

Who Am I and Where Am I? A Place-Based Poetry Unit

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Abstract

This curriculum unit is designed for middle school students who receive learning support services for reading and writing. In this unit, students will read, analyze, and write poetry in order to explore the relationship between identity and geography. They will read five mentor texts and consider: Which aspect(s) of the writer's identity is salient? How does this interact with their location, region, and space/place to impact their experience? They will also draft three of their own place-based poems, while considering: What makes me who I am? Where am I when I am "myself"? This instruction will research-based methods to improve students' reading fluency, reading comprehension, vocabulary, and written expression skills.

Keywords

Poetry, middle school, special education, fluency instruction, comprehension instruction, writing instruction, identity development, place-based learning

Content Objectives

Problem Statement

Elementary and middle school students with high-incidence learning disabilities who receive Learning Support services in the School District of Philadelphia rarely have opportunities to engage with culturally relevant place-based learning that involves student choice and voice.

Since these students have been identified as needing research-based intervention services, they are usually “pulled out” from the general education environment for approximately half of their literacy and math block every day. For most students, this means that they are exposed to the whole-group lesson for the day and then leave to work with a special education teacher. During their time with the special education teacher, they usually get direct, explicit instruction from a scripted intervention program. While these programs incorporate research-based practices that are vital to allowing students to make meaningful progress in literacy and math, they are one-size-fits-all programs that do not address students’ individual culture, interests, or location.

In addition, existing curricula for learning support students often emphasize read-alouds and independent seatwork. In doing so, they fail to provide opportunities for interaction and discussion. As a result, they deny students the chance to engage in higher-order thinking and collaborate with their peers to strengthen their understanding of texts.

Special education teachers in the School District of Philadelphia must find ways to use research-based intervention practices that will help their students to make progress while also: (1) engaging students with interesting lessons that relate to their lives and interests (2) providing opportunities for collaboration and discussion.

The content of the Teachers Institute of Philadelphia Seminar about viewing the city through the lenses of race, class, and gender is highly relevant to students’ lived experiences. I used the content of the Teachers Institute of Philadelphia seminar in order to plan an engaging, place-based poetry unit appropriate for middle school students who receive learning support services. The unit will incorporate research-based intervention

practices that are necessary for students with learning disabilities, opportunities for students to analyze and write place-based poetry to interrogate their own identity within their larger geographic context, and extensive discussion and collaboration.

The Cities Through the Lens of Race, Class, and Gender Seminar

At the outset of the “Cities Through the Lens of Race, Class, and Gender” seminar, we delved into the critical concepts of geography, which include location, region, distance, scale, and space/place. After this introduction to key geographical concepts, I began thinking that my curriculum unit would have students analyze their own personal “geographies.” We would read and write texts that explore our physical place in the world and how it interacts with aspects of our identity.

In a subsequent session, we analyzed poetry and songs about individuals’ experiences in the city. The poems and songs relayed a range of playful, prideful, and sorrowful accounts of writers’ experiences in the city. For instance, we read Wanda Coleman’s “I Live for My Car,” a lively tribute to her old but well-loved convertible car that is vital to her life in Los Angeles. We also read teen poet Afiya Ervin’s “I Almost Forgot,” a haunting comparison between the poet’s love for the city of Baltimore and the media’s portrayal of the city during protests after the death of Freddie Gray.

Discussing these poems encouraged me to incorporate songs and poems into my curriculum unit as a method of exploring our experiences in the city. I began planning to have students read and analyze mentor poems and then write their own poems about interactions between themselves (and different aspects of their identity such as race, class,

gender, age, nationality, language, etc.) and the city. In my independent research, I discovered high-interest poems that highlight the interaction between the poet's identity and their city environment, including, "For the Taxi Cabs that Pass Me in Harvard Square," by Clint Smith and "In Colorado My Father Scoured and Stacked Dishes" by Eduardo C. Corral.

I subsequently discussed my initial thoughts about focusing on the relationship between identity and geography during a conversation with our seminar leader Dr. Sanders. Dr. Sanders introduced me to the Soja's (1980) concept of the "socio-spatial dialectic." Soja proposed that social and spatial structures are "dialectically linked, in that each shapes and is simultaneously shaped by the other in a complex interrelationship which may vary in different social formations and at different historical conjunctures." (p. 225). For my students, examining the "socio-spatial dialectic" could involve analyzing the relationship between poets' social identities (race, class, gender) and their spatial surroundings. They could also examine their own "socio-spatial dialectic" by writing poetry that considers the two-way relationship between their identities and their spatial surroundings.

In a subsequent class session, we discussed intersectionality and how it interacts with geography. This class session helped me to understand that intersectionality is not simply the idea that our identity lies at the intersection of different characteristics (race, class, gender, sexuality, etc.). Rather, intersectionality refers to the idea that systems of oppression overlap so that it is impossible to experience the world solely as one's race, class, or gender.

As a result of this discussion, I began to consider how intersectionality might come into play in my curriculum unit. Not only could our poetry discussions center around different aspects of poets' identity and how those aspects interact with the city environment, but we could also analyze how different aspects of the poet's identity intersect to create their experience. For instance, Clint Smith's experience in, "For the Taxi Cabs that Pass Me in Harvard Square," is not solely about experiencing racism when hailing a cab. It is an account specifically about being a Black man who attends an Ivy League school and his particular experience at that intersection of oppression and privilege.

For the same class session, our seminar leader Dr. Sanders asked us to consider: Name 3 aspects of your identity: which do you foreground - where/when/why? This sparked an idea for how to translate the concept of intersectionality into something tangible for my students when they begin writing their own place-based poems. By asking them to first identify aspects of their identity that are important and then asking them to identify places where those aspects are salient, I could elicit stronger poems that communicate their varied experiences.

In a later seminar sessions, we discussed Irazábal and Huerta's (2016) article about city planning for LGBTQ youth of color and we delved into the concept of "performative reflexivity." Turner (1986) defined this as a condition by which people 'turn, bend, or reflect back upon themselves, upon their relations, actions, symbols, meanings, codes, statuses, social structures, ethical and legal rules, and other socio-cultural components which make up their public selves," (p. 24). As a group, we tried to parse the meaning of

“performative reflexivity.” While some of us believed that the word “performance” carried some negative connotation, we discussed that people often perform various aspects of their identity depending on where they are.

Our class discussion sparked my thinking around the idea of “performance” and its relevance to adolescents. My students frequently perform different aspects of their identity as they experiment with how they present themselves to the world. Moreover, students frequently critique each other about variability in their performance (“Since when do you like anime?” “Why are you suddenly so girly?” etc.). As part of considering the relationship between their identity and their geography, students could analyze where and when they perform various aspects of their identity. Through these discussions, I would hope to ease students' concerns about being “fake,” since we are all performing different aspects of ourselves all the time.

We covered many more topics during the Cities Through the Lens of Race, Class, and Gender Seminar, including Stuart Hall’s models of communication, Elijah Anderson’s cosmopolitan canopy, and gentrification in West Philadelphia. However, the discussions about poetry, the “socio-spatial dialectic,” intersectionality, and performance resonated the most with me as I considered which concepts would be most conducive to discussion and collaboration with my students. These concepts formed the basis of my content objectives for the unit.

Content Objectives Related to the Cities Seminar

As I began to consider how to connect the seminar on Cities Through the Lens of Race, Class, and Gender to a curriculum unit that would benefit my students, I concluded

that reading and writing poetry would allow us to engage with seminar content in a way that was exciting and approachable to my students.

Developmentally, my middle school students are exploring their own identity and their place in the world. Students arrive to my class every day with quickly evolving interests, beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, styles, and communication methods as they experiment with who they want to be and how they want to present themselves to the world. Research suggests that schools can unintentionally and intentionally play a critical role in this process of adolescent identity development. Verhoeven, Poorthuis, and Volman (2019) conducted a literature review which, “showed that different types of explorative learning experiences can be organized to support adolescents’ identity development: experiences aimed at exploring new identity positions (in-breadth exploration), further specifying already existing self-understandings (in-depth exploration), and reflecting on self-understandings (reflective exploration).” My goal is to devise a curriculum unit that serves as a venue for in-depth exploration and reflective exploration of students’ identities.

Teachers and youth leaders have used reading, writing, and performing poetry as a venue for identity exploration and construction (Rudd, 2012). The nature of reading and writing poetry provides an opportunity to engage with critical concepts from the TIP seminar, including intersectionality, performance, and interaction between the individual and their geography.

As a result of these considerations about how to translate the content of the TIP seminar to a unit that meets my students’ needs, I concluded that my unit would consist of two main objectives:

1. Students will be able to analyze poetry to describe the interaction between an individual's identity and their location, region, and space/place. They will consider: Which aspect(s) of the writer's identity is salient? How does this interact with their location, region, and space/place to impact their experience?
2. Students will be able to write poetry that describes their interactions between their identities and location, region, and space/place. They will consider: What makes me who I am? Where am I when I am "myself"?

Content Objectives Related to Students' Individualized Education Plan Goals

As discussed above, the content of the curriculum unit will explore the interaction between identity and place through the consumption and creation of place-based poetry. However, as a special education teacher, I must also ensure that the unit is designed to meet the literacy goals of students' Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

By middle school, most students with learning disabilities have IEP goals for improving their reading fluency, vocabulary, comprehension skills, and writing ability.

Reading fluency is a student's ability to read accurately at an appropriate rate to facilitate comprehension. Many adolescents with learning disabilities have learned how to decode text but still require explicit instruction in how to read fluently. The most common intervention for improving reading fluency is repeated reading, in which students engage with a text multiple times through hearing it from a teacher, peer, or audiobook and then reading it on their own until they are able to fluently read the text (Hughes & Kubina, 2008). This unit is very conducive to repeated reading because it includes relatively short

poems. We will read each poem first with an audiobook or teacher read-aloud. Then, as we discuss, students will have the opportunity to read stanzas aloud or do partner reading.

The unit also aims to improve students' **reading comprehension** by incorporating is comprehension strategy instruction. Struggling readers often need to be explicitly taught “what good readers do” in order to make meaning of text. This includes pre-reading strategies such as previewing the text and activating background knowledge, self-monitoring comprehension during reading and fixing comprehension breakdowns, summarizing during reading, and asking and answering questions after reading. I teach these strategies at the beginning of the year as part of the Collaborative Strategic Reading framework and we will continue to use them during this unit to bolster students' comprehension skills (Cavendish & Hodnett, 2017).

Another literacy skill that the unit targets is students' **vocabulary development**. For many students with learning disabilities, limited vocabulary impedes their comprehension of new texts. One research-based strategy for improving vocabulary is using keyword mnemonic pictures to teach new words. For example, to help students to remember that a scow is a type of boat, you would point out that “scow” sounds like “cow” and present a picture of a cow sitting in a boat. When students are later presented with the word during reading (scow), they will be able to think of the keyword (cow) and the picture (the cow sitting in the boat) to remember the definition (boat) (The Iris Center, 2013). For this unit, I will select 3-5 new vocabulary words per poem and briefly present keyword mnemonic images for those words before reading. Since I frequently use this strategy in

the classroom, I also encourage students to come up with their own keyword mnemonic images during some lessons.

Finally, many students require writing interventions to assist with their **written expression skills**. High-leverage practices for writing instruction include allowing students to use word processors for writing assignments, teaching steps for the writing process, providing graphic organizers, and modeling strategies to use with each step of the writing process (Gillespie & Graham, 2014). When students create their own place-based poems, I will model and provide students with strategic steps for brainstorming, planning, drafting, and revising their poems. I will also provide graphic organizers (see Appendices) to scaffold their writing.

Content Objectives Related to Common Core Standards and Poetry

Not only do learning support teachers address students' needs related to their IEP goals, but they also seek to scaffold instruction so that students can also access grade-level skills and standards. In this unit, students will read, analyze, discuss, and write poetry in order to meet middle school Common Core Standards. While this unit is designed specifically with 7th grade standards, it can be used to meet standards in the 6-8-grade band.

When students read and analyze the selected poems, they will be working on **grade-level standards related to reading literature**. They will improve their ability to, “analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot),” “determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text,” “analyze

the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama,” and “read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.”

When students discuss the meaning of the selected poems, they will be **working on grade-level standards related to speaking and listening**. They will improve their ability to, “engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.”

Finally, when students write their own original poetry, they will be working on **grade-level standards related to writing**. They will improve their ability to, “Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences,” “use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events,” and “develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.” By publishing their writing on a collaborative Google Map, they will be able to, “use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and link to and cite sources as well as to interact and collaborate with others.”

Teaching Strategies

The teaching strategies involved in this unit will target both the content objectives related to the Cities seminar as well as the academic objectives related to the students' Individualized Education Plans and Common Core State Standards.

Before the Unit: Pre-Assessments. Before engaging with the unit, students will complete a pre-test comprehension probe, reading fluency probe, and curriculum based writing probe. These measures will serve as the baseline for students' performance, which will continue to be monitored during and after the unit.

Before the Unit: Activating Background Knowledge. One important comprehension strategy for students with learning disabilities is activating and using background knowledge when reading. During the first lesson, we will do a "This or That" anticipatory walk to activate background knowledge and interest. I will present a series of statements such as, "People are always affected by their surroundings. It's important to act the exact same way no matter where you are. Everyone has one part of themselves that makes them who they are." One side of the room will be designated as the "Agree" side and the other side will be the "Disagree" side. Students will move to the side of the room that reflects their beliefs and take turns defending their positions. This will also serve as an informal pre-assessment of their thinking around identity, intersectionality, performance, and place.

During the Unit: Vocabulary Instruction, Comprehension Instruction, and Graphic Organizers to Support Reading Comprehension. Over the subsequent lessons, we will read the poems "5 South 43rd St, Floor 2" by Yoland Wisher, excerpts from "On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous," "For the Taxi Cabs that Pass Me in Harvard Square" by Clint Smith, "I

Almost Forgot,” by Afiyah Ervin, and “Accents” by Denice Frohman. For each text, I will pre-teach key vocabulary words with keyword mnemonics. As we read, we will utilize evidence-based comprehension instructional practices, including previewing the text to activate background knowledge, summarizing during reading, fixing comprehension breakdowns during reading, and generating and answering questions after reading. These strategies are part of a framework called Collaborative Strategic Reading, a process that has been proven to help students with learning disabilities to improve their metacognition and comprehension skills. Finally, for each poem we will fill out the same graphic organizer to help students comprehend the poet’s identity, their surroundings, and the interactions between the poet and their surroundings (see Appendix 1).

During the Unit: Modeling and Repeated Reading to Foster Reading Fluency. When we read the selected poems for the unit, I will first model how to read the poem fluently or we will watch a video of the poet performing the poem, as modeling of fluent reading is a research-based method for improving students’ fluency. Then, students will use partner reading in which they alternate stanzas with a partner. This will allow them opportunities for repeated reading, another evidence-based method for improving reading fluency.

During the Unit: Modeling, Guided Practice, and Graphic Organizes to Support Written Expression. After reading and analyzing each poem, we will use them as mentor texts for writing our own place-based poetry. While my students benefit from writing supports such as graphic organizers and sentence starters, I also want to provide some freedom for them to experiment and express themselves through poetry. I hope to find

some balance by providing recommended “structures” for students’ poems in order to get them started while also encouraging them to build on those structures however they see fit.

For each poem, we will focus on one poetic device and adopt a similar structure to the mentor poem. Each time, I will model strategies for each step of the writing process by first working on my own place-based poem. I will think aloud about aspects of my identity that are important and brainstorm the places where these aspects of my identity are the most salient. I will then model how to use the provided graphic organizers to write that type of poem.

After reading “5 South 43rd St, Floor 2,” and an excerpt from “On Earth, We’re Briefly Gorgeous,” which both describe the authors’ routes through their neighborhoods, we will write our own “direction” poems. The graphic organizer (see Appendix 3) will prompt students to give “directions” to those chosen places and use imagery and sensory details to describe their experience along their route. After reading “For the Taxi Cabs that Pass Me in Harvard Square,” and “I Almost Forgot,” which both use repetition and memories, we will create our own “repetition/memory poems.” The graphic organizer (see Appendix 3) will prompt students to repeat a phrase that they associate with a place and intersperse that repeated line with memories of that place. Finally, after reading “Accents” by Denice Frohman, we will create our own “metaphor” poems. The graphic organizer (see Appendix 4) will prompt students to generate a list of metaphors for their chosen place or aspects of that place before concluding with a statement about who they are in that place.

During the Unit: Discussion Techniques to Foster Speaking and Listening Skills. As we read and analyze poems, we will use a variety of discussion techniques and structures so that students have opportunities to discuss their ideas and listen to their classmates' ideas. There will be two "jigsaw" discussions, in which students work in groups to analyze a subsection of the text. They must work together to dive deeply into that specific section and then work together as a whole class to put together the "pieces" of the jigsaw. Students will also participate in a gallery walk, in which they walk around the room while observing and commenting on other students' work. Finally, students will have the opportunity to peer-edit each other's poems, fostering their ability to communicate their ideas about another student's writing and incorporate others' feedback into their own writing.

After the Unit: Editing and Publishing to Support Written Expression. At the end of the unit, students should have three place-based poems in their "portfolio," - a directions poem, a repetition poem, and a metaphor poem. Students will choose one poem that they want to refine and publish before engaging in peer editing activities. For peer editing, students will form partner pairs and give feedback on their partner's poem using the POEM acronym (Is it Powerful? Is it Open to the reader's interpretation? Does it Express the poet's experience in a certain place? Is it Musical in that it uses poetic structures and devices?). Students will have the opportunity to revise their writing based on their partner's feedback.

Finally, students will have the opportunity to "publish" their final poem on a collaborative Google Map. Students will digitally collaborate on a class map by posting a "pin" on the geographic location of their chosen place. They will add a poem title, an

accompanying photo, and the text of their poem to the pin in order to “publish” their writing on the collaborative Google Map.

Classroom Activities

Lesson 1: Anticipatory/Baseline Activities

Essential Question: What do we already know and believe about identity and geography?

Objective: Students will be able to demonstrate baseline reading fluency, reading comprehension, and writing skills. Students will be able to discuss topics of the unit in order to build background knowledge about identity and geography.

Standard: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.10, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1

Instructional Activities:

1. Baseline assessments: Students will complete an oral reading fluency probe, a reading comprehension probe, and a curriculum-based writing probe to establish baseline achievement levels.
2. “This or That” Discussion: Students will engage in a “This or That” discussion to demonstrate what they already know about identity and geography and activate background knowledge. I will project a series of statements such as, “People are always affected by their surroundings,” “It’s important to act the exact same way no matter where you are,” “Everyone has one part of themselves that makes them who they are.” Students move to one side of the room and another side if they disagree. Students will explain their responses and continue to move throughout the room if they are persuaded by classmates’ responses.

Demonstration of Learning: Baseline assessments, verbal responses during “This or That.”

Lesson 2: Analyzing “5 South 43rd St, Floor 2”

Essential Question(s): How does the poet describe the relationship between their identity and their geography? What poetic structures and devices convey this?

Objective: Students will be able to read and analyze “5 South 43rd St, Floor 2” in order to understand how the poet uses directions and imagery to describe the relationship between their identity and their geography.

Standards: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.4CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.10, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1

Instructional Activities:

1. Vocabulary: Introduce the vocabulary words for the poem (draped, smeared, hustled) and their definitions. Work with students to create keyword mnemonics to help retain the definitions.
2. Repeated Reading: I will read the poem once out loud. Students will record their initial reactions on a Jamboard. Then, students will read the poem two more times in partner pairs.
3. Modeling Analysis: For this first poem of the unit, I will model how to look for evidence in the text about the author's identity, their geography, and the interaction between the two. I will prompt students to share their ideas and record them on the graphic organizer (see Appendix 2).

Demonstration of Learning: Partner reading, verbal responses

Lesson 3: Analyzing excerpt from "On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous"

Essential Question: How does the poet describe the relationship between their identity and their geography? What poetic structures and devices convey this?

Objective: Students will be able to read and analyze an excerpt from "On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous" in order to understand how the poet uses directions and imagery to describe the relationship between their identity and their geography.

Standard: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.4CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.10, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1

Instructional Activities:

1. Vocabulary: Introduce the vocabulary words for the excerpt (iridescent, tenement, merciful) and their definitions. Work with students to create keyword mnemonics to help retain the definitions.
2. Modeling: I will read, "On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous," from Page 144 to 147. Students will record their initial reactions on a Jamboard.
3. Jigsaw Repeated Reading/Analysis) Students will work in groups to analyze different paragraphs of the excerpt. They will look for text evidence that conveys the author's identity, his surroundings, and the interaction between the two. They will record their ideas on the graphic organizer (see Appendix 2). They will share their ideas in a final whole-class discussion

Demonstration of Learning: Graphic organizers from jigsaw groups

Lesson 3: Modeling and Writing Directions Poems

Essential Question: What place is important to who I am? How can I use the “directions” structure and imagery to convey the relationship between that place and who I am?

Objective: Students will be able to use the “directions” structure and imagery in order to write a poem that describes the relationship between their identity and their geography.

Standards: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.D, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.5

Instructional Activities:

1. Modeling: I will model how to write a “directions” poem using the graphic organizer (Appendix 3). I will think-aloud to demonstrate how to brainstorm a place that is important to my identity. I will model how to blend “directions” to the place with descriptive imagery in order to fill out the graphic organizer and draft a poem.
2. Drafting: Students will use the graphic organizer to draft a directions poem.

Demonstration of Learning: Graphic organizers, drafts

Lesson 4: Analyzing “For the Taxi Cabs that Pass Me in Harvard Square”

Essential Questions: How does the poet describe the relationship between their identity and their geography? What poetic structures and devices convey this?

Objective: Students will be able to read and analyze “For the Taxi Cabs that Pass Me in Harvard Square” in order to understand how the poet uses repetition and memory to describe the relationship between their identity and their geography.

Standard: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.4CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.10, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1

Instructional Activities:

1. Vocabulary: Introduce the vocabulary words for the poem (rendered, derelict, transience) and their definitions. Work with students to create keyword mnemonics to help retain the definitions.

2. Repeated reading: I will read the poem out loud one time. Students will have the opportunity to discuss their initial reactions on a Jamboard. Students will break into pairs and read the poem two more times with partner reading.
3. Analysis: We will conduct a whole-class discussion and consider the relationship between the poet and his environment. We will record aspects of his identity inside the figure, aspects of his environment outside the figure, and evidence of their interaction on the arrows.

Demonstration of Learning: Oral reading, graphic organizers

Lesson 5: Analyzing “I Almost Forgot”

Essential Question: How does the poet describe the relationship between their identity and their geography? What poetic structures and devices convey this?

Objective: Students will be able to read and analyze “I Almost Forgot” in order to understand how the poet uses repetition and memory to describe the relationship between their identity and their geography.

Standards: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.10, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1

Instructional Activities:

1. Repeated reading: I will read the poem out loud one time. Students will have the opportunity to discuss their initial reactions on a Jamboard. Students will break into pairs and read the poem two more times with partner reading.
2. Analysis: At this point in the unit, students have used the graphic organizer (Appendix 2) to analyze the relationship between the poetry and their geography several times. For this poem, they will work with their partners to complete the graphic organizer. Then, we will post the graphic organizers around the room and students will have the opportunity to “gallery walk” and observe others’ analyses.

Demonstration of Learning: Graphic organizers, discussions during gallery walk

Lesson 6: Modeling and Writing Repetition/Memory Poems

Essential Question: What place is important to who I am? How can I use repetition to convey the relationship between that place and who I am?

Objective: Students will be able to use repetition in order to write a poem that describes the relationship between their identity and their geography.

Standards: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.D,
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.5

Instructional Activities:

1. Modeling: I will model how to draft the “repetition/memory poem.” I will return to my brainstorm from Lesson 3 about aspects of my identity and places where those aspects are the most salient. I will choose a different place and model how to brainstorm a line or phrase that I associate with that place. This will serve as the “repeated line.” Finally, I will model how to intersperse the repeated line with detailed memories of the selected place to create the repetition poem.
2. Drafting: Students will use the graphic organizer to draft their own repetition/memory poems.

Demonstration of Learning: Graphic organizers, drafts

Lesson 7: Analyzing “Accents”

Essential Question: How does the poet describe the relationship between their identity and their geography? What poetic structures and devices convey this?

Objective: Students will be able to watch, read, and analyze “Accents” in order to understand how the poet uses metaphors to describe the relationship between their identity and their geography.

Standards: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.4,
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.10, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1

Instructional Activities:

1. Repeated reading: We will watch Denice Frohman perform “Accents” at a slam poetry event. Students will re-read the poem with partners.
2. Jigsaw Analysis: Partners will be assigned different stanzas of the poem. Partners will look for metaphors and describe how the metaphors communicate a relationship between the poet and their geography.
3. Whole-Group Discussion: After the jigsaw, the class will come back together to share the metaphors they found and discuss how those metaphors showed the relationship between the poet and their geography.

Demonstration of Learning: Jigsaw discussion

Lesson 8: Modeling and Drafting Metaphor Poems

Essential Question: What place is important to who I am? How can I use metaphors to convey the relationship between that place and who I am?

Objective: Students will be able to use repetition in order to write a poem that describes the relationship between their identity and their geography.

Standards: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.D, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.5

Instructional Activities:

1. Modeling: I will model how to write the final poem by revisiting my initial brainstorm and selecting a third place to write about. I will model how to write metaphors to describe my experiences in that place.
2. Drafting: Students will use the graphic organizer (see Appendix 6) to draft their own metaphors poem.

Demonstration of Learning: Graphic organizer

Lesson 9: Peer Editing Poems for Publication

Essential Question: How can we use poetry to express aspects of our identity? How can we improve our writing to prepare it for publication?

Objective: Students will be able to use the POEM framework in order to peer edit poems. Students will be able to incorporate feedback in order to edit and revise their work.

Standards: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.5

Instructional Activities:

1. Selecting Poem to Revise: Students will read through their three drafts (the directions poem, the repetition poem, and the metaphor poem). They will select a poem that they would like to edit and publish.
2. Peer Editing: Students will be paired up and they will read their partners' selected poem. They will give feedback based on the POEM framework (Is it Powerful? Is there figurative language that makes it Open to the readers' interpretation? Does it Express an aspect of their identity? Is it MUSICAL in that it uses poetic devices?).

3. Modeling: I will “role-play” with a student to show how I could receive feedback based on the POEM framework and incorporate it into my poem.
4. Revising: Students will listen to partners’ feedback and revise their poems to improve them.

Demonstration of Learning: Revised drafts

Lesson 10: Publishing Poems

Essential Question: How can we publish poetry to express our experiences to a wider audience?

Objective: Students will be able to use a collaborative Google Map to publish their writing so that it can interact with classmates’ poems and a wider audience.

Standard: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.6

Instructional Activities:

1. Modeling: I will model how to “publish” my poem on a collaborative Google Map. I will drop a pin on the selected place, add the text of my poem, and add an accompanying image.
2. Publishing: Students will “publish” their poems on the collaborative Google Map. I will give students’ time to read others’ poems and celebrate their successes.
3. Post-Assessments: During a subsequent lesson, I will administer oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, and written expression probes in order to determine students’ progress after the unit.

Demonstration of Learning: Google Map, oral reading fluency probes, reading comprehension probes, written expression probes

Resources

Reading List for Students

1. “5 South 43rd St, Floor 2” by Yolanda Wisner. *This “directions” poem describes the poet’s route through their neighborhood with rich imagery that conveys their positive and negative experiences in their community.*
2. “On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous” by Ocean Vuong, page 144 to 147. *This “directions” excerpt describes the author’s bike ride through his neighborhood*

- and describes positive and negative memories at different locations along the route. **Note for teachers: This selection includes mature content and language.***
3. “For the Taxi Cabs that Pass Me in Harvard Square: by Clint Smith. *In this poem, the poet uses repetition to relay the experience of being repeatedly passed by taxi cabs. The repeated line is intersped with memories of when his identity as a Black man was most salient.*
 4. “I Almost Forgot” by Afiyah Ervin. *In this poem, the poet uses repetition to highlight her positive memories of Baltimore and contrast them with the negative depictions she sees on the news.*
 5. “Accents” by Denice Frohman. *In this poem, the poet uses metaphors to describe how her mother’s accent anchors her to her Puerto Rican identity when she communicates in English.*

Bibliography for Teachers

Cavendish, W., & Hodnett, K. (2017). Collaborative strategic reading. *Current Practices Alerts*, 26, 1-6.

This article describes the procedures for Collaborative Strategic reading and evidence of its effectiveness for improving reading comprehension for students with learning disabilities. The methods of activating background knowledge, summarizing during reading, and asking questions after reading are critical to improving reading comprehension for students with learning disabilities.

Gillespie, A., & Graham, S. (2014). A meta-analysis of writing interventions for students with learning disabilities. *Exceptional children*, 80(4), 454-473.

This meta-analysis describes effective writing interventions for students with learning disabilities, including extensive modeling, guided practice, and feedback.

Hughes, C., Kubina, R. (2008). Fluency instruction. *Current Practice Alerts*, 15, 1-4.

Retrieved from <http://TeachingLD.org/alerts>

This article presents effective strategies for improving students’ oral reading fluency, including modeling and repeated reading.

Irazábal, C., & Huerta, C. (2016). Intersectionality and planning at the margins: LGBTQ youth of color in New York. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 23(5), 714-732.

This study investigated how LGBTQ youth of color in New York City experience space and how urban planners can use intersectionality to understand the needs of this population.

The IRIS Center. (2013). Study skills strategies (part 2): Strategies that improve students' academic performance. Retrieved from <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/ss2/>

This article describes how to use keyword mnemonics in order to help students retain vocabulary. In this method, students learn to associate a vocabulary word with a word that sounds similar. That "keyword" cues them to recall an image that gives a hint about the meaning of the vocabulary word, which helps them to retain the definition.

Rudd, L. L. (2012). Just slammin! Adolescents' construction of identity through performance poetry. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 55(8), 682-691.

This article describes how poetry can serve as an effective venue for adolescent identity development and exploration.

Soja, E. W. (1980). The socio-spatial dialectic. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 70(2), 207-225.

Soja describes the concept of the "socio-spatial dialectic," in which social structures and physical structures impact one another to create economic and social conditions. In this article, Soja pushes back against the idea that class analysis can exclude considerations of space.

Turner, V. 1986. *The Anthropology of Performance*. New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications.

Turner describes the concept of "performative reflexivity, in which people, "turn, bend, or reflect back upon themselves, upon their relations, actions, symbols, meanings, codes, statuses, social structures, ethical and legal rules, and other socio-cultural components which make up their public selves."

Verhoeven, M., Poorthuis, A. M., & Volman, M. (2019). The role of school in adolescents' identity development. A literature review. *Educational Psychology Review*, 31(1), 35-63.

This literature review summarized research about supporting adolescents' identity development within school. The review concluded that, "different types of explorative learning experiences can be organized to support adolescents' identity development: experiences aimed at exploring new identity positions (in-breadth exploration), further specifying already existing self-understandings (in-depth exploration), and reflecting on self-understandings (reflective exploration)."

Classroom Materials

1. Oral reading fluency probes for pre-test and post-test assessments. These probes can be used to monitor students' oral reading fluency on their instructional reading level.
2. Reading comprehension probes for pre-test and post-test assessments. Multiple choice comprehension probes can be used to monitor students' comprehension on their instructional reading level.
3. Curriculum-based writing probes for pre-test and post-test assessments. Students can write about an open-ended prompt for a 5 or 10-minute time increment to determine their writing fluency, grammar, and spelling skills.
4. Printed copies of all poems and method for projecting poems (SmartBoard, projector, etc.).
5. Printed copies of all graphic organizers (see Appendix 2, Appendix 3, Appendix 4, and Appendix 5).
6. Method for projecting videos of slam poetry performances.
7. Access to computers for Jamboard activities.
8. Access to computers for peer editing and publishing poems on a collaborative Google Map

Appendix

Appendix 1. Common Core Standards Addressed in the Unit

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3

Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.10

By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.D

Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.

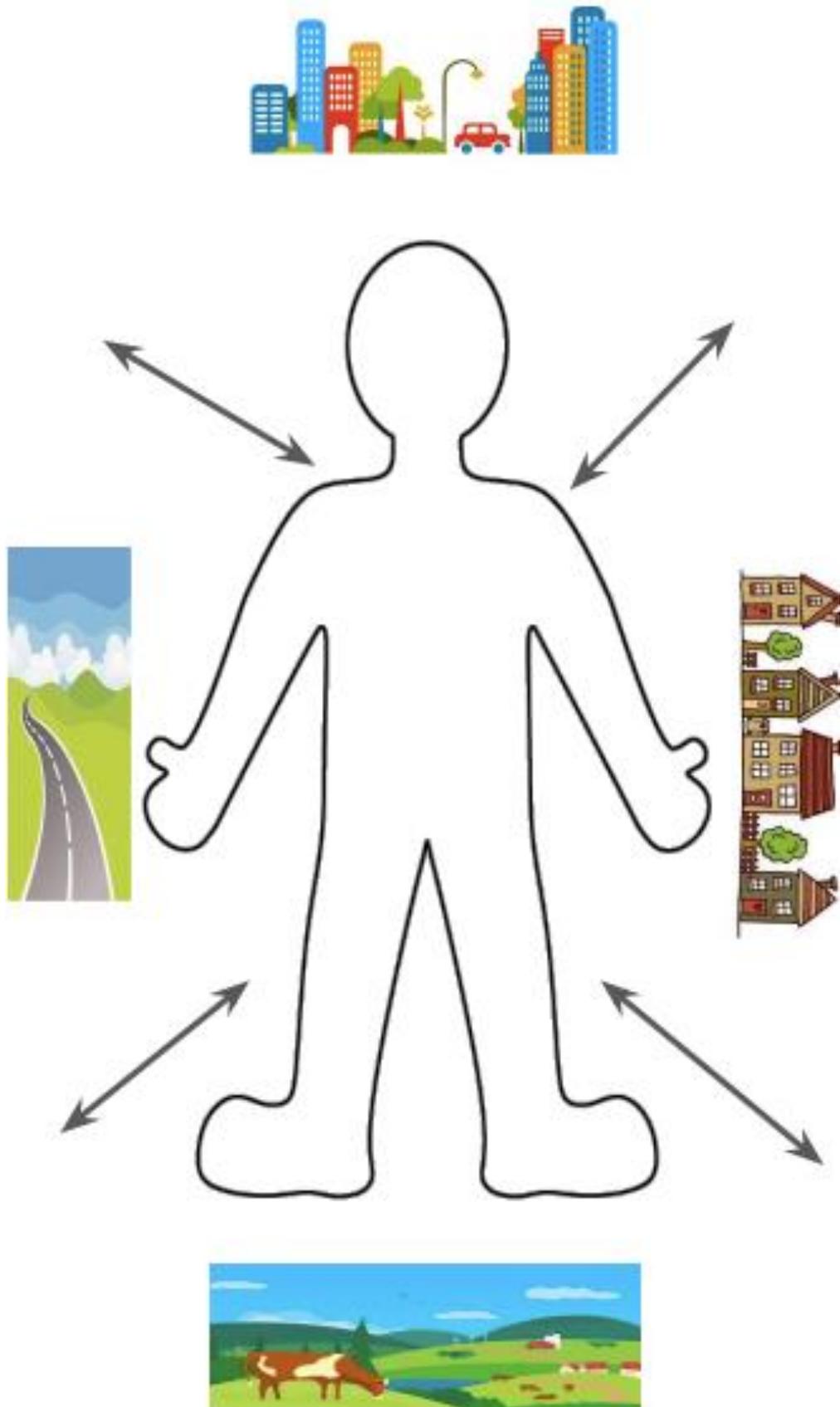
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.5

With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well the purpose and audience have been addressed. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grade 7 here.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.6

Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and link to and cite sources as well as to interact and collaborate with others, including linking to and citing sources.

Appendix 2. Graphic Organizer for Analyzing Poems



Appendix 3. Directions/Imagery Poem Template

Part A: Who am I and where am I?

Choose a part or parts of yourself that are important to you.

Think about WHERE you are when you show that side of yourself.

These could be a place you love, a place you hate, or a place you spend a lot of time. It can be a place where something happy or something sad happened. It should be a place that you can give DIRECTIONS to.

1. I am	2. WHERE do you show that part of yourself?
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Part B: Write your poem.

In your poem, you will give “directions” to your chosen place. After each “direction,” you will share imagery and sensory details to describe your experience when you go to your chosen place.

Start at...
<i>What do you see, hear, taste, smell, feel, think, say at this point? Be descriptive!</i>
Next...
<i>What do you see, hear, taste, smell, feel, think, say at this point? Be descriptive!</i>
Then..
<i>What do you see, hear, taste, smell, feel, think, say at this point? Be descriptive!</i>
Stop at...
<i>What do you see, hear, taste, smell, feel, think, say at this point? Be descriptive!</i>

Appendix 4. Repetition/Memory Poem

Part A: Who am I and where am I?

Choose a part or parts of yourself that are important to you.

Think about WHERE you are when you show that side of yourself.

These could be a place you love, a place you hate, or a place you spend a lot of time. It can be a place where something happy or something sad happened. It should be a place that you can have very specific MEMORIES of.

1. I am ...	2. WHERE do you show that part of yourself?
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Part B: Brainstorm your repeated line.

<p>What are some words, phrases, sentences, or quotes that you associate with your chosen place?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">••••• <p>Choose the most powerful line and circle it. This is the line you will repeat throughout your poem.</p>

Part C: Write your poem.

In your poem, you will alternate between your repeated line and your memories of your chosen place. Try to make it so that the memories BUILD into the most powerful memory you have of that place.

Repeated line
<i>Memory #1 in your chosen place (be descriptive!)</i>
Repeated line
<i>Memory #2 in your chosen place (be descriptive!)</i>
Repeated line
<i>Memory #3 in your chosen place (be descriptive!)</i>
Repeated line
<i>Memory #4 in your chosen place (be descriptive!)</i>

Appendix 5. Metaphor poem

Part A: Who am I and where am I?

Choose a part or parts of yourself that are important to you.

Think about WHERE you are when you show that side of yourself.

These could be a place you love, a place you hate, or a place you spend a lot of time. It can be a place where something happy or something sad happened.

1. I am	2. WHERE do you show that part of yourself?
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Part B: Write your metaphor poem.

Write metaphors for your place or different aspects of your place.

End your poem with a statement about who you are in that place.

Place/part of place	Metaphor
_____ is...	
I am...	

Lists the academic standards covered and includes any additional materials (e.g., handouts, rubrics) needed to implement the unit.