

dream in color 

A resource guide for  
middle school teachers



*Dr. Maya Angelou*



## Dream in Color

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Imagine a world where diversity is celebrated. A world where people of all complexions and cultures express themselves freely. If you imagine it, then you Dream In Color.

Target, in partnership with the Poetry Foundation, Furious Flower Poetry Center at James Madison University and Dr. Maya Angelou, invites you to celebrate Black History Month through the rich legacy of African-American poetry. Discover the work of poets past and present, whose voices move us all to continue to dream.

As part of our 2007 Black History Month celebration, Target is proud to provide a toolkit to inspire children of all ages to Dream In Color. Students will discover the works of important African-American poets, classroom activities designed to encourage them to develop their own poetic voices, discussion guides, bibliographies and links to engaging online poetry resources.

Dream In Color is just one of the ways that Target supports diversity and makes a real difference in the lives of children through the arts and education.



## To the Teacher:

The exercises in each unit are meant to serve as guidelines to excite students about poetry. The exercises are not sequenced, so you may use as many or as few as you like, and in any order. You may want to do one exercise per class period, or you may want to stretch an exercise over a few days. The exercises should be fun for both you and the students, so just jump in and enjoy the results.

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# 1. Family and Friends

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## My Grandmother Is Waiting for Me to Come Home

My Grandmother is waiting for me  
to come home.

We live with walnuts and apples  
in a one-room kitchenette above The  
Some Day Liquor Gardens.

My Grandmother sits in a red rocking chair  
waiting for me  
to open the door with my key.

She is Black and glossy like coal.

We eat walnuts and apples,  
drink root beer in cups that are broken,  
above The  
Some Day Liquor Gardens.

I love my Grandmother.  
She is wonderful to behold  
with the glossy of her coal-colored skin.  
She is warm wide and long.  
She laughs and she Lingers.

**Gwendolyn Brooks**

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### Background

Family is one of the most often-recurring themes in all genres of African-American literature. The trauma of enslavement, followed by the routine separation of the members of slave families, created a focus on displacement and replacement that shouts and murmurs through black poetry and prose. The family is also often depicted as a space of discovery, nurture and support. Writing about family explores personal history, develops a sense of community, and establishes identity. In Brooks' "My Grandmother is Waiting for Me to Come Home," the most important yet understated idea is that the grandmother is home, she is there, and "she lingers." Even though the kitchenette is small and lacking in fancy material possessions, the grandmother is substantial and warmly welcoming.

### Discussion Questions

#### 1. Imagery

Read the poem aloud to the class, but do not hand out copies yet. Read the poem again. Ask the class to respond to these questions either verbally or in a drawing:

Can you describe the room where the grandmother is waiting?

What does the grandmother look like?

Where is the grandmother sitting?

What do the grandmother and the grandchild eat?

Where does the grandmother live?

Hand out copies of the poem.

What did Gwendolyn Brooks describe in the poem that you forgot to write down (or draw)?

Why do you think you remembered what you did?



POETRY



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Guide the students toward a discussion of imagery. Imagery uses vibrant language to create a mental sensation. To help them understand that they remember the things they wrote down because the images stuck with them, ask some of the following questions:

How many of the things you remember are connected to your senses?

Describe the grandmother's chair. In your mind did you see the "red rocking chair"?

Describe what the grandmother and grandchild ate. In your mind could you taste "apples" or "walnuts"?

Explain that Brooks uses the poetic device of imagery to help us to see the home and the people she describes in the poem. Her imagery helps the poem to stay with us after we have finished reading it.

## 2. Speaker

Read "My Grandmother Is Waiting for Me to Come Home." Ask the students the following or similar questions:

Who is the speaker in the poem? (Or, who is telling the story?)

How old do you think the speaker is? Why do you think this? Be sure that the students are using information from the poem to answer this question.

Do you think the speaker is a boy or a girl? Does it matter?

Are the grandmother and child wealthy? Why do you think this? Be sure that the class uses information from the poem to answer this question.

When your mom or dad asks you to see something from "their point of view," what do they mean?

How is your point of view as a middle schooler different from your point of view at age six? If you were to write a poem from a first grader's perspective, what could you do to help your reader recognize that you're writing from a little kid's point of view?

When Gwendolyn Brooks wrote the poem, she was already an adult and a famous writer. She uses her imagination to write a poem from a child's point of view. She uses simple imagery and repetition to show her readers how much the child loves the grandmother.

## 3. Free Verse, Repetition, Sound

This poem is written in free verse. For a discussion of poetic form, ask the students the following:

What is rhyme? Can you give me an example of rhyme?

Does this poem rhyme?

Are the lines in this poem all the same length?

Ask the students to count the syllables in each line of the poem.

Do the lines of the poem have the same number of syllables?

Do the syllables per line have a pattern such as 11, 7, 7, 11? Or 8, 6, 8, 6?

Point out that the poem does have a specific form; this style of poetry is called free verse. In a free verse poem, the poet can make a line as long or as short as she wants.

Writing in free verse does not mean that the poet does not care about style. A poet chooses her words and the style of her poems very carefully. While some poems call for exciting verbs (as in Komunyakaa's "Slam, Dunk, & Hook" in the Middle School SPORTS curriculum), Brooks chooses to use the verb "is" four times in the poem. The use of simple verbs and repetition ("She is" is used three times) in the poem helps us to hear the voice of a child describing her grandmother.

Brooks also pays close attention to the way words sound when they are in a line together. She uses consonance, assonance and alliteration to create repetitions of sound within the poem. Read the poem to the class, emphasizing the sounds of the

consonants and vowels. Ask the students to:  
Underline all of the places they hear consonance.  
Circle the places they hear assonance.  
Draw a box around instances of alliteration.

If the students need reinforcement, write a word on the blackboard and ask them to:

Come up with other words that begin with the same sound and that make a sentence. Students find it easier to alliterate with consonants:

PURPLE pigeons parade proudly through Paris.  
COZY cats curl up in Connie's kitchen.

Consonance is a little harder for most children to verbalize, since it usually comes at the end of words. Give simple examples such as:

Janet went in the tent and ate.  
Darius rides the bus.

Explain that assonance is usually similar vowel sounds within a line. Use the following as an example:

Come on in, we're in the den.

Ask students to underline or otherwise mark the examples of alliteration, assonance or consonance in the following:

The red, red robin comes bob, bob, bobbin' along.

What a wonderful bird is the pelican,  
Its beak can hold more than its belly can.

Explain to the class that these devices make the words stand out and help you to remember the poem after you read it.

## Activities

1. Hand out the Margaret Walker poem "Lineage," and have the students highlight the images in the poem.

### Lineage

My grandmothers were strong.  
They followed plows and bent to toil.  
They moved through fields sowing seed.  
They touched earth and grain grew.  
They were full of sturdiness and singing.  
My grandmothers were strong.

My grandmothers are full of memories  
Smelling of soap and onions and wet clay  
With veins rolling roughly over quick hands  
They have many clean words to say.  
My grandmothers were strong.

Why am I not as they?

Margaret Walker

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2. Have the students share examples of an adult who is special to them. After a few ideas have been shared to start the creative juices:

Ask each child to select an adult who is special to write a poem about. This may be an aunt, uncle, teacher, or coach.

Have the class sit quietly for three to five minutes and imagine they are in the adult's house. Then ask these questions, giving the students ample time to write:

What images did you see? Write those images down. Can you add details?

- How does the house smell?
- What can you hear when you are in the house?
- Is it warm? Cold? Humid?
- How does being in the house make you feel?

Ask the students to write 10 sentences that begin with:

“My [special adult] is \_\_\_\_\_.”

Have them take their favorite details from their lists and compile them into a free-verse poem.

#### Optional Activity

As a homework assignment, ask the class to read “Fifth Grade Autobiography” by Rita Dove or “Poem [2]” by Langston Hughes.

Ask each class member to write a poem about someone close to him or her who is no longer here. The person does not have to be deceased – it might be a parent in the military or an older sibling in college.

The poem can be simple and short, or detailed and full of imagery. Suggest that the students use consonance, assonance or alliteration in the poem.

## More poems about Family and Friends

### Fifth Grade Autobiography

I was four in this photograph fishing  
with my grandparents at a lake in Michigan.  
My brother squats in poison ivy.  
His Davy Crockett cap  
sits squared on his head so the raccoon tail  
flounces down the back of his sailor suit.

My grandfather sits to the far right  
in a folding chair,  
and I know his left hand is on  
the tobacco in his pants pocket  
because I used to wrap it for him  
every Christmas. Grandmother's hips  
bulge from the brush, she's leaning  
into the ice chest, sun through the trees  
printing her dress with soft  
luminous paws.

I am staring jealously at my brother;  
the day before he rode his first horse, alone.  
I was strapped in a basket  
behind my grandfather.  
He smelled of lemons. He's died –

but I remember his hands.

Rita Dove

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### Poem [2]

(to F.S.)

I loved my friend.  
He went away from me.  
There's nothing more to say.  
The poem ends,  
Soft as it began,—  
I loved my friend.

Langston Hughes

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### Puzzlement

I, partly Nigerian.  
I, partly Puerto Rican.

I have a Nigerian father,  
a Puerto Rican mother.  
I am packed in a skin that is tan.

I, too, have a heart on fire.  
I, too, want to be Proud.  
I, too, want to be Something and Proud.

I want to shout "I'm A TAN!"

Gwendolyn Brooks

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## 2. Sports

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### Slam, Dunk, & Hook

Fast breaks. Lay ups. With Mercury's  
 Insignia on our sneakers,  
 We outmaneuvered to footwork  
 Of bad angels. Nothing but a hot  
 Swish of strings like silk  
 Ten feet out. In the roundhouse  
 Labyrinth our bodies  
 Created, we could almost  
 Last forever, poised in midair  
 Like storybook sea monsters.  
 A high note hung there  
 A long second. Off  
 The rim. We'd corkscrew  
 Up & dunk balls that exploded  
 The skullcap of hope & good  
 Intention. Lanky, all hands  
 & feet . . . sprung rhythm.  
 We were metaphysical when girls  
 Cheered on the sidelines.  
 Tangled up in a falling,  
 Muscles were a bright motor  
 Double-flashing to the metal hoop  
 Nailed to our oak.  
 When Sonny Boy's mama died  
 He played nonstop all day, so hard  
 Our backboard splintered.  
 Glistening with sweat,

We rolled the ball off  
 Our fingertips. Trouble  
 Was there slapping a blackjack  
 Against an open palm.  
 Dribble, drive to the inside,  
 & glide like a sparrow hawk.  
 Lay ups. Fast breaks.  
 We had moves we didn't know  
 We had. Our bodies spun  
 On swivels of bone & faith,  
 Through a lyric slipknot  
 Of joy, & we knew we were  
 Beautiful & dangerous.

Yusef Komunyakaa

from *Pleasure Dome: New and Collected Poems* ©2001 by  
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 University Press.

### Background

In 1924, Howard University's newspaper included an editorial that stated: "Athletics is the universal language. By and through it we hope to foster a better and more fraternal spirit between the races in America and so to destroy prejudices; to learn and to be taught; to facilitate a universal brotherhood." Many of the advances made in the progress toward racial integration in the United States occurred in the sports arena. In the early 1900s, George Poage, John Baxter "Doc" Taylor, and DeHart Hubbard became famous for winning gold medals in the Olympic games. In 1908, Jack Johnson was the first African-American to become Heavyweight Boxing Champion. The color barrier in Major League Baseball broke when Jackie



Robinson was signed to the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947. During times of intense racial prejudice, African-Americans were able to compete in sports and defy mistaken notions of white superiority. Athletic teams in some ways paved the way for the desegregation of schools and neighborhoods. Today, many of our country's most skilled athletes are those of African descent. The neighborhood "hoops" have become both a place to hone one's skills on the basketball court and a place for social congregation. Yusef Komunyakaa creates the poem "Slam, Dunk, & Hook" to come alive with the rhythms and movements of schoolyard basketball. The schoolyard game was sometimes a rite of passage, sometimes a therapy session, and just as often a test of pride and identity.

### Discussion Questions

Listen to a recording of Komunyakaa reading "Slam, Dunk, & Hook," or read the poem aloud to the class.

#### 1. Word Choice

There are some big words in this poem, but the class should be able to understand those words in the context of the poem. Pass out copies of the poem and discuss the following with the class:

Ask the students what the poem is about.  
Ask them to circle the word "basketball" every time it occurs in the poem.

When they don't find the word "basketball" in the poem, then ask:

If "basketball" isn't in the poem, why do you think the poem is about basketball?

The students might say that the poem uses words such as "slam dunk" and "metal hoop."

List all of the basketball words the children identify on the blackboard.

Discuss how poets use descriptive words related to the subject instead of boring words that identify the subject.

Ask the class:

Is the poem only about basketball?  
What else do you think the poem is about?

If the students need help, ask them to describe the players:

Are the players boys or girls?  
Are they short or tall?  
Do they seem almost like they are more than human?

In the middle of the poem, the speaker tells us about Sonny Boy. You can almost miss this part of the poem if you read it too quickly, but this reveals that the players' love of basketball runs deeper than just a game. What does basketball mean to Sonny Boy?

#### 2. Simile and Metaphor

Discuss simile and metaphor in the poem. Metaphor says one thing is another thing. Simile uses "like" or "as" to equate two things. Give the children examples of metaphor and simile:

##### Metaphor

All the world's a stage.  
Life's a beach!  
She's a ball of fire!  
Our team was a fighting machine!

##### Simile

He's as bold as brass.  
She's as bright as a penny.  
That teacher is as hard as nails!  
I wish it would rain- it's as dry as a bone.  
Her skin was like sandpaper.

Can you identify similes and metaphors in the poem?  
 How many of you play basketball? Have you been to a game?  
 Picture the game in your head.  
 How are basketball players like bad angels? Sea monsters? Sparrow hawks?

3. Performance

If you listened to Yusef Komunyakaa read the poem, ask the class the following questions. If the teacher read the poem, insert your name for Komunyakaa where appropriate.

With what tone does Komunyakaa read the poem?  
 Does he make the game sound intense?  
 How does Komunyakaa arrange the poem on the page?  
 What does Komunyakaa do to make the intensity of the words visible on the page?

Ask students to memorize one of the other poems included in this curriculum, paying close attention to tone. Have them perform their poems for one another.

4. Word Choice

Point out that many of Komunyakaa's verbs are not words we use in our everyday conversations.

How often do you use the word "corkscrew" to describe an action?  
 What other unusual verbs does Komunyakaa use?  
 What picture comes to your mind when someone says:

He pirouetted?	They raged?
She slammed?	He spiked?

As a poet, Komunyakaa looks for words that best describe actions, and he can turn nouns into verbs to achieve that effect.

**Activities:**

1. Performance

Have the class stand in a circle. You can hold onto the poem and assign a phrase or sentence to each student, going around the circle. The first student will be "Fast breaks." The person to her left will be "Lay ups," then the next two to the left can be "With Mercury's insignia on our sneakers," and "We outmaneuvered to footwork." (You can determine the length of their phrases based on what you think they can handle.)

As you assign a phrase or sentence to each student, make him come up with a motion to go with it. Have the entire class repeat the phrase with the motion each time a new one is assigned. Then, with each additional phrase and motion, begin again with the "Lay ups" and, as a class, repeat the phrase and motion of each student thereafter.

By the end of the poem, the entire class should be able to say the poem together with the motions. If your class is particularly ambitious, break the circle up and try to act out the poem as though it is a basketball game – without losing track of whose line comes next!

2. Enjambment and Poetic Sentence Structure

After completing this activity, have the students return to their desks and look at the written poem.

Ask if they notice anything about how their individual phrases are written in the poem.

One of the things they should notice is that a thought often begins on one line, breaks off and continues on another. This is an example of enjambment.

Ask the students whether Komunyakaa writes in complete sentences. Have them give examples. Explain that in a poem a sentence can be short, long, or incomplete. The poet bends the rules of grammar to help the poem capture the feeling he wants to convey. Komunyakaa's short sentences help us to sense the quickness of each motion in the poem. The poet forces our eyes to follow swiftly down the page, just as the players move quickly on the court.

#### **Optional Activity**

For homework, have students listen to a sportscaster on the radio or on TV and listen for the kinds of verbs a sportscaster uses to help the audience see what is happening.

Write poems using these verbs to describe a game. Practice playing with line breaks and enjambment to create a poem that reflects the action of the game.

## More poems about Sports

### Harlem Hopscotch

One foot down, then hop! It's hot.  
     Good things for the ones that's got.  
 Another jump, now to the left.  
     Everybody for hisself.

In the air, now both feet down.  
     Since you black, don't stick around.  
 Food is gone, the rent is due,  
     Curse and cry and then jump two.

All the people out of work,  
     Hold for three, then twist and jerk.  
 Cross the line, they count you out.  
     That's what hopping's all about.

Both feet flat, the game is done.  
 They think I lost. I think I won.

Maya Angelou

From *The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou*. Random House, New York. Copyright ©1994 by Maya Angelou. Used by permission of the author.

### old tennis player

Refuses  
 To refuse the racket, to mutter No to the net.  
 He leans to life, conspires to give and get  
 Other serving yet.

Gwendolyn Brooks

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### Makin' Jump Shots

He waltzes into the lane  
 'cross the free-throw line,  
 fakes a drive, pivots,  
 floats from the asphalt turf  
 in an arc of black light,  
 and sinks two into the chains.

One on one he fakes  
 down the main, passes  
 into the free lane  
 and hits the chains.

A sniff in the fallen air —  
 he stuffs it through the chains  
 riding high:

“traveling” someone calls —  
 and he laughs, stepping  
 to a silent beat, gliding  
 as he sinks two into the chains.

Michael S. Harper

From *Images of Kin* by Michael S. Harper. University of Illinois Press. Copyright ©1977 by Michael S. Harper. Used by permission of the author.

### Once the Dream Begins

I wish the bell saved you.

“Float like a butterfly  
& sting like a bee.”

Too bad you didn’t  
learn to disappear  
before a left jab.

Fighting your way out of a clench,  
you counter-punched & bicycled  
but it was already too late —

gray weather had started  
shoving the sun into a corner.  
“He didn’t mess up my face.”

But he was an iron hammer  
against stone, as you  
bobbed & weaved through hooks.

Now we strain to hear you.  
Once the dream begins  
to erase itself, can the

dissolve be stopped?  
No more card tricks  
for the TV cameras,

Ali. Please come back to us  
sharp-tongued & quick-footed,  
spinning out of the blurred

dance. Whoever said men  
hit harder when women  
are around, is right.

Word for word,  
we beat the love  
out of each other.

Yusef Komunyakaa

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University Press.

### Zuri at Bat

Dear Danitra,  
At the softball game last week,  
smart-mouth J.T. snickered loud and said,  
“What makes you think a puny girl like you can  
help us win?”  
“Exactly where you been?” I asked him, stepping in.  
When the pitch came, I slammed the ball so far,  
it ripped through the clouds and headed for a star.  
I strutted 'round the bases, took my own sweet time.  
My new friend, Nina, laughed and bet J.T.  
he couldn’t hit a ball as far as me.  
He can’t, and that’s a fact.

Nikki Grimes

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## 3. Dreams

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### Dream Boogie

Good morning, daddy!  
 Ain't you heard  
 The boogie-woogie rumble  
 Of a dream deferred?

Listen closely:  
 You'll hear their feet  
 Beating out and beating out a —

*You think  
 It's a happy beat?*

Listen to it closely:  
 Ain't you heard  
 something underneath  
 like a —

*What did I say?*

Sure,  
 I'm happy!  
 Take it away!

*Hey, pop!  
 Re-bop!  
 Mop!*

*Y-e-a-h!*

### Langston Hughes

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### Harlem

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up  
 like a raisin in the sun?  
 Or fester like a sore —  
 And then run?  
 Does it stink like rotten meat?  
 Or crust and sugar over —  
 Like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags  
 like a heavy load.

*Or does it explode?*

### Langston Hughes

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### Background

From the very beginning, African-American poets have been creators and critics of social values as they envisioned a world of justice and equality. As they reflected their values in the context of the American Dream, they created a body of poetry that grew out of their folk roots. Langston Hughes' "Dream Boogie" shows the importance of music, improvisation, and inventive style. With it he creates a poem which is inspired by boogie-woogie rhythms that accompanied the popular dance crazes of the period. The music encouraged African-Americans to dance and dream of brighter days even when their realities were the blues.



**Discussion Questions**

1. Introduce Langston Hughes to the class using the information provided in the biography section.

Give the students Langston Hughes' "Harlem" to read for homework the night before the class discussion. Have them answer the following questions for homework:

1. What dream do you think Langston Hughes is referring to in his poem?
2. What does it mean to defer something?
3. What do you think Langston Hughes is talking about when he refers to a "dream deferred"?
4. Hughes uses very descriptive language to ask questions about what might happen to a dream deferred. First is an example of Hughes' language. Underneath, tell what you think he is saying:

Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Or crust and sugar over — Like a syrupy sweet?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Maybe it just sags like a heavy load.  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Or does it explode?*  
\_\_\_\_\_

In the next class period, spend 10 or 15 minutes talking about "Harlem" by Langston Hughes. Ask the students:

What kinds of things does Hughes suggest might happen to a dream that is deferred?  
What is the theme of the poem?

Explain to the students that "Harlem" is an important poem in African-American poetry, not only because of its excellence as a poem, but because many poets and writers have made allusions to the poem in other works. For example, Lorraine Hansberry titled the famous play *A Raisin in the Sun* from the third line of the poem.

2. Rhythm

In class, distribute copies of "Dream Boogie" to the class. Ask them to read it silently.

Divide the class in half, and ask one-half to read the non-italics aloud and the other to read the italics aloud. If the class naturally falls into the boogie rhythm, call that to their attention and continue with the following discussion. If the class does not read in boogie rhythm, explain that you are going to suggest a different rhythm. Read the poem aloud with the syncopated "boogie" rhythm.

Ask the class to read aloud in halves again, and continue the discussion below:

What is rhythm? If you are asked to "dance to the rhythm" or if someone says "I have rhythm," what does this mean?

Rhythm can be quite complex, but basically it is the repetition of a beat or sound in a predictable pattern. An example of rhythm that many students will recognize comes from jump rope rhymes, such as:

Cinderella, dressed in yella,  
Went upstairs to kiss a fella,  
Made a mistake, kissed a snake,  
How many doctors will it take?

What kind of rhythm does “Dream Boogie” have? Is it a heavy rhythm? Is it a snappy rhythm? Does the title of the poem give you any clue as to the type of rhythm? The answer, of course, is “boogie woogie.”

### 3. Riffing

Explain that musicians use a technique called “riffing” when they take part of a song and bring it into another song. (Riffing entered the musical lexicon in the 1920s as jazz musicians improvised and brought musical elements from existing songs into their compositions and improvisations. The jazz great Charlie Parker, for example, used some of the chord progressions in his music that George Gershwin had composed a half generation earlier.) In music, riffing can also be a melodic phrase that you hear repeatedly in a song – often passed from one soloist to the next. If you have any aspiring jazz musicians in your class, they might be able to provide some examples of riffing in music they have played. Rappers are famous for riffing on the work of previous artists when they take a phrase of music or a lyric from an older piece and use that as the background for a new theme. Ask the class if they can think of examples.

Look carefully at “Harlem” and “Dream Boogie.”

Ask the students:

Can you tell where “Dream Boogie” riffs on “Harlem”? Does “Dream Boogie” sound more hopeful than “Harlem”? Why or why not?

The poem riffs on the question “What happens to a dream deferred?” Hughes takes the phrase “dream deferred” and moves it from a serious poem into an upbeat, jazzy poem. It is catchy, like a song.

Why do you think Hughes chose to write “Dream Boogie” in a musical context?

The boogie-woogie style was pervasive in the 1920s and well recognized in popular culture. Connecting

words to a musical style gives poetry an accessibility that words alone may not have.

If a listener were to hear Hughes or a jazz band read “Dream Boogie,” do you think they would remember the words?

### Activities

#### 1. Rhythm and Scat

Read “Dream Boogie” or “Boogie 1 a.m.” aloud. Ask the students to put the poems face down on their desks; then ask them to recite either one of the poems in their entirety – probably no one can. Ask them if they can scat the musical rhythm of the poem using non-words, such as follows for “Dream Boogie:”

Be bop a re bop

(Good morning, daddy!)

Bop a dop

(Ain’t you heard)

a boogie woogie doo wop

(The boogie-woogie rumble)

If students are not comfortable with using nonsense or scat words, ask them to hum (not as effective for boogie) or to use “da dunk.” (The point is that the words to the poem may not stay completely with the reader, but the musical element makes the poem memorable.)

## 2. Rap

Borrow any books of Langston Hughes' poetry that are available in your school's library. We recommend *Montage of a Dream Deferred* or *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes*. You'll find a gold mine of musical poems in these books.

Hand out copies of "Easy Boogie" (page 17). Talk about the elements in the rap that come from both poems, and how Litwin fits them together in one musical piece. Flip through the Hughes books that you have on hand. Which other poems could fit into the rap?

Have your students choose a poem from this curriculum and create a riff collage – a rap made up of pieces of poems by Langston Hughes.

## Optional Activity

Alternately, you could provide the students with one stanza from "Motto" and ask them to write a rap that uses this stanza as the refrain.

### Motto

I play it cool  
 And dig all jive.  
 That's the reason  
 I stay alive.

My motto,  
 As I live and learn,  
 is:

*Dig And Be Dug  
 In Return.*

Langston Hughes

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## More poems about Dreams

### Theme for English B

The instructor said,

*Go home and write  
a page tonight.  
And let that page come out of you —  
Then, it will be true.*

I wonder if it's that simple?  
I am twenty-two, colored, born in Winston-Salem.  
I went to school there, then Durham, then here  
to this college on the hill above Harlem.  
I am the only colored student in my class.  
The steps from the hill lead down into Harlem,  
through a park, then I cross St. Nicholas,  
Eighth Avenue, Seventh, and I come to the Y,  
the Harlem Branch Y, where I take the elevator  
up to my room, sit down, and write this page:

It's not easy to know what is true for you or me  
at twenty-two, my age. But I guess I'm what  
I feel and see and hear, Harlem, I hear you:  
hear you, hear me — we two — you, me, talk on this page.  
(I hear New York, too.) Me — who?  
Well, I like to eat, sleep, drink, and be in love.  
I like to work, read, learn, and understand life.  
I like a pipe for a Christmas present,  
or records — Bessie, bop, or Bach.  
I guess being colored doesn't make me not like  
the same things other folks like who are other races.

So will my page be colored that I write?  
Being me, it will not be white.  
But it will be  
a part of you, instructor.  
You are white —  
yet a part of me, as I am a part of you.  
That's American.  
Sometimes perhaps you don't want to be a part of me.  
Nor do I often want to be a part of you.  
But we are, that's true!  
As I learn from you,  
I guess you learn from me—  
although you're older — and white —  
and somewhat more free.

This is my page for English B.

Langston Hughes

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**Boogie: 1 a.m.**

Good evening, daddy!  
I know you've heard  
The boogie-woogie rumble  
Of a dream deferred  
Trilling the treble  
And twining the bass  
Into midnight ruffles  
Of cat-gut lace.

Langston Hughes

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**Easy Boogie**

Down in the bass  
That steady beat  
Walking walking walking  
Like marching feet.

Down in the bass  
That easy roll,  
Rolling like I like it  
In my soul.

Riffs, smears, breaks.

Hey, Lawdy, Mama!  
Do you hear what I said?  
Easy like I rock it  
In my bed!

Langston Hughes

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**I, Too**

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.  
They send me to eat in the kitchen  
When company comes,  
But I laugh,  
And eat well,  
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,  
I'll be at the table  
When company comes.  
Nobody'll dare  
Say to me,  
"Eat in the kitchen,"  
Then.

Besides,  
They'll see how beautiful I am  
And be ashamed —

I, too, am America.

Langston Hughes

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**listen children**

listen children  
keep this in the place  
you have for keeping  
always  
keep it all ways

we have never hated black

listen  
we have been ashamed  
hopeless tired mad  
but always  
all ways  
we loved us

we have always loved each other  
children all ways

pass it on

Lucille Clifton

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