

Poetry as a Form of Social Critique

Course: Literary Arts/English 10th grade to 12th grade, depending on the level of the class.

Unit Duration: Three Weeks

Objectives: To engage students in a multi-tiered lesson plan that teaches them rhetorical considerations, engages them in current social events, and teaches them transferable skills to the next lesson and beyond the classroom.

Required Texts for This Unit:

1. *The DK Handbook* by Anne Frances Wysocki and Dennis A Lynch
2. *Compose Design Advocate: A Rhetoric for Written, Oral, and Visual Communications 2nd edition* by Anne Frances Wysocki and Dennis A Lynch
3. Additional handouts to be given to the students.

Suggested Standards Met (tailor this to your own school standards):

1. Develop fluency in quickly externalizing ideas on paper and computer screens, and in moving from such notes to rough drafts of possible essays.
2. Explain in clearly written English the rhetoric of others.
3. Develop written arguments in response to others' arguments.
4. Reconstruct and revise the connections between claims, reasons, and evidence in their own writing, their peers', and published authors'.
5. Discern how the style of their own writing, their peers', and published authors' creates an appeal that pulls the audience closer to the material in question.
6. Analyze texts to apprehend more fully the relations among language use, power, and social hierarchies.

7. Create texts that respond to the language, discourse, and power dynamics in given contexts.
8. Discern the various ways that generic strategies and formal, stylistic, tonal language, and discursive conventions for a particular contexts.
9. Generate their own texts by making use of various generic strategies and particular language conventions for particular contexts.
10. Read Difficult, research-based texts with critical understanding.
11. Critique their own ideas, form, and style in light of the contexts for which they are written and with awareness of the generic choices they are making, and revise their own writing to improve form, style, and generic/institutional strategies to intervene more effectively in a given rhetorical situation.
12. Proofread for correctness and clarity.

Day 1: Who Said it Was Simple Freewrite and Revision

Class Duration: 1 hour and 50 minutes.

Objectives: To introduce students to the rhetorical situation found within literature that specifically addresses social issues and identity. Students will be able to talk about genre features of poetry, the effectiveness of the form in transmitting social critiques, and will be able compare how the rhetorical situation and author background shifts their own understanding of the rhetorical situation happening within the poem.

Lesson Plan:

I. Class warm-up discussion on literature and poetry (20 minutes)

Questions are meant to lead the students to think about the importance of genre and the characteristics of genre before being introduced to a free-writing exercise on Audre Lorde's poem, "Who Said It Was Simple."

- A. What does literature do?
- B. Why do most colleges include some sort of intro-to-literature as part of a liberal-arts education?
- C. How does poetry differ from other forms of literature?

II. Audre Lorde's Poem, "Who Said It Was Simple" Reading and Freewrite (20 minutes)

- A. Professor will pass out handouts with "Who Said It Was Simple" and read the poem out loud to the students.
- B. The students will then have 15 minutes to do a free write considering the author's intention behind writing the poem, the effect of the form has on the meaning of the poem, and if it is an effective medium to transmit social commentary.

III. Adding Context (30 minutes)

- A. The professor will then provide background information on Audre Lorde's identity (Queer black woman) and the time period she was writing about (the 1970s) in the form of a slideshow with time for Q&A from students.
- B. Audre Lorde's "Who Said It Was Simple" with Rhetorical Situation Knowledge
Freewrite (**30 minutes**)
- C. The professor will hand out a second freewriting handout, instructing the students to reconsider their first writing and to address the same aspects now with situational rhetorical knowledge as well as the background of the author. Students will be asked to not only take genre into consideration as they did before, but take this new information into account in their analysis of the poem.

IV. Homework Assignment (10 minutes)

- A. Students will be asked to type up, edit, and revise both freewrites and to do a one page comparison of their two free writes on the same poem. Students will be asked to also state whether or not their understanding of the poem changed with the additional information provided after the slideshow.

V. Conclude class for the day at 1 hour and 50 minutes.

Handouts for Day 1 (next page)

Who Said It Was Simple Freewrite: Part 1

Who Said It Was Simple
by Audre Lorde

There are so many roots to the tree of anger
that sometimes the branches shatter
before they bear.

Sitting in Nedicks
the women rally before they march
discussing the problematic girls
they hire to make them free.
An almost white counterman passes
a waiting brother to serve them first
and the ladies neither notice nor reject
the slighter pleasures of their slavery.
But I who am bound by my mirror
as well as my bed
see causes in colour
as well as sex

and sit here wondering
which me will survive
all these liberations.

Freewrite instructions: After hearing the poem, read it once more on your own and freewrite with the following questions in mind:

1. What is the author's purpose in writing this poem?
2. What does the author want the audience to take away from the poem?
3. What is the author's message within the poem?
4. Is the form aiding in the author's purpose? Why or why not? Is there a form that may be more effective?

Note that you may also write about whatever struck you about the poem and its features.

Some general notes on freewriting: Freewriting is nonstop writing for the amount of time given in class. You are not to stop writing until time is called. If you get stuck, repeat the last sentence or word in your freewrite until another concept comes to mind. Freewriting should be continual, non-stop writing. Grammar, punctuation, structure, and complete sentences are not taken into consideration in your draft; however, if asked to revise, these things should be corrected in your typed up draft. Pass/no pass score.

Who Said It Was Simple Freewrite: Part 2

Who Said It Was Simple
by Audre Lorde

There are so many roots to the tree of anger
that sometimes the branches shatter
before they bear.

Sitting in Nedicks
the women rally before they march
discussing the problematic girls
they hire to make them free.
An almost white counterman passes
a waiting brother to serve them first
and the ladies neither notice nor reject
the slighter pleasures of their slavery.
But I who am bound by my mirror
as well as my bed
see causes in colour
as well as sex

and sit here wondering
which me will survive
all these liberations.

Freewriting instructions: now that you've been given context to both the author (Audre Lorde) and the period in which "Who Said It Was Simple" was written (the 1970s), you're going to rethink your original freewrite and take both the rhetor (or the author) and the rhetorical situation (or the time period) into consideration along with the genre (or form) of the writing. Keep the following in mind:

1. What is the author's purpose in writing this poem?
2. What does the author want the audience to take away from the poem?
3. What is the author's message within the poem?
4. Is the form aiding in the author's purpose? Why or why not? Is there a form that may be more effective?

Note that you may also write about whatever struck you about the poem and its features.

Some general notes on freewriting: Freewriting is nonstop writing for the amount of time given in class. You are not to stop writing until time is called. If you get stuck, repeat the last sentence or word in your freewrite until another concept comes to mind. Freewriting should be continual, non-stop writing. Grammar, punctuation, structure, and complete sentences are not taken into consideration in your draft; however, if asked to revise, these things should be corrected in your typed up draft. Pass/no pass score.

Who Said It Was Simple Homework

After typing up and correcting your two freewrites, take the following question into consideration in a single-page reflection (double spaced, 1-inch margins, 12 font Times New Roman):

1. Did anything change between your first and second freewrite?
2. If so, what changed? If not, why do you think your two freewrites were so similar?

Your two typed and corrected freewrites and this paper are due at the beginning of our next class meeting. Pass/no pass score.

Day 2: Black Lives Matters/Pepsi Ad Article Rhetorical Analysis

Class Duration: 1 hour and 50 minutes.

Objectives: To engage students in the rhetoric of others in multiple formats: first to analyze the rhetoric of a social movement (Black Lives Matter), the second is to analyze the use of Black Lives Matter in the Pepsi commercial, and, finally, to analyze the rhetoric of an article talking about both Black Lives Matters and the Pepsi ad.

Lesson Plan:

- I. Black Lives Matter: History and Purpose Discussion (**30 minutes**)
 - A. Professor will lead class in a discussion of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. The professor will ask the students to raise their hands if they've heard of Black Lives Matters and follow up with asking students to explain what the movement is. If there are any gaps in knowledge or misinformation, the teacher will redirect the discussion and dispense correct information if the discussion gets off track.
 - B. The teacher will engage the class in the following questions:
 1. What prompted the BLM movement?
 2. What is the purpose of the BLM movement?
 3. How does the BLM movement communicate with followers?
 4. How is the BLM movement organized?
 5. What kind of actions does the BLM movement take?
- II. Pepsi BLM Article Popcorn Reading and Video Activity (**20 minutes**)
 - A. The professor will distribute the "Pepsi Pulls Ad Accused of Trivializing Black Lives Matter" article from *The New York Times*. A student who has not previously

engaged in discussion that day will be asked to read the first paragraph and will then be instructed to call on another student in class to read the next paragraph.

This will continue until the article is finished.

- B. After the article is read, the class will view the Pepsi ad in addition to viewing the Twitter images enlarged and in color.
 - C. The students will be asked to read the article again on their own after viewing the ad in question.
- III. Pepsi Ad Rhetorical Analysis and Freewrite Activity (**30 minutes**)
- A. The professor will hand out an Article Rhetorical Analysis sheet for the students to fill out for 15 minutes. The professor will float and answer any questions as they arise.
 - B. The professor will hand out the Pepsi Ad Freewrite sheet and give students 15 minutes to freewrite in response to the prompt.
- IV. Pepsi and Black Lives Matter Discussion (**15 minutes**)
- A. The professor will lead the students in discussion and in sharing what they wrote in their freewrites. The professor will ask the students the following questions and engage the class in a mindful discussion:
 - 1. Who is the author of the article writing to? What audience does Daniel Victor have in mind?
 - 2. What do you think Pepsi's intent was in making this ad? Do you feel that they had BLM in mind?

3. Did you feel that this ad was a tribute or a parody of the BLM movement?

Was it intentional? Please elaborate on the features of the ad that influenced your opinion.

4. What is the purpose of the Tweets in the article? Did they influence your opinion of the video at all?

V. **Homework (10 minutes)**

A. The professor will hand out the “Pepsi and Black Lives Matter” writing prompt and collect the homework from the last class meeting.

B. The professor will read the prompt to the students and will ask if they have any questions on the writing assignment.

C. The professor will remind students that this is part of a larger writing project that will not only be shared with the professor, but with their classmates and to take their audience into consideration when constructing their paper.

VI. **Conclude class for the day at 1 hour and 50 minutes.**

Handouts for Day 2 (next page)

[Pepsi Article from the NY Times Link](#)

Article Rhetorical Analysis

Identify the following elements in the “Pepsi Pulls Ad Accused of Trivializing Black Lives Matter” article. If you have any questions, please raise your hand.

Author’s Main Claim:

Evidence 1:

Evidence 2:

Anticipation Objections:

Conclusion:

Statement of Values:

(Worksheet adapted from the Compose Design Advocate: A Rhetoric for Written, Oral, and Visual Communications 2nd edition. See page 382-383 for examples in your handbook.)

Pass/no pass score

Pepsi and Black Lives Matter Freewrite

Freewrite instructions: After reading the article once as a class and once on your own, as well as viewing the original advertisement that sparked the controversy, freewrite for 20 minutes keeping the following questions in mind:

1. Who is the author of the article writing to? What audience does Daniel Victor have in mind?
2. What do you think Pepsi's intent was in making this ad? Do you feel that they had BLM in mind?
3. Did you feel that this ad was a tribute or a parody of the BLM movement? Was it intentional? Please elaborate on the features of the ad that influenced your opinion.
4. What is the purpose of the Tweets in the article? Did they influence your opinion of the video at all?

Note: You are not limited to the topics above during your freewrite; however, do try to address these four questions before moving onto other topics.

Some general notes on freewriting: Freewriting is nonstop writing for the amount of time given in class. You are not to stop writing until time is called. If you get stuck, repeat the last sentence or word in your freewrite until another concept comes to mind. Freewriting should be continual, non-stop writing. Grammar, punctuation, structure, and complete sentences are not taken into consideration in your draft; however, if asked to revise, these things should be corrected in your typed up draft. Pass/no pass score.

Pepsi and Black Lives Matter Mini Essay Prompt

Today in class we analyzed the article “Pepsi Pulls Ad Accused of Trivializing Black Lives Matter” in multiple ways including a freewrite and a worksheet rhetorically analyzing the article. In addition to those written activities, we discussed the following four questions:

1. Who is the author of the article writing to? What audience does Daniel Victor have in mind?
2. What do you think Pepsi’s intent was in making this ad? Do you feel that they had BLM in mind?
3. Did you feel that this ad was a tribute or a parody of the BLM movement? Was it intentional? Please elaborate on the features of the ad that influenced your opinion.
4. What is the purpose of the Tweets in the article? Did they influence your opinion of the video at all?

For your homework assignment, pick one of these questions and write a two page (double spaced 12 font Times New Roman with 1 inch margins) response. You may draw on the rhetoric worksheet and your freewrite to help construct your two page essay. In addition, don’t forget to type up your Freewrite and to edit and revise as needed.

Due at our next class meeting. Pass/no pass score.

Day 3: Synthesizing Sources - Audre Lorde and Black Lives Matter

Class Duration: 1 hour and 50 minutes.

Objectives: For students to take their rhetorical knowledge and synthesize two sources explored in class together; students will apply their rhetorical knowledge of the rhetor, rhetorical situation, and audience into a poem in the style of Audre Lorde that addresses the BLM Pepsi controversy.

Lesson Plan:

- I. Class Discussion (**20 minutes**)
 - A. Class will open with a class discussion of the two sources we've covered in the past week - Audre Lorde's poem and the article on Black Lives Matter and Pepsi. The professor will lead the discussion and will ask the students the following questions:
 1. What do the two sources have in common?
 2. What is different about the two sources?
 3. How did the authors audiences differ?
 4. How did the authors purpose differ?
 5. How do you think these two sources could work together?
 - B. The professor will follow up and redirect any off-topic answers or re-engage students with the topic at-hand if discussion gets off topic.
- II. Group Work - BLM and Audre Lorde (**40 minutes**)
 - A. Students will count off by four and move into groups by by number.
 - B. The professor will hand out a "Synthesizing Sources" worksheet and have the students, as a group, come together and write a poem in the style of Audre Lorde in response to the Pepsi/BLM controversy. Students will not be graded for poetic

style but rather will be asked to explain how they think their group poem represents the rhetoric of Lorde while also incorporating the rhetorical situation and audience of the Pepsi/BLM.

III. Oral Presentations and Explanation of Poem (**40 minutes**)

- A. Groups will stand up one by one and share their group poem followed by a 5 minute explanation for their rationale behind their choices. Groups can volunteer or the professor can call on and students.
- B. The teacher will follow up with any questions and open Q&A to the class after group explanations for up to an additional 5 minutes per group.

IV. Homework (**10 minutes**)

- A. The professor will collect the previous classes homework assignment and hand back graded papers with feedback from the last week.
- B. Professor will hand out the formal writing assignment for students. This is a 5 page minimum paper (7 page max).
- C. The essay will have a construction timeline with specific milestones to be written before course meetings for in-class activities.
- D. The professor will review the prompt with the students and answer any questions the students may have in regards to the assignment.

V. **Conclude class for the day at 1 hour and 50 minutes**

Handouts for Day 3 (next page)

Synthesizing Sources

As a class, we have seen that poetry and articles are often carry political, social, and personal commentary despite being different genres. For this assignment, you may refer to the “Article Rhetorical Analysis” worksheet we did last week in your groups and the poem by Audre Lorde, “Who Said It Was Simple.”

Directions: In your group, you will write a poem in the style of Audre Lorde (or take on her mantle as a rhetor to use our rhetorical terminology). The situation you will write about will change, however. Instead of addressing the protests of the 1970s, you will change the rhetorical situation to the Pepsi/Black Lives Matters controversy you read about in the article “Pepsi Pulls Ad Accused of Trivializing Black Lives Matter” and have your poem aimed at a modern audience. **You will not be evaluated on the poem;** however, it will be shared with the class. Your score is dependent upon your explanation for the choices your group made in the construction of your poem.

Maximum points: 15

Key Terms for this Assignment: Rhetor, Rhetorical Situation, Audience

Audre Lorde and Black Lives Matter Essay

Summary: This unit has focused on rhetorical awareness of social commentaries. For your assignment, you will use the two sources (Audre Lorde’s poem “Who Said It Was Simple” and the article “Pepsi Pulls Ad Accused of Trivializing Black Lives Matter”) in addition to at least one outside source of your choice. Your final paper will be **5 pages minimum, 7 pages maximum** and will follow either MLA or APA standards (and will be double spaced 12 font Times New Roman with one inch margins).

Objectives:

1. To display rhetorical awareness including (but not limited to) genre, rhetor, rhetorical situation, and audience
2. To craft a research paper with a single thesis uniting all three sources
3. To develop writing strategies for writing to different audiences
4. To articulate a unique point of view on a widely-discussed issue

Directions: Audre Lorde’s poetry has experienced a revival in the age of Black Lives Matter. Using the information you’ve gained from the slideshow in week 1 (found on Blackboard) of the course, the poem “Who Said It Was Simple,” the “Pepsi Pulls Ad Accused of Trivializing Black Lives Matter” article, and at least one outside source, compare and contrast the 1960’s and 1970’s to our contemporary age. Some questions that can be taken into consideration while you construct this paper are the following:

1. What is the rhetorical situation Audre Lorde was addressing? Does that parallel the Black Lives Matter movement? How or how not?
2. What was the Civil Rights Movement about? How does the Black Lives Matter movement mirror that movement, if it does? If it does not, what differs?
3. What progress has been made since Audre Lorde wrote her poem? What progress yet remains, if any?
4. What would Black Lives Matter find appealing about Audre Lorde’s poem? What situations is she addressing that Black Lives Matter also addresses?

You are not limited to these questions; these are just starting points to get your essay flowing. While this essay can incorporate opinion, your main assertion as well as your arguments should be **based on facts** provided both within our course and from your additional source(s).

Remember, this paper requires one additional source outside of the two sources we’ve covered in class.

Outline/Assignment Milestones and Due Dates:

Day 4: One outside resources, printed and brought into class. A rough introduction and thesis statement.

Day 5: A rough draft with an introduction, developed body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Should roughly be 5 pages (but 4 won't be marked down)

Day 6: A rough draft with an introduction, developed body paragraphs, and a conclusion that incorporates peer feedback. This should be at least 5 pages and at max 7 pages.

Final Paper Due: Day 7, no exceptions (if you are unable to attend class email it to me by the time class begins)

Maximum Points: 55

(Adapted from Alexander Reid's "The Activity of Writing" and Victor Villanueva's "For the Love of Language: A Curriculum" found in *First-Year Composition: From Theory to Practice*)

Day 4: Evaluating Resources Workshop; Introduction Construction Workshop

Class Duration: 1 hour and 50 minutes.

Objectives: This lesson will aid students in forming the skills necessary in evaluating not only the validity of sources, but if they are appropriate for use in their paper. The second part of this lesson plan is to aid students directly with their composition and ability to construct introductions by reviewing the purpose and different styles of introducing a paper. Students will be able to transfer these skills to future introductions as well.

Lesson Plan:

- I. Evaluating Resources Workshop (**50 minutes**)
 - A. Students are to bring in one outside resources they feel is appropriate for their synthesis paper.
 - B. Students will break into groups and evaluate each other's sources using page 47 of *The DK Handbook* and discuss, in groups, the validity and appropriateness of the sources selected by their peers using the Source Evaluation worksheet.
 - C. If they students have any questions about the sources, the professor will come over and address any concerns of the students.
- II. Essay Introduction Workshop (**50 minutes**)
 - A. Students must have their introduction constructed and brought to class.
 - B. The professor will select paragraphs while the students work through the Evaluating Resources Workshop and display them on the overhead (with the student's name covered) to do group feedback with the class.
 - C. The professor and the class will evaluate the following elements of the introductions from the students:

1. Does the introduction make the topic clear?
2. Does it have a clear thesis statement?
3. Does the introduction function as an introduction to the topic the paper is to address?
4. Are there any major errors that make the introduction hard to understand?
5. What is one thing this introduction does well?
6. What is one thing this introduction can improve?

III. Essay Construction Review (**10 minutes**)

IV. **Conclude class for the day at 1 hour and 50 minutes**

Handouts for Day 4 (next page)

Source Evaluation Worksheet

(To be used with *The DK Handbook* starting on page 47)

Identify the following elements in your peer's outside source. Then provide a sentence or two in which you express whether, after reviewing the source using the handbook, you feel this source is appropriate for use in their paper.

Audience

Writers

Appearance

Format

Language

Review

Bibliography (Sources)

When to Use

Remember: There is no one perfect source but, do you feel this one works well for this assignment?

(Adapted from *The DK Handbook* page 47)

Day 5: Peer Review Workshop

Class Duration: 1 hour and 50 minutes.

Objectives: The purpose of this lesson is for students to give and receive feedback on their rough drafts. This not only aids them in their evaluative skills of others rhetoric but allows them to understand how their own rhetoric is received by others.

Lesson Plan:

- I. **Students Peer Review Workshop (1 hour and 30 minutes)**
 - A. The professor will orally give instructions for the peer review workshop; reinforcing oral instructions with written instructions on a handout
 - B. Students will count off and break into groups of three.
 - C. Each student will have two peer review worksheets and will evaluate both of their group members papers following the Peer Review Guidelines provided
 - D. The groups of three will recount and break into new groups, repeating the peer review process using the Peer Review Guidelines with two new peer review sheets.
 - E. By the end of class, students will have been evaluated by four of their peers and the professor will be providing feedback as well and collecting paper drafts.
- II. **Essay Progress Discussion (20 minutes)**
 - A. The professor will ask the class how their drafts are going and ask if the students have any questions, comments, or concerns.
 - B. The professor will continue with reviewing the prompt and the expectations of the assignment.
- III. **Conclude class for the day at 1 hour and 50 minutes**

Handouts for Day 5 (next page)

Peer Review Guidelines

(To be used in conjunction with pages 266-267 in *The DK Handbook*)

Evaluate your peers work based on the following guiding questions. Be sure to write clearly so that your classmate may read your feedback. **Remember to always read the paper twice before giving any feedback.** Frame your feedback as “I” statements and address the paper, not the writer (e.g. “I think the paper could do X better” or “I think the paper does X well”).

What do you identify as the thesis statement of the paper? Is it an effective thesis statement? Why or why not?

What audience is the writer addressing? Do you feel that this audience consideration is appropriate for the context of this assignment?

Number the paragraphs of the paper you are evaluating. Which paragraph (identify it by the number) is the most effective in the paper? What makes it an effective paragraph?

Which paragraph could be improved? What could be approved about it? Be specific.

Does the overall flow of the paper work? Do you feel that you know where the paper is going? Are there any surprises or places you get lost when reading?

Does anything in the paper feel out of place or off topic? Why or why not?

Does the conclusion conclude the paper well? Is there anything about the conclusion that doesn't feel final? If you feel it does conclude well, what specifically makes you feel that way?

Does the essay address the prompt well? Which parts of the essay specifically address the prompt well? Are there any points it could make to help enhance its relation to the prompt?

Are there any factual mistakes or logical inconsistencies in the work? If so, where are they and why are they problematic in the work?

Give an overall impression of the paper (do not assign a letter grade; rather, give feedback you think you haven't covered yet that would be helpful to your peer).

Day 7: Final Draft Due (Chance to Revise in Final Portfolio)

Students will hand their essays in at the beginning of class on the 7th day. The professor will remind students of the chance to revise after final feedback to increase their score in their final portfolio. The unit ends when the paper is turned in.