MLK and Langston Hughes **11th grade**

**Quick Recap**

11th graders are probably already familiar with MLK, Hughes, and the Harlem Renaissance, but they might still benefit from a brief 5-10 minute recap of Hughes and how Hansberry used Hughes’s “Dream Deferred” / “Harlem” to title her play *A Raisin in the Sun.*

**“Dream Deferred” (“DD”)**

From there, continue with “DD” by reading it aloud while the students draw the images of what they hear.

* Each student gets a small poster paper and a few markers
* They can make one cohesive drawing or several small ones, as long as they use ONE SIDE of the poster paper
* If you want them to go into more detail, you can have them explain their artistic decisions on the back of the poster paper (however, I don’t do this).

You can end this activity with a few students sharing their artwork and explaining it if necessary. Most important, you want to remind students that if Hughes was employing imagery (and he was), then it definitely worked! They will naturally talk about how depressing and dark the poem is, but if they don’t mention it enough, remind them of that, too.

* Showcase the posters by taping them to the wall (in a space that allows for other artwork to be added to each side).

**“I Dream a World”**

Switching gears, tell students they’re going to explore the bright side of Hughes. Hand out the “IDAW”/”DD” document.

* Ask a well-spoken student to read “IDAW” out loud. (I like to have poetry read out loud so we really HEAR it)
* Ask students to annotate “IDAW,” focusing on its contrast to “DD”
* I have them annotate / make comments in the margins, but you can structure it more if you want
* Discuss the contrast as a class (expect some really awesome ideas, like “IDAW” is the beginning and “DD” is the end, or the “Dream” in “Dream Deferred” is literally the world the speaker creates in “IDAW,” but when “deferred,” “DD” happens)

Since there is an emphasis on time with the deferred part, I bring in Salvador Dali’s *Melting Clock at Moment of First Explosion.* The title alone sparks a lot of potential ideas.

* Ask students to engage with the painting 2 ways:
  + First, what is the meaning of the artwork? In other words, what is the message that Dali conveys?
  + Second, how does this painting and its message relate to Hughes’s “DD” (and “IDAW” if you’re feeling ambitious).
  + See my notes for what my class and I came up with (at this point their minds are blown, much like the clock)

Closing: Poetry and paintings (or artwork in general) are similar in that they both convey ***feeling***. Yes, they also convey messages, but, more than any other genre, they convey a feeling. “IDAW” and “DD” conveys feelings of ideal worlds with unlimited possibilities along with feelings of hopeless and despair when the ideal is not realized. Dali’s painting is a visualization of such feelings.

**MLK “I Have a Dream” and “Unfulfilled Hopes”**

Another text that embodies the dream is MLK’s famous “I Have a Dream” speech. Although Hughes is not known for his participation in the civil rights movement, we can see how he indirectly participated by allowing King to take poetic liberties with his ideas.

* Tell students there are remnants of Hughes’s poetry in King’s speech. You just have to look and listen.
* Listen to the speech as students read along
* Use the elmo to model annotation
  + I focus on the remnants from Hughes first (see example)
  + Have students finish finding remnants of Hughes for HW or independent study in class
  + Review the next day (using Elmo is best)
  + To see if they can do the same thing on their own, give them MLK’s sermon “Unfullfilled Hopes.” Put the students in pairs, and have one student assigned to “DD” and the other assigned to “IDAW.” Together, they will find the remnants of each Hughes poem in the sermon.
  + Then move on to ethos, pathos, logos, anaphora, diction, metaphor, and rhetorical analysis-type stuff if you still need to cover and/or review that.

**For 9th graders**

Use the lesson above, but instead of the “Quick Recap,” introduce Hughes as you introduce Hansberry’s *A Raisin in the Sun.*

**Hughes and Hansberry**

Pass out copies of the play *ARITS.* As a class, read Hughes’s poem “DD” at the beginning of the play. Most students will immediately make connections to the play’s title, but make sure they understand the “raisin in the sun” connection.

* Ask students to predict what the play will be about after they’ve read the poem. You can make this either written or verbal, but definitely discuss.
* Give students a copy of “Mother to Son” (I also use a prezi, which I can share), and tell them that the Hansberry thought of naming the play *The Crystal Stair.* (This will be more important during and after reading the entire play)
* Once students finish reading the play, introduce the Poetry Project.

***See “Dream Deferred” above***

**Poetry Project**

These are the directions for the project. Make copies and give to students.

ENG I H Poetry Project

1. “Son to Mother”

Respond to Langston Hughes’s poem “Mother to Son” from the perspective of Walter in *A Raisin in the Sun.* Your poem should be at least 15 lines. Pretend that Mama is speaking “Mother to Son” to Walter, and Walter responds to Mama in your poem “Son to Mother.”

1. “I Dream a World”

Use your response describing your ideal world to create a poem about that wonderful world. This poem should be at least 14 lines. You may use the title “I Dream a World,” or you may create your own.

1. Freestyle / Your Choice

Create any kind of poem, as long as it is LONGER than 5 lines. You can make it serious, silly, sad, etc. Remember that your style does not have to mimic standard or conventional English (think back to E.E. Cummings).

***See “I Dream a World” above***

**Hang the collaborative “IDAW” poem so that it bookends the “DD” pictures, symbolizing that we all desire to begin and end with “IDAW,” even if it means enduring some of the pain in “DD.” However, ending with “IDAW” keeps hope alive.**