

# Poetry and the City

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## **Index**

Overview  
Rationale  
Objectives  
Strategies  
Classroom Activities  
Annotated Bibliography/Resources  
Appendices

## **Overview**

Within the confines of the thematic units of study, the few poems a student is required to study are not enough to provide students with the basic skills needed to read, decode, and appreciate the craft of poetic writing. Additionally, thematic units fail to teach the fundamentals of studying poetry and fail to wet student interest in the poetic genre. In fact, high school students seem to shy away from or vigorously protest when it comes time to study poetry. Often they are asked to read poems from the literary canon to which they can make no connection. The words are unfamiliar and the subject matter seems murky or even confusing to the adolescent reader.

This curriculum unit is designed to appeal to students in all high school grade levels, but most specifically for those students in the ninth grade. It is a unit that takes into careful consideration the urban student population in the city of Pittsburgh. As poetry is often seen as the most or at least a difficult form of literature, the unit has been planned in a way that invites students to participate in reading poems whose subjects are familiar to them.

The goal of my unit is to get students interested in reading poetry by exposing students to poems whose themes revolve around the idea of “city” and elements of the city. Additionally, these poems will illustrate the importance of the genre poetry both socially and historically. The unit will begin by establishing a history to and social relevance of poetry through the ages. As my experience

has proven, students often lack detailed understanding of history outside of that of American history; therefore, the historical background provided at the opening of this unit will include colonial American including the Puritans, the American Revolution and Civil War, the abolitionist and women's movements, and the Industrial Revolution. By briefly examining these historical periods and the poetry that accompanied them, students will develop an understanding of the social importance of poetry. This background will lead into the study of the development of the American city in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the urban poetry, including hip hop, which ensued. The goal of my curriculum unit is to provide a strong background in the social and historical events of the twentieth-century as they affect the American city and its culture; and in turn, examine the poetry that evolved.

Inner city students will be much more interested in reading and learning about poetry with topics that seem familiar to them. By choosing to examine poetry with familiar themes and utilizing various visual and auditory learning techniques, students will become more engaged and therefore more interested in the poetry studied. "City" items might include: skyscrapers, transportation, homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse, subsidized housing, downtown areas, unemployment, etc. Interest and understanding will foster an environment enabling students to grasp some of the more challenging ideas and literary devices with the poems themselves, later leading to ability and possibly the desire to read poems outside this theme.

### **Rationale**

After years of teaching in both private and public education, I have found that, typically, high school students hate studying poetry. For whatever reason, the minute you mention that you will be studying poetry, the classroom erupts into groans. I have always wondered why that is. I have made the assumption through the years that this hatred developed due to improper teaching of the subject matter or poor choice of the studied poems by the teacher. Whatever the reason, high school students are often not interested in reading poetry.

As a result, when I was ready to teach poetry, as I have done every year, I would choose poems not at all for their content but for what literary techniques I would hope the students would learn by the end of the unit. I focused on the students learning items such as simile and metaphor, irony, meter, and scansion, as in my opinion, those were literary terms that every student should learn and know. The problem was that I never really took into consideration whether the students understood the poems that they were reading, or if they could understand these literary devices in other pieces of literature. Because of the lack of interest, or in fact, the protests concerning poetry by the students, I simply plowed through

my lesson and moved onto something else. I never once thought that my teaching had failed. I never believed that my students walked away from the unit with absolutely no more than when they had begun.

I was fortunate this year to have two very eye-opening events coincide. Right around the time I began **The Pittsburgh Teachers Institute** seminar *Reading and Teaching Poetry*, I received my very first student teacher. I had just wrapped up *The Odyssey* and thought it would be a good idea to continue with the poetry idea. I decided to have my student teacher assume her first teaching responsibilities by completing a short poetry unit. She was a bit nervous, having never liked poetry herself. However, I was confident that she would do just fine since I had plotted out exactly what she would do in this unit. The unit was to cover the following literary techniques with a poem or two corresponding for each: *narrative poems, humor poems, limericks, poems that evoked imagery, denotation and connotation, metaphor, simile, personification, irony and paradox, and concrete poetry*. I had decided that it would be far too difficult with my current students for my student teacher to cover concepts such as meter, rhythm, and scansion, especially when she admittedly did not like studying poetry herself. I spared her thinking that I was doing her a favor, making it a nice easy unit.

The entire month-long unit was a flop. At first I attributed the failure to the student teacher's inexperience and lack of confidence. I grew angry looking around the room as the students tuned her out and with each day became less engaged in her lessons. On one occasion after a particularly horrible lesson with one of my toughest groups, she asked me if I would teach the next class hoping she could see where her mistakes lay. I was more than happy to take the reins again, hoping that she would be able to see why and where she had gone so horribly wrong. I felt charged after teaching what I believed was a very successful lesson on *denotation and connotation*. I guess in my mind, her mistakes seemed so painfully obvious; however, during our discussion afterward, she completely shocked me suggesting that our lessons had been virtually the same. In her mind, she had done pretty much the exact same lesson as I had. I became very upset with her discovery, and it haunted me for days. How could she possibly think that our lessons had been similar?

For days I thought about what she had said. It wasn't until I watched the student teacher give a review lesson the following week to the two groups, her denotation/connotation group and mine, that I realized that she had, in a way, been correct. What finally dawned on me was the fact that we had indeed taught the same materials, and the only difference had been in classroom management. The group I had instructed knew no more information than the group she had instructed. I simply thought my lesson was so much better because the students

were quiet and offered answers to my questions. They had, however, not retained any more of the information than the students in her group. I quickly realized that it was not the novice's fault but the problem lay in the poems I had chosen for her unit. For years I had been teaching poetry the wrong way. My students did not care about the materials, and they made no connections to what we read. They memorized what I told them they needed to know come exam time, and if they wanted to succeed in my class, they did it.

This stunning realization of my inability to teach poetry came during the same couple of weeks as heated discussions with my seminar fellows. After listening to the issues that the other fellows brought up in class, we seemed to agree that we faced all the same problems and issues when it came to teaching poetry. I began to think long and hard about what the problem was. Not only did I ponder the ideas that kept coming up over and over again in the seminar, but I thought very hard about where teachers lost high school students in the studying of poetry. I came to realize that it was the poems themselves that were the problem. They were complicated in language, tricky in theme, and, to the general high school student, boring in nature. Listening to the other fellows and watching my student teacher in action revealed the horrible nature of my previous poetry units. I shuddered at the thought of how many of my former students I failed to prepare for reading the poetic form. And although our curriculum intentions and topics were very different in nature, we seemed to wish for the same objective from the course.

The seminar participants seemed desperate to find a group of poems that would be interesting to our students. We examined and discussed many poems, agreeing on some and disagreeing on others. I began formulating in my mind the types of poems, or rather the subject matter, that I thought my students might latch onto and enjoy; and therefore, be able to extrapolate the meaning and understand the literary device. I was very moved by two of the segments or chapters in our seminar text *Poems, Poets, Poetry* by Helen Vendler. Vendler's examination of both *Poetry and Social Identity* and *History and Regionality* sparked my interest. Although I did not care for many of the poems she chose for these sections, her ideas were very potent. I began to focus my attention on the predominate ideas of these chapters as a means to arrive at a curriculum unit topic.

When I began serious thought about my curriculum unit, I decided that I needed to focus on the whole life of a student. What had they been exposed to throughout their lives. I thought a lot about my own five year old son and his seeming interest in the poetic form even at such a young age. The very first literature that children are exposed to is often poetic in nature. Parents and caregivers sing lullabies to calm and sooth the infant child and later retell the

nursery rhymes of their own childhood. These both tend to be rhyming in nature, which is often why we as older parents can remember the words decades after we ourselves heard them. The rhymes make them fun to read and recite to small children but also help to propel interest in books and reading as the child starts to get older. These early rhymes are often what aid early childhood and early elementary teachers to help their students make connections into the world of reading.

In elementary school, teachers often use rhyming words to help their students learn to read. Throughout elementary school, teachers will often read or have students read poetry without protest. Teachers have no problems infusing the curriculum with poetry in part because the poetic form is so familiar to their students but also because the subject matter of these poems is also familiar. Poems used during these primary grades are often short cute, rhyming poems that usually deal with something common and everyday in the life of a primary school child. Topics read might deal with weather, school, growing up, etc. Additionally, these poems are of interest to students because they use common and familiar language. Students do not have to struggle through the poem looking for some hidden meaning—it is right in front of them. In the elementary school years, poetry continues to be a fun and interesting literary genre for a child.

It must happen then somewhere in the middle school years. By the time students reach me in the ninth grade, they already know they have no desire to read poetry. Perhaps a few go untarnished, but the vast majority of students express their poetic disdain. Most likely it is in middle school where a teacher might first ask students to examine poems for horrible things such as *literary devices* or *writer's techniques*. It might be the first time that a student is exposed to a poem that they believe has a hidden meaning because they were unable to interpret it upon a first reading. And while many of them might have found some enjoyment when their teacher or another student uncovered its duplicity, many other students became put off. *Why doesn't the poet just come right out and say what he/she means? Why does it have to mean something deeper? Something esoteric? And how am I ever supposed to learn where those hidden meanings lay?*

The middle school years are ones of constant anxiety and insecurity for students. If all of a sudden they become unable to “read” a poem in the way they had before, their insecurities surrounding poetry will mount, subsequently leading to a hatred of poetry. A seemingly harmless middle school teacher might inadvertently be creating my later poetry-hating monster student. A child who falls behind in vocabulary or in learning the multiple meanings of words, will be unable to understand many poems that might be introduced. Additionally, the mere fact that poetry reading actually requires some sort of skill might be completely foreign to the child who is only used to the simple rhyming poems of

elementary school. I am not suggesting that middle school teachers should not introduce poetry of a more challenging nature. I do believe, however, that perhaps a very slow and methodical introduction is necessary. Making very clear connections between the literary devices and the simple, elementary poems might be one of the first steps to take with the middle school student. Additionally, a very close study of vocabulary prior to any poetic reading, might aid those students whose vocabulary skills are weak. Finally, I am of the firm belief that if teachers of these middle year students would continue, as the elementary teachers did before them, to choose poems fun and interesting in nature, then reading poetry might not be such a horrible thing in the mind of a burgeoning ninth grader.

The question that arose over the last few weeks of thinking about my young son who is learning how to read, about elementary and middle school students and teachers, about the failing attempt to teach poetry by my student teacher, and all in conjunction with what I've learned from the seminar is *how do I get my high school students interested in reading poetry?* What I have decided is that in order to get and keep my urban high school students' interest, I must choose a theme or subject matter that they understand, and it must be current. No dead poets that wrote about love or nature or death or someone or something else over 200 years ago. My urban student expresses absolutely no interest in something for which they cannot make a direct connection. This idea was driven home close to the end of the school year when I had my ninth graders prepare scrapbooks that focused on who they were, where they came from, and what they had accomplished in the 14 or 15 years of their lives. So many of my students had been affected by the nature of what went on in their neighborhoods. Poverty, violence, the city in essence, was a large part about what they focused. In fact, it was almost startling to me how much they shared as a group coming from, what I thought was many different backgrounds.

When it came time to really sit down and plan out my unit; the general idea of which had not changed much since its original inception, yet the scope of which had changed rather dramatically; the more I thought about this unifying subject or theme. It occurred to me that my unit theme was staring me in the face. The one thing that we all have in common is the city. As a result, the idea of the city—its noises, people, and things that all of us encounter everyday—became the impetus of my curriculum unit. Additionally, because I strongly believe in a somewhat cross-curricular examination of literature, always attempting to insert elements of subjects outside of literature, I wanted my unit to have a historical or social basis. I thought very seriously about how I could use the poems that would fit into Helen Vendler's idea of *Poetry and Social Identity* and/or *History and Regionality*.

## Objectives

It is my intention that the curriculum unit **Poetry and the City** will enable my students to maneuver through a thorough poetry unit from reading comprehension to literary analysis to the creative production of their own poetry using this theme. I will first engage my students in a two to three day lesson on the social and historical relevance of poetry, focusing on just a few events in history and matching them with a particular poem. These first lessons will include an introduction to the vocabulary studied throughout the unit. The students will discuss the vocabulary in terms of a working definition as well as being given the formal definition as paraphrased by *A Handbook to Literature (Sixth Edition)*.

At the conclusion of the introductory lessons, student will then discuss the idea of *CITY*, listing as many characteristics as possible (formulating a district initiative *WORD WALL*). Each day thereafter, students will read a “city” poem, beginning from the 1920s and the Harlem Renaissance to the 1950s Beat Poets to contemporary Urban poetry. The terms as laid forth in the first few lessons will be highlighted and reviewed as appropriate to each poet or poem (both the terms, poets, and poems may be modified to meet an instructors desired wishes for the unit). Students will also be expected to read the poems both silently and aloud, describing both the details of the poem’s subject as well as speaking about it in terms of the poet’s literary devices. The students’ summaries and generalizations will allow me to assess their overall understanding and comprehension.

The unit will culminate in each student or small groups of students writing original “city” poems on a theme of their choice. They will be asked to model their poem after their favorite poem from the unit. As a requirement, their poem must discuss some issue either socially or historically relevant. These poems will be shared and discussed with their peers.

## Strategies

I would like the progression of this unit to be one that builds or piggybacks on the previous lesson. A step by step approach that advances from the unit’s vocabulary words, to the listening of poems in conjunction with viewing photographs and listening to music, to discussing the poems in terms of their literary devices, to reading poems independently using learned strategies for comprehension, and finally writing poetry of their own. Approaching poetry in this manner, by covering the “housekeeping” items such as vocabulary in the early part of the unit, students can focus solely on the content and story of the poem rather than being bogged down in the poems devices. This will also help them later in the unit when they will be required to analyze and interpret the poems that they will

read independently. It is my intension that by covering the vocabulary at the beginning, I will be free to discuss only the poems content and simply aid my students in the analysis of the poem, pointing out important aspects and recognizing the devices used.

The unit will conclude by having students practice writing and speaking their original poems. The students will be responsible for generating their own “city” poems or rap song involving a critical social commentary and encouraging action for social justice (on a topic directly related to city life or living), choosing their favorite “city” poet to use as a model for their poems. Part of the evaluation process will include an oral discussion with both instructor and classmates on their topic and what their poem/rap song achieved. The final step will be the evaluation in which students will be able to compare and contrast two “city” poets or poems, provide interpretation for a new poem, or judging materials read based on their personal opinions.

My hope is that by creating a learning atmosphere that is non-threatening, in that the subject matter is very familiar to students, students will be open to learn new ideas and concepts. The subject of the “city” poems will be comfortable to the students, enabling the introduction of literary terms and devices.

Several of the Pennsylvania Department of Education Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening will be used within the confines of the **Poetry and the City** curriculum unit. The beginning of the unit will have students studying the vocabulary necessary to analyze the poetry. The vocabulary lessons will fall under Learning to Read Independently (E. Expand a reading vocabulary) and Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature (C. Analyze the effect of various literary devices and D. Identify poetic forms). The next step in the unit, having the students listen and respond to the poems read to them will fulfill the Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature and the Listen standards. Students will accomplish Learning to Read Independently and Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature (A. Read and understand works of Literature, B. Analyze the use of literary elements, and F. Read and respond to nonfiction and fiction) when they are responsible for reading chosen poems. Finally, when the students are responsible for writing and reciting their original poems, they will accomplish the Types of Writing (A. Write poems) and Speaking and Listening standards.

### **Classroom Activities**

#### Vocabulary

The students will construct a vocabulary list that will be the start of the poets, poems, and notes for the unit. The list will be constructed chronologically according to the order of the information given in each lesson. All definitions were taken from the Sixth Edition of *A Handbook to Literature*. The following literary terms, techniques and poetic devices will comprise the vocabulary list:

Poem:	A cultural artifact of some sort.
Poetry:	A term applied to the many forms in which human beings have given rhythmic expression to their most intense perceptions of the world, themselves, and the relation of the two. Poetry adds to our store of knowledge or experience.
Lyric:	(450-700 AD--Beowulf ) A poem strongly marked by imagination, melody, and emotion. The history of this form of poetry starts almost with the beginnings of our literature and is the most broad of all the various types of verse. It includes: HYMNS, SONNETS, SONGS, BALLADS, ODES, ELEGIES.
Hymn:	A poem expressing religious emotion and generally intended to be sung by a chorus.
Sonnet:	A poem consisting of 14 lines that follows a specific rhyme scheme (most popular abab dcde efef gg).
Song:	A lyric poem adapted to musical expression.
Ballad:	A form of verse to be sung or recited and characterized by its presentation of a dramatic or exciting episode written in simply narrative form.
Ode:	A single, unified strain of lyrical verse, directed to a single purpose, and dealing with one theme. Originally the ode was choral and was accompanied by music. The rhyme pattern need not be maintained and the metrical movement will quicken and slow with the mood and emotional intensity of the poem.
Elegy:	A sustained and formal poem setting form meditations on death or another solemn theme. Up through the end of the seventeenth century elegy could mean both a love poem and a poem of mourning.
Alliteration:	The repetition of initial consonant sounds or any vowel sounds in successive or closely associated syllables
Blank Verse:	Unrhymed but otherwise regular verse, commonly used for long poems whether dramatic, philosophic, or narrative.
Connotation:	The emotional implications and associations that words may carry, as distinguished from their dictionary definition.
Denotation:	The basic meaning of a word.

Harlem Renaissance:	The first major literary movement of African-American writers that occurred in Harlem as a result of the massive migration to northern cities after the First World War.
Beat Poets:	American poets of the 1950s and 1960s in romantic rebellion against what they conceived of as the American culture.
Light Verse:	Humorous, comic, witty poems (such as parody and limerick).
Narrative Poetry:	A poem that tells a story.
New York School:	A group of American poets who flourished between 1950 and 1970, distinguished by urbanity, wit, and exuberance.
Rap:	Improvised rhymed verse sung or chanted to a recorded instrumental music. The verse tends to be in rhymed lines of dimeter or tetrameter.
Rhyme Scheme:	The pattern in which rhyme sounds occur in a stanza.
Rhythm:	The passage of regular or approximately equal time intervals between definite events or the recurrence of specific sounds or kinds of sound.
Stanza:	A recurrent grouping of two or more verse lines in terms of length, metrical form, and, often, rhyme scheme. Similar to a prose paragraph.
Tone:	The attitude a poet takes toward the subject in a literary work.
Simile:	When the similarity between two objects is directly expressed using the words <i>like</i> or <i>as</i> . Similes are generally a comparison between two unlike objects.
Metaphor:	A comparison identifying one object with another and ascribing to the first object one or more of the qualities of the second.
Irony:	A broad term referring to the recognition of a reality different from appearance. Best identified in speech rather than writing.

#### American Historical & Social Timeline

Colonial Period (1607-1765): Marked by three very distinct types of poetry:  
 Native American oral tradition, which dealt with primarily myths and legends (the subjects might cover creation, migration, healing, or tricksters);  
 puritanical literature from New England, which aimed to educate and execute God's will (those from poets Anne Bradstreet and Edward Taylor or prose authors Jonathan Edwards and Cotton

Matter); and literature of the southern and middle colonies, reflecting the social and economic conditions of the area (including William Byrd and the first black American to write an autobiography, Olaudah Equiano, or the first black poet, Jupiter Hammon).

Revolutionary Period  
(1765-1830) :

Which involved poems such as Philip Freneau who wrote angrily against the British and in favor of liberty in America including is poems “To the Memory of Brave Americans” and “American Liberty”.

Romantic & Realistic  
Periods (1830-1900):

By combining these two literary periods, we can illustrate a broad range of poets and poems including female; abolitionist and black American; and the first “city” writers from Whitman to the “Chicago School” of Poetry.

Day One & Two

### *Goals*

This two to three day lesson will introduce the vocabulary particular to the unit, provide students with the opportunity to briefly discuss American history and times of social relevance, and discuss the literary form of poetry and why it is used.

### *Objectives:*

The students will be able to:

- 1). discuss the literary terms and styles on list in common/plain terms, formulating a working definition, reviewing the actual definition, and writing these definitions on one list to be used for review during the entire unit.
- 2) Generate a list or timeline of important periods in American history.
- 3) Place items within an actual timeline, copying into English notebook
- 4) Discuss the importance of the poetic form (answering the question: *Why write poetry?*)
- 5) review and discuss particular poems in regards to their

social and historical relevance.

*Procedure:*

I believe that students benefit from discussing, constructing a working definition, and then writing out the definitions or explanations for vocabulary words, rather than simply reading and reviewing definitions. Therefore, each vocabulary word will be presented to the class, briefly discussed aloud (asking students to volunteer potential definitions or explanations for each), and then written on the board or overhead projector for students to copy into their English notebook. It will be required that they keep this list somewhere accessible, so we are able to access it daily. Students will then have the opportunity to add an example for each if they choose. Additionally, students will create a Word Wall using the terms put forth in this unit. This will allow for a visual stimulator within the classroom that will help to serve as a constant reminder for the unit's terms.

To aid students in the development of an American social and historical timeline, a generic heading will be placed on the board or via overhead projector. In addition, a sample timeline will be drawn on the board and students will have the opportunity to fill in what they believe are important events in American history and social evolution. These events will be listed on the side and then later placed appropriately within the timeline. In advance of the lesson, poems will be chosen that highlight some of the events that students may have placed within the timeline. These poems or excerpts will be placed on transparencies to be used on an overhead projector. After the timeline exercise has been completed, I will lead the class in a reading of several poems according to their relevance to the events chosen. Placing the poems on the overhead projector will allow for the students to read along without having to make multiple copies of poems that are only to serve as examples and will not be used during the final evaluation.

Samples or examples of such poems could include: The American Revolution—Philip Freneau's "American Liberty" or "George the Third's Soliloquy"; The American Civil War—"O Captain! My Captain" or others by Walt Whitman, Abolitionist—"Get off the Tracks" by Jesse Huchinson; and follow along in that sort of order, making sure to include poems by women during the suffrage movement and the first black poets. It is important to illustrate to students the nature of the more complicated language and poetic styles. The idea merely is to illustrate how poetry has, throughout its literary history, often served as a recorder of social and historical events. Using poems to illustrate this occurrence in American history will enable the students simply to see the value of poetry as a literary form, setting the stage for the lessons to come.

## Day Three/Four

### *Goal:*

As an anticipatory set, I will lead a discussion about what items students think of when thinking about the word “city”. Students will construct a list of these items. Students will then read along with their first “city” poem and discuss the pertinent literary elements in relationship to the vocabulary list given on the first day of the unit.

### *Objective:*

The student will be able to:

- 1) read and discuss the poem and its subject aloud.
- 2) Discuss the poem’s relevance both socially and historically.
- 3) Discuss the literary terms and techniques in regard to the poem.

### *Procedure:*

Because students have such a difficult time studying and understanding poetry and its themes, by developing a unit which focuses on a theme in which all urban students are familiar, the city, it is my hope that they will be able to extrapolate the meaning, understand the poet’s intended purpose, and even discuss the poem in terms of its poetic elements.

All lessons will proceed in a similar fashion. Students will be given a brief introduction or background before reading the poem. This background might include some biographical information on the poet to acclimate the students with the poet’s relevance as a social commentator.

Poems will be read aloud either by me or by a student volunteer. I am very picky, however, and only allow students to read poems that I believe they can handle and read well. I believe that understanding a poem can often begin with hearing it read aloud. If a reading is not done well, it will not aid in but can often hinder the understanding of a poem. After each reading, a brief discussion of the poems rhythm and cadence will commence. I will ask students if they know of any songs that have a similar rhythm, or if they believe the poem could be read differently, placing it within the rhythm of a familiar song.

Afterwards I will lead the students in a discussion of the poem’s meaning, which will oftentimes be obvious because of the nature of the “city” poems and

unit. Understanding the poem's theme, however, will enable the students to determine the tone of the poem. *Why did the poet write this poem? What was the poet trying to convey to his/her readers?*

Finally, students will be expected to identify and discuss the poem in relation to the vocabulary terms on the list from the beginning of the unit. Since it is my assertion that because students will not have trouble determining the poem's meaning, they will be able to decipher and understand the more complicated literary techniques found within the poem.

#### City Poems to Consider

Carl Sandburg	<i>Chicago</i> <i>Ready to Kill</i> <i>Skyscraper</i>
Ezra Pound	<i>In a Station of the Metro</i>
Edna St. Vincent Millay	<i>MacDougal Street</i>
Ogden Nash	<i>Lines Indited with all the Depravity of Poverty</i>
Adrienne Rich	<i>From an Atlas of the Difficult World</i> <i>Prospective Immigrants Please Note</i>
Sherman Alexie	<i>Capital Punishment</i>
Martin Espada	<i>Sleeping on the Bus</i>
Robert C. Fuentes	<i>In this Place</i>
Raymond Patterson	<i>Harlem Suite</i>
Lawrence Ferlinghetti	<i>A Vast Confusion</i> <i>Manhattan Mamma</i> <i>The Changing Light</i>
Jean Toomer	<i>Cane</i> <i>African American Life in Washington D.C.</i>
Tupac Shakur	<i>I Cry</i> <i>The Rose that Grew From Concrete</i> <i>And Tomorrow</i>
Rusty Broadspear	<i>The City</i>
Paul Carr	<i>After Rain</i>
Cynthia L. Hoefling	<i>City Trip</i>
Gary Soto	<i>Minimum Wage</i>
Allen Ginsberg	<i>Howl</i> <i>A Supermarket in California</i>
John Berryman	<i>Dream Song 149</i>
Hart Crane	<i>To Brooklyn Bridge</i>

#### Additional Poets to Consider

Luis Omar Salinas  
Amiri Baraka  
Maya Angelou  
Michael Harper  
Karl Shapiro  
Irving Feldman  
Gregory Corso  
Langston Hughes  
Countee Cullen  
Dorothy Parker  
Helen Bevington  
Frank O'Hara

## Annotated Bibliography/Resources

*Academy of American Poets*. 1997-2003

<<http://www.poets.org>>

This web site offers a brief biography of researched poets along with providing links to several poems.

*American Poems*.

<<http://www.americanpoems.com>>.

The web site allows the viewer to research various American poets, their biographies and poems.

Appel, Alfred. *Jazz Modernism: From Ellington and Armstrong to Matisse and Joyce*. Knopf, 2002

Illustrating a link from Jazz to other areas of art including painting and literature.

Appel, Alfred. *Art of Celebration: Twentieth-Century Painting, Literature, Sculpture, Photography and Jazz*. Knopf, 1992.

A look at several aspects of twentieth-century culture and art.

Athanases, Steven Z.; Christiano, David; Drexler, Susan. *Family Gumbo: Urban Students respond to Contemporary Poets of Color*. *English Journal*. V. 81. September, 1992. Pages 45-54.

An examination by students of poets and their poems.

Bloom, Harold. *Langston Hughes*. Chelsea House, 1989.

A biography examining the life and works of Harlem Renaissance poet and essayist Langston Hughes.

Crane, Hart. *Illustrated Editions of **The Bridge**: the Walker Evans Photographs of 1930*.

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Literary criticism of poetry and companion photographs of Hart Crane and Walker Evans.

Delpit, Lisa. *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*. The New Press. New York, 1995.

Delpit examines how successful educators have reached their students of other race and ethnic backgrounds. Additionally, she discusses teacher expectations of students of color.

- Education Week. *Voices from the City*. Vol. 29. March 9, 1994. Pages 30-1.  
Covers many different styles of urban poetry.
- Gavin, Philip. *The History Place*. July 4, 1996.  
<<http://www.historyplace.com>>  
This site provides photographs and brief historical background for several eras in American history.
- Holman, Hugh C and Harmon, William. *A Handbook to Literature: Sixth Edition*. Macmillan Publishing Company. New York. 1992.  
This reference book provides a listing and explanation of terms useful in the study of literature.
- Ladson-Billings, Gloria. *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*. Jossey-Bass Publishers. San Fransisco, 1997.  
An examination of teachers who have successfully reached and taught African American children, and the tactics they employed.
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## Appendix

### Standards

Academic Standard for Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening by the Pennsylvania Department of Education met by **Poetry and the City**.

- 1.1 Learning to Read Independently
  - D. Identify basic facts and ideas in text using specific strategies
  - E. Expand a reading vocabulary by identifying and correctly using idioms and words with literal and figurative meanings.
  - H. Demonstrate fluency and comprehension in reading.
  
- 1.3 Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature
  - A. Read and understand works of literature.
  - B. Analyze the use of literary elements.
  - C. Analyze the effects of various literary devices.
  - D. Identify poetic forms.
  - E. Read and respond to nonfiction and fiction.
  
- 1.4 Types of Writing
  - A. Write poems
  
- 1.6 Speaking and Listening
  - B. Listen to selections of literature
  - D. Contribute to discussions