

## Lesson Plan

### Studying Sound in Poetry

**Book:** *Amanda Gorman*

**Series:** Black Voices on Race

**Level:** Navigator

#### Objective

To help students explore how literary techniques like allusions, alliteration, repetition, and rhyme contribute to the mood and meaning of a poem.

#### Supplies

- *Amanda Gorman* book
- Whiteboard
- PBS News Hour’s YouTube video of Amanda Gorman reading her poem “The Hill We Climb” at Joe Biden’s inauguration: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZ055ilIiN4>

#### Before the Activity

Read the *Amanda Gorman* book, or assign it to students to read on their own. Pull up the YouTube video of Amanda Gorman reading her inauguration poem in your web browser.

#### Activity

Chapter 1 (“The Hill We Climb”) talks about a poem Amanda Gorman read at the inauguration of US President Joe Biden. On page 7, the text summarizes the poem’s main ideas. Choose a student to read the first paragraph on that page aloud:

*Her poem was called “The Hill We Climb.” In it, Gorman said that Americans can come together to heal. People have different beliefs. They have different skin colors. They have different backgrounds. But these differences shouldn’t divide people. What is most important is that everyone works together. All the country’s troubles are like a big hill. Walking up the hill can be hard. But by working together, people can make it to the top.*

To communicate these ideas, Gorman uses several literary techniques. Write the following terms on the whiteboard, using definitions adapted from the Merriam-Webster online dictionary:

- alliteration: the repetition of a sound at the beginning of two or more neighboring words
- allusion: a statement that refers to something without mentioning it directly
- repetition: something stated or done again
- rhyme: close similarity in the final sounds of two or more words or lines of writing

Then, pull up the YouTube video of Amanda Gorman reading her poem and play it for the class. Ask students to listen for examples of the four techniques on the board. Afterward, discuss the following questions:

- What allusions does Gorman use in the poem? (Sample Answers: “History has its eyes on us” is similar to lyrics from the musical *Hamilton* by Lin-Manuel Miranda. “But that doesn’t mean we are striving to form a union that is perfect” recalls the Preamble to the US Constitution.)
- What effect does this technique have? (Answers will vary but might include that these allusions remind the audience of themes and ideas from those other works, such as peace and freedom.)
- Did you hear any examples of alliteration? (Sample Answers: “To compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters and conditions of man,” or “And every known nook of our nation and every corner called our country.”)
- Did you hear any examples of rhyme? (Sample Answers: “We will not be turned around or interrupted by intimidation because we know our inaction and inertia will be the inheritance of the next generation,” or “The new dawn balloons as we free it. For there is always light, if only we’re brave enough to see it. If only we’re brave enough to be it.”)
- What effects did these techniques have? (Answers will vary but might include that these techniques can be pleasing to people’s ears or can create a sense of comparison or contrast between ideas.)
- When does Gorman use repetition? (Sample Answers: Gorman starts several sentences in a row with the phrase “That even as.” Later, she starts even more with “We will rise . . .”)
- What effect does this technique have? (Answers will vary but might mention that repeating the same phrase creates a sense of building tension or momentum.)

### **Evaluation**

Could students identify examples of the four literary techniques in Gorman’s poem? With prompting and support, could they describe the effects these techniques created?

### **Standards**

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards’ reading standards for literature, grades 4 and 5 (RL 4.4, 4.5, 5.4, 5.5).