

# LESSON PLAN: "BATTLE POEMS: THE ELEVATION"

\*ADAPTED FROM THE YOUNG CHICAGO AUTHORS' CURRICULUM FOR POETRY N.O.W.

**OBJECTIVE:** To have students write epistolary (letter) poems to someone or some idea that needs to be addressed.

<p><u>KEY TERMS:</u></p>	<p><b>Battle poem</b> – Writing that addresses a particular dislike or issue.  <b>Critical Discourse</b> – A discussion or expression by which something is criticized.  <b>Rant</b> - To speak or write in an angry or violent manner.</p>	
<p><u>STANDARDS:</u></p>	<p><b>Virginia</b>            9.1, 10.1 D I, 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, 11.6 – 12.6 A, 11.6 E, 12.6 D, 12.7 A</p>	<p><b>Common Core</b></p> <p><i>Reading</i>            Grades 6-8: 1, 2, 4, 6            Grades 9-12: 1-4, 6</p> <p><i>Writing</i>            Grades 6-8: 3.b-d, 4, 5            Grades 9-12: 3.a-d, 4, 5</p> <p><i>Speaking and Listening</i>            Grades 6-8: 1.b-d            Grades 9-12: 1.c-d</p> <p><i>Language Standards</i>            Grades 6-8: 3, 5            Grades 9-12: 3, 5</p>

<u>INTRODUCTION:</u>	Read Rodriguez's and Berez's poems and ask students how they felt about the poems. Ask why these poems were written. Why are the authors upset? What are they upset about?
<u>STEP ONE:</u>	Have students return to their battle rhyme list from "Who Wanna Battle: Verbal War in Forms." Select another person or idea from that list.
<u>STEP TWO:</u>	Have students write a battle poem/letter to that person or idea for 10-15 minutes, encouraging them to fill an entire page. Then stop writing and read around.

## ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

**“to the police officer who refused to sit in the same room as my son because he’s a ‘gang banger’” by Luis Rodriguez**

For Ramiro

How dare you!  
How dare you pull this mantle from your  
soiled  
sleeve and think it worthy enough to cover  
my boy.  
How dare you judge when you also wallow  
in this mud.  
Society has turned over its power to you,  
relinquishing its rule, turned it over  
to the man in the mask, whose face never  
changes,  
always distorts, who does not live where I  
live,  
but commands the corners, who does not  
have to await  
the nightmares, the street chants, the  
bullets,  
the early-morning calls, but looks over at  
us  
and demeans, calls us animals, not worthy  
of his presence, and I have to say: How  
dare you!  
My son deserves to live as all young  
people.  
He deserves a future and a job. He  
deserves  
contemplation. I can’t turn away as you.  
Yet you govern us? Hear my son’s talk.

Hear his plea within his pronouncement,  
his cry between the breach of his hard  
words.  
My son speaks in two voices, one of a boy,  
the other of a man. One is breaking  
through,  
the other just hands. Listen, you who can  
turn away,  
who can make such a choice—you who  
have sons  
of your own, but do not hear them!  
My son has a face too dark, features too  
foreign,  
a tongue too tangled, yet he reveals, he  
truths,  
he sings your demented rage, but he  
sings.  
You have nothing to rage because it is  
outside of you.  
He is inside of me. His horror is mine. I see  
what  
he sees. And if my son dreams, if he plays,  
if he smirks  
in the mist of moon-glow, there I will be,  
smiling  
through the blackened, cluttered and  
snarling pathway  
toward your wilted heart.

**“Poem for Wicker Park Yuppies (A True Story)” by Kim Berez**

You people  
 talk about travesties, Eurodollar exchange  
 rates  
     in a foreign land  
     I can't find on a map  
 'cuz I went to Chicago public schools  
 & maybe 'cuz I barely been out of the  
 neighborhood still

You know what's happening all around the  
 world  
 but you don't know what's going on all in  
 front of your face

Hey! I said you people so well informed  
 reading the paper all morning in Café  
 Purgatory  
 sipping \$2 a cup herb tea from filtered  
 water with no bugspray in it  
 or \$4 a cup organically grown coffee  
     from only companies that don't exploit  
 Nicaraguans

How wonderful to have that choice!  
 Instead if hunting for a decent-paying job  
 here  
 To pay the ever increasing rents  
     to cover the ever increasing taxes  
     here where the yuppies ever increase

You people walk around blinded by your  
 focus  
     on worlds so far removed  
 Deafened by constant anal-ization of the  
 world inside yourself  
 Can't you open one eye and see what was  
 in front of your nose ISN'T

What's missing from this picture?  
 One less teenage hoodlum to have to pass  
 on the street  
 nervously with your 'significant other'  
 If you noticed you'd think *changing*  
*demographics*

But what's missing here  
 WAS  
 MY COUSIN

My cousin Ricky                      was-blown-  
 away

Right here on the corner where you live  
 your 'pioneering' life

We buried him  
 while your face was buried in *USA Today*  
 B E Z droning in your earphones  
     deafening your senses  
     to such nuisance

& Ricky does not sleep nights no more  
 so he walks around in my dreams

He's not carrying the pieces the cops  
 found him with  
 He's just a boy with restless legs  
 Just a number now to read with your coffee  
 and scorn  
 I mean scone