Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2023 Volume I: Poetry as Sound and Object

Cities of Big Shoulders, Roses from Concrete: The Poetry of the City

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In this unit students will explore the concept of poetic voice as expressed in the city poem. They will explore urban poetry by employing analysis of figurative language, textual structures, and word choice. Students will also learn how the collaborative interpretation of poetry through performance, visual art, and videography can both enhance the meaning of the text in addition to creating new meaning. Through using these tools, students will learn the methods in which authors transform the sights, sounds, buildings, people, and cultures of the city into their own unique and distinctive poetic voice. Poetic voice represents the sound of the poem as it is brought to the ear of the reader-listener, the authorial presence and tone which drives the artistic vision, and the inherently political voice of the poem that asserts citizens' right to the city, to shape its present and future. From ancient Rome, to the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the nineteenth century, up to the present day, students will see how poets across the world envisioned the city, how it was celebrated, critiqued, or carefully examined. In this process, students will have the opportunity to explore and illumine their own experiences and vision of life in the city through their own poetry. This unit was developed for the Grade 7 Reading Intervention classroom, and is intended for all secondary humanities and social studies courses.

(Developed for Read 180, grades 7-8; recommended for English Language Arts, World History, and American History, grades 7-12)