

TOURNAMENT OF POEMS

Instructions:

Use the enclosed bracket, which is designed for eight poems. 10 suggested poems are also included. Each day read aloud the two poems that are competing against each other. Have students complete the reading response:

Suggested Response Prompts:

1. Choose one of the poems and find music that you think would work well as a soundtrack for it. Share the music and explain your choice.
2. Choose one of the poems and draw or find a picture or a photo to illustrate it. Share the picture and explain your choice.
3. Choose one of the poems and write a letter to a friend, or create a video recommending the poem to them.
4. Choose one of the poets and research their lives. Write down three to five interesting facts about them other than their name, where they lived, and the dates they lived or died.
6. Describe a dream (day dream or night dream) you had that is similar to this poem.
7. Draw a cartoon representing the speaker of this poem.

Once that is complete, have the students vote on which poem proceeds through to the next round.

SUGGESTED POEMS

We Lived Happily during the War

by Ilya Kaminsky

And when they bombed other people's houses, we

protested

but not enough, we opposed them but not

enough. I was

in my bed, around my bed America

was falling: invisible house by invisible house by invisible house.

I took a chair outside and watched the sun.

In the sixth month

of a disastrous reign in the house of money

in the street of money in the city of money in the country of money,

our great country of money, we (forgive us)

lived happily during the war.

The Rose That Grew From Concrete

by Tupac Shakur

Did you hear about the rose that grew
from a crack in the concrete?
Proving nature's law is wrong it
learned to walk without having feet.
Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams,
it learned to breathe fresh air.
Long live the rose that grew from concrete
when no one else ever cared.

Dreams

by Langston Hughes

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

Interlude

by Kevin Young

I know now who
I am writing this to

& it ain't you

Afraid it's me
I cannot leave

alone well enough—

a sparrow striking again
again his own reflection

This Morning I Pray for My Enemies

by Joy Harjo

And whom do I call my enemy?
An enemy must be worthy of engagement.
I turn in the direction of the sun and keep walking.
It's the heart that asks the question, not my furious mind.
The heart is the smaller cousin of the sun.
It sees and knows everything.
It hears the gnashing even as it hears the blessing.
The door to the mind should only open from the heart.
An enemy who gets in, risks the danger of becoming a friend.

When we were knife throwers

by Shaindel Beers

My favorite part of the act wasn't the sparkle of red sequins,
the skimming of satin skirt flirting with thigh. I loved

the knife *thwack*, the shudder of the pearl handle vibrating
when the blade landed true. I loved cartwheeling in space

when you spun the wheel, our love every day a game
of roulette, praying to always land on black but wearing
red just in case. I lived for you tying the blindfold, the whisper,
I love you as you fastened the manacles secure. Each second

a precarious balance between trust and chance.

The Library of Babel

by Alison C. Rollins

for Jorge Luis Borges

While there is still some light
on the page, I am writing now
a history of snow, of everything
that has been and will be thought.

When a blind poet says *I need you*
to be my eyes, they are asking to see
through your mouth.

Symptoms of Optimism

by Camille Rankine

If I've told you once, I've told you
time is a language I don't speak.

When I say *now*, I mean
mañana, chica. Was it yesterday

we were bloody-nosed, holding
our breath for the balloon to come

down, hoping for higher, higher? Maybe
freedom is a ribbon, pinning us to earth.

By nightfall, find me beginning
my descent, clinging sideways

to the ceiling. And how many days
since I've touched the ground?

Morning, I'll trickle down. Tomorrow,
I promise. The birds will come.

#47

by Lawrence Ferlinghetti

In far-out poetry

the heart bleeds upon the page

shamelessly

as printer's ink bleeds onto

the fine tooth of paper

As blood in its rage

beats through the body

blind in its courses

Leaving its indelible imprints

those fine tattoos of living

known as poems

Crossing

by Jericho Brown

The water is one thing, and one thing for miles.

The water is one thing, making this bridge

Built over the water another. Walk it

Early, walk it back when the day goes dim, everyone

Rising just to find a way toward rest again.

We work, start on one side of the day

Like a planet's only sun, our eyes straight

Until the flame sinks. The flame sinks. Thank God

I'm different. I've figured and counted. I'm not crossing

To cross back. I'm set

On something vast. It reaches

Long as the sea. I'm more than a conqueror, bigger

Than bravery. I don't march. I'm the one who leaps.

My Mother Is a Rubber Ball

by Keely Hyslop

My mother is a rubber ball.

Flung against a wall by a hand that used to hold her,
she knows how to rebound.

Watch her grow her teeth back
after years of grinding them away during sleep.

My mother is a phoenix.

She cooks me French toast,
then bursts into flame.

Watch the top layer of my skin singe away
as she teaches me about expectations.

My mother is a magical washing machine.

Fill her with shirts soiled with mucus and tears,
add the detergent, the right incantation.

Watch the spin cycle closely.

You missed it, didn't you?

The shirts have disappeared.

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