “free verse” because it doesn’t rhyme. The lines all have different rhythms</td>
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without rhythm and rhyme schemes, do not follow regular rhyme scheme rules, yet still provide artistic expression. & not a consistent number of syllables or words. This creates a unique rhythm for the words of the poem. It makes me think of jazz or funky music. Maybe Young is trying to capture a sense of something special by not using a predictable format.

3. Re-read the poem. Then re-read it aloud to yourself. Write down any new observations.
   Consider:
   a. Does the poem move fast? Slow? What is its rhythm?
   b. Do you notice any patterns or repetitions?
   c. Is there anything that doesn’t seem to fit? That “sticks out?”

4. Now, consider the title of the poem, “Eddie Priest’s Barbershop and Notary.”
   a. What do you notice about the title?
   b. Does it change your understanding of the poem? Does it offer new insight to your reading?
   c. Who is Eddie Priest?
   d. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary a “notary” is “a public officer who attests or certified writings (like a deed) to make them authentic”? Why is this included in the title? What meaning does it give to the poem?

5. Think about the speaker.
   a. Who is speaking in the poem?
   b. To whom is he/she speaking?
   c. What do you know about the speaker?

6. Go back to the poem. Underline the words and phrases that stand out to you. Observe your annotations.
   a. What is the mood and tone of the poem?
   b. Are the words you underlined angry? Sad? Bored? Excited? Happy? These are clues to the overall mood of the poem.

7. Dig deeper into the words of the poem. Return to the chart of poetic terms above. Each term is exemplified in the text. Complete the chart. The “free verse section is filled out as an example.

8. Next, paraphrase the poem below. Go line by line and summarize in your own words the meaning of each word.

9. Finally, what is the theme of the poem? Write a few sentences stating the theme and supporting your idea with two pieces of text evidence.
Eddie Priest’s Barbershop & Notary  By Kevin Young

Closed Mondays

is music is men
off early from work is waiting
for the chance at the chair

while the eagle claws holes
in your pockets keeping
time by the turning
of rusty fans steel flowers with
cold breezes is having nothing
better to do than guess at the years
of hair matted beneath the soiled caps
of drunks the pain of running
a fisted comb through stubborn
knots is the dark dirty low
down blues the tender heads
of sons fresh from cornrows all
wonder at losing half their height
is a mother gathering hair for good
luck for a soft wig is the round
difficulty of ears the peach
faced boys asking Eddie
to cut in parts and arrows
wanting to have their names read
for just a few days and among thin
jazz is the quick brush of a done
head the black flood around
your feet grandfathers
stopping their games of ivory
dominoes just before they reach the bone
yard is winking widowers announcing
cut it clean off I’m through courting
and hair only gets in the way is the final
spin of the chair a reflection of
a reflection that sting of wintergreen
tonic on the neck of a sleeping snow
haired man when you realize it is
your turn you are next

From poetryfoundation.org

Todo Es Muy Simple
By Idea Vilariño

Todo es muy simple mucho
más simple y sin embargo
aun así hay momentos
en que es demasiado para mí
en que no entiendo
y no sé si reírme a carcajadas
o si llorar de miedo
o estarme aquí sin llanto
sin risas
en silencio
asumiendo mi vida
mi tránsito
mi tiempo.

Activity 2: Writing About Poetry - Your experience with poetry has expanded mightily with the past few activities! You considered the importance of poetry and defined important poetic terms. You’ve been introduced to Kevin Young, a remarkable contemporary poet, writer, thinker, and activist. You’ve analyzed one of his poems. That’s a lot of important work. Congratulations!

As a final step in your poetry analysis, you will write an **explication**. This is another literary term relevant to discussions of poetry -- an explication is “the process of analyzing a literary work in order to reveal its meaning.” Don’t you feel fancy? Let’s try it by responding to the prompt below.

A. Write an essay in which you explain how the organization of the poem and the use of poetic devices (those you identified in the chart above) contribute to the overall theme and meaning of the poem. Use ALL the thinking and writing you completed above to help you answer this question. Remember the key elements below in your draft:

- **Introductory Paragraph**: This is your introduction. Remember the basics: introduce your title and author. Make a claim about the poem’s meaning. (Remember the essays that began our work? Does this poem help us make sense of our world and our place in it? How?)

- **Supporting Paragraphs (3-5:)** These paragraphs should detail how aspects of the poem support its overall meaning -- which you stated in your introduction. Each paragraph should explain a different feature of the poem: title; mood; diction; rhythm; enjambment; caesura -- or any other features you noticed. Include specific text evidence in each paragraph.

- **Conclusion**: This is your last chance to convince your reader that your interpretation of the poem is valid and powerful. Why is this poem worth reading? How does it reflect our shared human experiences?

B. Once you’ve drafted your essay, Use the checklist below to edit and polish:

- Do you have a strong, arguable thesis statement?
- Did you capitalize the poem’s title and put it in quotation marks? Did you mention the author by his full name in your opening sentences?
- Are all your sentences punctuated correctly?
- Did you avoid first person?
- Did you include topic sentences for each paragraph? Did you include direct text evidence to support?
- Do your paragraphs have transitions so your essay flows smoothly throughout?
- Does your conclusion bring your ideas together and leave your reader clear about your feelings about the poem?
- Finally, read your essay aloud to a friend, relative, or pet. Correct any sentences or ideas that sound awkward.

You’re finished! Well done! What a wonderful way to celebrate National Poetry Month!