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8th Grade English
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From the Page to the Stage: How do Poets Perform Spoken Word Poetry?

Welcome to Room 4!

For the past few weeks, my students and I have been exploring poetry by writing and publishing our own 8th Grade Poetry Anthology. To celebrate the release of this anthology, we will be having a poetry slam and open mic next week in class, where students will have the opportunity to perform the poems that they have written in a competitive or non-competitive environment. In preparation for the slam and open mic, we have spent this past week focusing on how performing a poem can affect the poem's meaning.

Because my students and I spent a lot of time learning about performance when we were reading *A Midsummer Nights' Dream* in the previous unit, I have been able to activate this background knowledge and connect it to what we are learning now. The students' experience on the stage has helped them be able to recognize the different elements of a good performance, such as eye contact, facial expressions, tone, volume, and body movement. Prior to today's lesson, we spent time in class watching videos of spoken word poetry performances, and identifying the different ways that poets perform a poem. We began an activity in the previous class where students were placed in groups of two, and each group was given a specific aspect of performance to focus on, and we watched some of the spoken word poetry performances again. Each group is responsible for noting as many examples of their specific aspect of poetry performance as they can possibly find. For example, the group responsible for paying attention to volume would record any time they noticed the poet getting louder or quieter to emphasize a certain part of the poem.

Today's Lesson

In today's class, we will be finishing up the activity that we started in the last class, and then we will be moving on to an activity that will allow the students to really see how a poem can be brought "from the page to the stage" (in the words of Meghan Rosa!). I will read a poem for the students in two ways— first in the most flat affect I can possibly convey, with a monotone voice and no emphasis on any of the important parts of the poem, and then I will actually perform the poem. The students have a graphic organizer to fill out where they can write down everything they notice about each reading, and we will discuss afterwards which performance was "better." To wrap up the class, the students will have the opportunity to do their own performance of the same poem, and then will fill out an exit slip before they leave to sum up what they have learned about how poets perform poems.

Rounds Inquiry

1. Throughout the different activities during this lesson today, do you see evidence of the student engagement? Are they listening and paying attention to the videos and the readings/performance? Are they taking notes when asked to do so? Are they volunteering to try performing the poem?

