“Poetry Out Loud” Recitation Activity and Performance

The first thing we want to do with our poetry unit is acknowledge the oral tradition from which poetry comes. The qualities of sound and emotion in poetry must be reflected in the way we read aloud. Poets often write their work with the ‘performance’ of a public reading in mind. Once you begin to think of your own writing in this way, and have witnessed how your classmates have chosen to interpret their poems through performance, your creative use of poetic elements will be more enhanced.

First, we will view sample videos of POL champions performing various poems. Keep in mind, they are “dramatizing” the poetry more than we are; also, we aren’t memorizing. Our goal is to make clear, intended choices in our readings.

Visit poetryoutloud.org and spend 30 minutes reading the poems in the catalogue. After reading several poems, choose one and print it off which you wish to practice and read for the class.

I will be evaluating the following criteria:

- **Physical Presence**: eye contact, poise, body language; strong, confident posture; appears to enjoy the poem

- **Voice & Articulation**: volume, natural and fluid pace, rhythm, intonation, pronunciation; captures attention of audience; avoid sing-song patterns for rhymed poems; pausing or not pausing at line breaks

- **Complexity of chosen poem**: length; complexity and sophistication of the chosen poem

- **Evidence of Understanding**: catches the meanings and nuances of the poem; look up unknown words; appropriate emotional choices

Be prepared to answer class questions afterwards about your choices and understandings of the poem.

**Possible Follow-Up Questions**

1. What do you think motivated the poet to write this?

2. Why did you choose this poem? What was your initial reaction?

3. What do you think the poet meant by the word/phrase, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ ?

4. Why did you choose to read \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in (this) way? (with emphasis, sorrowfully, slowly, etc.)

5. What is your favorite part of the poem to read?

6. What do you think the poem' theme is regarding \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?

7. What did you learn about the poem after practicing that you didn’t see or understand before?

8. What tone or attitude do you think the poet most wants to express?