

PART 3

LESSON 3: SPOKEN WORD + SOUND - CREATE AND PERFORM SPOKEN WORD POEM WITH SOUNDSCAPE

SOUNDSCAPE/SOUND PAINTING

Sometimes Spoken Word Poetry is performed with an accompaniment. The sounds of body percussion, instruments and/or voices can set the mood, enhance the text, and create a more interesting performance.

Soundscapes or sound painting is one way to accompany a poem. Students can blend voices, body percussion sounds, environmental and/or instrumental sounds together.

In this lesson, students will create an improvised soundscape for a poem with vocal, environmental, or instrumental sounds.

YOU WILL NEED:

- One or more short poems (you could use the poems included with PART 3, LESSON 2: Speaking Poetry Outloud lesson, or search for others)
- Copies of the **Soundscape for Dream Variations I Planning Worksheet**
- Improvised vocal or body percussion sounds, classroom instruments, or found instruments.

WHAT TO DO:

STEP 1: Introduce the idea of **sound painting**, to highlight important words, mood, meaning, or the atmosphere of a poem.

STEP 2: Display the text of a poem. “Winter Moon” by Langston Hughes works well to introduce *sound painting* or *soundscapes*.

- Speak the poem for students at a slow tempo. Hesitate slightly after key words such as ***thin, sharp, moon, ghostly white, slim, and curved crook.***
- Ask students to identify key words/phrases that suggest sounds to them. Circle the words on the displayed poem.
- Invite suggestions for producing vocal or body sounds that fit the mood and/or meaning of the circled words and phrases. Experiment with their suggestions, improvising and fitting sound to the words.
- **TIP:** It works best if the word is spoken, then the sound immediately follows in the brief silence without any pause. It keeps the poem flowing.
- **Speak the poem with selected sounds. THIS IS A REHEARSAL.** It is okay if it is messy!
- Divide the class in half. One group is the audience, the other the “sound orchestra.” As you speak the poem line by line, students in the “sound orchestra” improvise the selected voice and body sounds to illuminate the text and mood of the poem. The audience enjoys and responds to the performance.
- Switch groups and do it again. The audience again enjoys and responds to the performance.



WINTER MOON

*How thin and sharp
is the moon tonight!*

*How thin and sharp
and ghostly white*

*Is the slim curved crook
of the moon tonight!*

– Langston Hughes

DREAM VARIATIONS I

To fling my arms wide
In some place of the sun,
To whirl and to dance
Till the white day is done.
Then rest at cool evening
Beneath a tall tree
While night comes on gently,
Dark like me —
That is my dream!

To fling my arms wide
In the face of the sun,
Dance! Whirl! Whirl!
Till the quick day is done.
Rest at pale evening...
A tall, slim tree...
Night coming tenderly
Black like me.

STEP 3: When the process is familiar, introduce another Hughes poem for small group work. The two-part poem is called “Dream Variations I.”

- Display the text and recite the poem as a class.
- Tell students that they will create soundscapes in small groups.
- Distribute the **Soundscape for Dream Variations I Planning Worksheet**. Directions and the poetry text are included in the worksheet.

STEP 4: Divide into groups. Each chooses a scribe. The scribe captures the group’s ideas in writing as they brainstorm. Groups will:

- Read the poem together. Decide how fast or slow to go.
- Identify the best places to highlight a word or phrase with vocal or body sound.
- Decide what sounds should be loud/soft/smooth/accented, and how long they should last.
- Consider articulation: should the sounds be smooth (legato) or snappy and detached (staccato), or strong and accented
- Identify places where a single sound works. Places for layers of sound.
- Select a reader. Assign sound making group members to their parts of the soundscape. Scribe captures ideas in writing.

STEP 5: Groups Rehearse. The readers speak the poem with sounds woven through until the group can do it without hesitating. They are ready to perform for the class.

STEP 6: Document your work with audio or video recording.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

- If you have access to other band or orchestral instruments, create your soundscape with instrumental sounds in addition to classroom instruments, Orff instruments, percussion instruments or found items.
- Perform soundscapes twice. The first time with readers speaking the poem and sound makers performing. The second time, omit the words and perform only the sound colors or patterns of the poem in the same order.
- For a deeper experience, the students from a “soundscape” group can be paired with a “choreography” group and brainstorm how they can work on a performance together that combines sound and movement.



X2



WATCH THIS:

The 2018 WITNESS Young Peoples Concert featured VocalEssence Associate Artistic Director G. Phillip Schoultz, III performing an art song setting for voice and piano of “Dream Variations I,” composed by Margaret Bonds, and danced by Roxane Wallace.

<https://youtu.be/Z5njiNs3Ltg>



SOUNDSCAPE FOR “DREAM VARIATIONS I”

PLANNING ORGANIZER

- Read the poem together. Make decisions about **dynamics** (how loud and soft) and which words to **accent**, **tempo** (faster or slower places), and **pitch** of your voices (higher and lower).
- Find the best places to “paint” or accentuate a word or phrase with sound.
- Decide when sounds should be loud/soft/accented/ and how long they should last.
- Decide if the sounds should be smooth (**legato**), snappy and detached (**staccato**), or strong and accented (**marcato**).
- Find places where a single sound works. Find places for layers of sound.

LINES OF THE POEM	DESCRIBE YOUR SOUNDSCAPE IDEAS
<i>Who will read which lines?</i>	<i>How will sounds be made, who will make them, and other special instructions.</i>
“To fling my arms wide In some place of the sun,	
To whirl and to dance Till the white day is done.	
Then rest at cool evening Beneath a tall tree	
While night comes on gently, Dark like me — That is my dream!	
To fling my arms wide In the face of the sun,	
Dance! Whirl! Whirl! Till the quick day is done.	
Rest at pale evening . . . A tall, slim tree . . .	
Night coming tenderly Black like me.”	
Create an ending (coda)	

Name(s): _____

Group Name: _____ Date: _____