

LESSON PLAN: "THE CORNER: SMALLER PLACES & THE POEMS IN FRONT OF OUR NOSES"

*ADAPTED FROM THE YOUNG CHICAGO AUTHORS' CURRICULUM FOR POETRYN.O.W.

OBJECTIVE: To have students write in thick detail a specific spot they see and/or visit on a regular basis.

KEY TERMS:	Imagery - Vivid descriptive language that appeals to the senses.	
STANDARDS:	Virginia 9.1, 9.3 – 12.3 F, 9.4 A, C-M, 9.6 – 10.6 A E, 9.6 B, D, E, H, 10.6 C, F, 12.7 A	Common Core <i>Reading</i> Grades 6-8: 2, 4, 6, 9 Grades 9-12: 2, 4 <i>Writing</i> Grades 6-8: 3.b-d, 4, 5 Grades 9-12: 3.a-d, 4, 5 <i>Speaking and Listening</i> Grades 6-8: 2 Grades 9-12: 2 <i>Language Standards</i> Grades 6-8: 3, 5 Grades 9-12: 3, 5

INTRODUCTION:	Ask students to write a list of their favorite spots to hang out in their neighborhood, in their city, in the country, in the world. Any place is applicable, but it must be a place that they know well and visit fairly often. Have them also write down various street intersections that they know well and that are important to them.
STEP ONE:	Listen to Common's "The Corner" and then read Ellis's and Lansana's poems.
STEP TWO:	Ask students what they like and remember about these pieces. Note the rich and vivid details, as well as the specific, familiar, and seemingly mundane locations of these places.
STEP THREE:	Have students select one location from their list.

STEP FOUR:

Write a story or a scene from that location, using imagery and information.
Stress that the more specific the writing, the better.

Have students write for 10-15 minutes, encouraging them to fill an entire page. Then stop writing and read around.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

"Block Party" by Thomas Sayers Ellis

A permit is obtained
In advance. Orange, fluorescent
Pylons are placed in the middle
Of the street at both ends
Of the block. No thru traffic,
Nowhere to park.

Weather allows
Word to spread like
A sexually transmitted disease.
Streetwise, one big
Virus, bacon grease,
The epicenter of an itch.

Expect groove, good junk,

Chitlin' buckets. The DJ is
Too old to be still
Living at home,
Every summer turning
His mama's front yard

Into a radio station.
A garden of plastic crates,
Wax irises, small reels
Of weeds, two turntables
And a microphone,
Headphones flipped forward

Like the face guard
On a football helmet.
Spin doctor, athlete, star.
Expect old folks, night
Owls perched on porches,
Peering out dark windows.

Expect youngins,
Ripping and running,
High on sugar, salt, sun.
Sodas, burgers, dogs. Bass booming,
Booming again, and backing
Away like thunder.

A synthesized bomb
Parts the crowd. Roadies
In flare-red jumpers
Work like hustlers,
Plugging things in
And taking things out.

A sea of us wave
And go ho, pumping
Our fists like fists.
The street stretches like skin,
Curbs distant as shores,
Rival congregations, storms.

“sixty third & cottage grove” by Quraysh Ali Lansana

a new abandoned canopy promises
ghost train rides while providing refuge
from the backstabbing moonlight

twenty-four hour corner summit
meeting midnight minds inside workshirts
stained beyond wear demands for attention

greasy spoons fall by the northside
neon flickering convenience and no surprise
amidst the despair are smiles
true enough to call home

working women wait on tips gracefully
side-stepping after dinner invitations
heads held high, serving retort

salmon patties pepper p.m. hunger pangs
addressing eggs scrambled beyond indifference
as is our waitress, with too many tables