

Lesson Plan

Pick a Poem

Book: *Langston Hughes*

Series: Black Voices on Race

Level: Navigator

Objective

To help students practice identifying the themes of a poem and the ways its structure and language bring out these themes.

Supplies

- *Langston Hughes* book
- Whiteboard
- Computer access for students
- Poetry Foundation website: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/>

Before the Activity

Read through the *Langston Hughes* book, or assign it to students to read on their own.

Activity

Langston Hughes was a prolific poet with a long and influential career. In many of his poems, he uses techniques that help match the sounds of the words to the feelings and ideas he's describing. 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
- repetition: using the same words or phrases in several sentences or lines of writing
- rhyme: close similarity in the final sounds of two or more words or lines of writing

Have students go to the Poetry Foundation website and use the search feature to find poems by Langston Hughes. Each student should choose one of his poems to analyze. Students should read the poem and type answers to the following questions:

- Which poem did you choose?
- What thoughts or feelings did you have while reading it?
- What ideas do you think this poem is about?
- What techniques, such as rhyme, alliteration, or repetition, does Hughes use in this poem?
- How do these techniques bring out the poem's feelings or ideas?
- How does the poem's shape (line lengths or line breaks) relate to these feelings or ideas?

Evaluation

Have students print or email their answers so you can collect their work. Give each student 1 point for answering each question, for up to 6 points total.

Standards

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards' reading standards for literature, grade 7 (RL 7.2, 7.4, 7.5).