

Lesson Name: Voices, Stories, and Community

Curriculum Connections: ELA, Performing Arts, Social-Emotional Learning

Students will explore spoken word poetry as an important part of hip-hop culture by creating and performing original spoken word pieces based on one of the following prompts:

- “I come from...”
- “A hero in my life is...”
- “My community looks/sounds/feels like...”

Students will learn how hip-hop and spoken word give people a voice to tell stories, express identity, and build community.

Essential Questions

- How can spoken word help people tell their stories?
 - What makes spoken word powerful?
 - How does hip-hop connect to identity and community?
 - How can our voices inspire others?
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Grades 3–5 Focus

- Self-expression
- Sensory details
- Rhythm and repetition
- Speaking confidently

Grades 6–8 Focus

- Voice and perspective
 - Figurative language
 - Social themes and storytelling
 - Performance techniques
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Learning Objectives

Students will:

1. Understand spoken word as part of hip-hop culture.
 2. Use descriptive language and rhythm in writing.
 3. Create an original spoken word piece.
 4. Practice speaking and performance skills.
 5. Share personal experiences and observations respectfully.
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Materials

- Notebook or writing journal
 - Pencil/highlighters
 - Chart paper/smart, chalk or white board
 - Audio/video clips of age-appropriate spoken word performances
 - Writing prompts
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Vocabulary

Word	Definition
Spoken Word	Poetry written to be performed aloud
Rhythm	A repeated beat or flow
Expression	Showing thoughts and feelings
Imagery	Language that creates pictures in the mind
Repetition	Repeating words or phrases for effect

ACTIVITY OUTLINE

Introduction to Spoken Word & Hip-Hop

Play a short, school-appropriate spoken word performance or teacher model.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bomrAp6AaSk>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3aeldJwewMg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWbERIVc7BM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OadZpUJv8Eg>

Discuss:

- What did you notice?
- How did the speaker use emotion?
- What words or phrases stood out?

Explain:

- Spoken word is connected to hip-hop culture.
- Spoken word poets use rhythm, storytelling, and emotion.
- Poems do not need to rhyme.
- Strong spoken word often includes:
 - Repetition
 - Powerful imagery



- Emotion
- Personal stories

Connecting Spoken Word to Hip-Hop

Discuss how spoken word connects to:

- rap and lyricism
- storytelling traditions
- protest and social justice
- rhythm and beat
- identity and culture

Class Brainstorm

Create a class anchor chart for each prompt.

“My name is...”

Examples:

- identity
- respect
- pronunciation
- visibility

“I am unique because...”

Examples:

- language
- appearance
- interests
- experiences

“I carry...”

Examples:

- memories
- expectations
- hopes
- fears
- traditions

Write one sentence beginning with one of the prompts.

Writing Workshop

Quick-write:

“What the world sees/what I know”



Model a short spoken word piece.

Example:

The world sees quiet.

I know

my mind is loud

with questions,

music,

dreams,

and things I'm too nervous to say out loud.

The world sees a child

sitting in the back.

I know

I'm someone still learning

how to take up space.

Discuss:

- imagery
- repetition
- emotion

Students choose ONE prompt:

- "I come from..."
- "A hero in my life is..."
- "My community looks/sounds/feels like..."

Support students with:

- brainstorming
- sentence starters
- vocabulary
- organization

Writing Requirements

Grades 3–5

- 6–10 lines
- Use descriptive words
- Include repetition at least once

Additional Support for Younger Learners

- Sentence starters
 - I come from _____



- I hear _____
- My hero teaches me _____
- Shared writing
- Partner brainstorming

Grades 6–8

- 10–20 lines
- Use imagery and figurative language
- Include repetition and rhythm
- Include a strong ending

Deeper Learning for Older Students

- Add rhyme schemes
- Incorporate social themes
- Create background beats
- Record audio and/or video performances
- Compare spoken word and rap lyrics

Revision & Performance Practice [OPTIONAL]

Teach performance skills:

- eye contact
- voice projection
- pacing
- expression
- pauses

Students practice with partners.

Partners give feedback:

- What line stood out?
- What emotions did you hear?
- What could be clearer?

Students revise:

- stronger word choices
- repeated phrases
- smoother flow
- clearer imagery



Spoken Word Showcase [OPTIONAL]

Students perform for the class.

Reflection Discussion

Ask:

- How did it feel to share your voice?
 - What did you learn about your classmates?
 - Why is storytelling important in hip-hop?
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Supplementary Classroom Activities

- **Gallery Walk:** display poems around the room.
 - **Beat & Rhythm Activity:** students clap rhythms while reading lines aloud.
 - **Community Soundscape:** students record sounds from their neighborhood and incorporate them into performances.
 - **Collaborative Class Poem:** each student contributes one line.
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Teacher Notes

- Create a respectful and supportive environment.
- As performance is OPTIONAL, students are evaluated on their written work.
- Focus on voice, storytelling, and identity rather than perfection.
- Encourage celebration of diverse experiences and cultures.
- Preview all media clips beforehand.

