



Yale-New Haven
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2006 Volume III: Postwar America: 1945-1963

Voices of the Sixties and the Modern Poetry Slam

Guide for Curriculum Unit 06.03.04
by Sean Griffin

In this unit I tried to help students to make a cultural connection between the music that they enjoy today and the poetry and music that was enjoyed by their parents and grandparents. The unit begins with a focus on the Beatnik poets of the fifties. I ask students to examine the poetry of Ginsberg, Ferlenghetti and others before giving them the chance to write their own beat poems and create artwork to accompany them. The second part of the unit focuses on the lyrics connected with the protest music of the sixties. After providing the students with some background, I ask them to examine the lyrics, listen to the music and eventually create their own work similar to that which they studied. Finally in the final section of the unit, students examine spoken word or performance poetry. The culminating project for the final section is a classroom poetry slam in which students share their work in a competitive manner.

(Developed for Language Arts, grade 8; recommended for English and Social Studies, grades 7-12)

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