

# PART ONE

## LESSON 2: MEET JOE DAVIS, POET AND WITNESS GUEST ARTIST

Joe Davis is the guest artist and for this year's *Reawakening Love* WITNESS program and concert. **Students will learn about Joe Davis** as they read a short biography, view and listen to a video, and describe what they found interesting, thought provoking, and significant about the artist. Student partners will complete a Bio Summary using the **Create a Portrait** worksheet to capture their insights about the artist and what they are looking forward to seeing and hearing at the WITNESS concert.

### YOU WILL NEED:

- A video about Joe Davis, titled “CLNE Leadership Profile of Joe Davis” located in the VocalEssence Classroom Resource Hub: <https://vocalessence.org/resourcehub2223>.  
[The video was produced by the Center for Leadership and Neighborhood Engagement (CLNE).]
- Copies of student article, **Meet Joe Davis**
- Copies of the biographical **Create a Portrait** worksheet

### INTRODUCE STUDENTS TO JOE DAVIS

**STEP 1:** View the video “CLNE Leadership Profile of Joe Davis”, located in the WITNESS Classroom Resource Hub and via this link: <https://youtu.be/AWptQWl2xzE>, where Joe talks about his youth and his work. Direct students to jot down thoughts, questions, observations, and additional interesting details as they watch.

**STEP 2:** Distribute copies of the student biographical article **Meet Joe Davis**. Have students read the biographical article individually or in small groups, taking turns reading. Direct students to notice significant or interesting information about Joe as they read. Encourage them to use a highlighter to highlight important or interesting points.

**STEP 3:** Discuss as a class, and ask students to describe what they noticed about Joe. Collect comments on the board.

**OPTIONAL:** Watch the video a second time for more information to add to the summary.

**STEP 4:** Create a **Portrait of Joe Davis** using the biographical **Create a Portrait** worksheet. Students can work as individuals or in pairs.

- Direct them to fill the six spaces with facts, information, and observations based on their reading, viewing the video, and noting the summary on the board.
- Encourage them to expand beyond six circles, adding more facts, comments, or sketches and illustrations in the margin space.
- With the full class, ask each group to share one item from their **Portraits** without repeating. Keep going around sharing as long as information keeps coming.

**STEP 5:** Display the completed **Portraits of Joe Davis** on a classroom wall or a hallway bulletin board.



JOE SAYS 'HELLO'  
JOEDAVISPOETRY.COM

### MINNESOTA STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

English Language Arts:  
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas.  
*Use and interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively and demonstrate understanding of the text in which it appears.*

### FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS

- Read the biography out loud as a class, and identify facts about Joe Davis in a discussion.
- Complete the **Create a Portrait of Joe Davis** worksheet as a class.
- Display it on a smart board or a PowerPoint slide so all students can follow the bio.

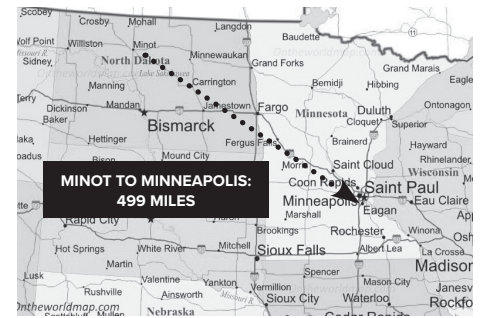
## BIOGRAPHICAL ARTICLE:

### MEET JOE DAVIS (B. 1987)

In Joe's own words, he was born "... in the humble prairies of Minot, ND, the son of a Jamaican immigrant mother and a hard-working Chicagoan father. I was raised in a home chilled by piercing winters and uncertain transitions yet warmed by a family full of faith and love.

*My parents and older sister nourished my creativity and imagination at an early age—from play time to story time, long library visits to watching Reading Rainbow—planting a seed which would only grow with the encouragement of classmates and teachers."*

NORTH DAKOTA, SOUTH DAKOTA AND MINNESOTA

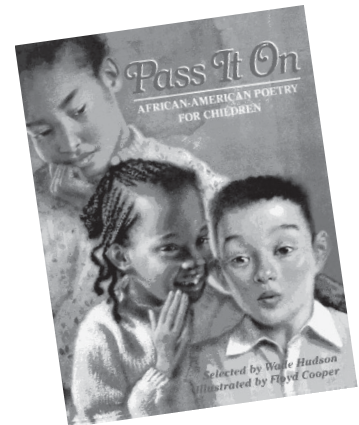


### JOE IS PASSIONATE ABOUT WORDS.

Joe and his family loved to go to the Minot, ND Library. One day, he found an illustrated anthology of poems, "Pass it On: African American Poetry for Children" edited by Wade Hudson. This was the first time he saw illustrations of children who looked like him.

In elementary school, Joe contracted a serious skin disease. This kept him out of school for many months. To fill the long, sad days and cope with his illness, Joe started to write poems and stories. When he returned to school, his teachers noticed his growing love for words. They supported and encouraged Joe's deep interest and desire to write.

He went to college at Minot State University, graduating with a degree in English. Joe says that it was the "... environment at Minot State that allowed me to explore and experiment with different things." Later he went to Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, where he received a master's degree in Theology.



### JOE BELIEVES POETRY IS POWERFUL.

Poetry can have a major influence in our lives. It changes the way we think, how we interact with others, and helps us become more open and willing to accept and love our world.

### JOE IS INSPIRED BY HIS EXPERIENCES.

He notices things that others ignore, and can create a poem on almost any topic. What an awesome gift!

He writes poems about himself and the people he meets and knows...

what and who they love, their challenges, and what makes them human. Joe's heroes include his family members, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Langston Hughes, and Dr. Seuss. Poet Gil Scott-Heron also had an important impact in his life.



*"I learned that my words could be used to offer hope and healing to others who had experienced similar problems and pains as those I wrote about. Poetry became a passage for unity and understanding, an outlet for my soul, a place to articulate my triumphs and tragedies. Since this discovery I've seized every opportunity to share, propelling a growth and challenging a mastery of my craft, a never-ending quest for excellence and expression that continues to this day."*

## JOE DAVIS IS AN ENTREPRENEUR.

**Entrepreneur** is a word for people who think big and invent innovative ideas and/or solutions to problems most people don't even know exist. He not only writes poems and songs, but he also performs his works regularly with musicians. He is the frontman (lead singer) of the world-funk group, **The Poetic Diaspora**, and he continues to create and perform spoken word poems.

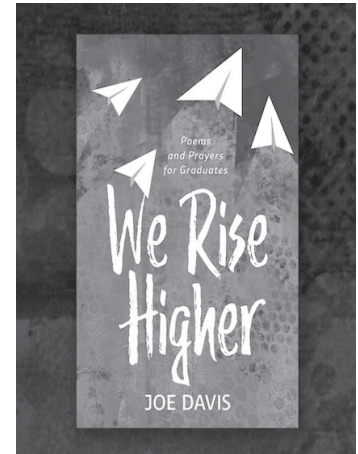
Joe formed and now directs a multimedia performance production company called **The New Renaissance**. This group creates, develops, and performs innovative and immersive experiences that connect poetry, music, and theater.

**Joe is a teacher**, working in schools as an artist-in-residence. He co-created JUSTmove, an arts-connected racial justice education program.

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## JOE IS A PUBLISHED AUTHOR.

A big dream was recently fulfilled when his poetry collection, **We Rise Higher** was published in 2022 (by Sparkhouse Publishing). **We Rise Higher** is dedicated to all the graduate of this generation. His words inspire, support, and encourage them as they move on what's next. He is currently working on a second book. Through all of his writing, performing, and teaching, Joe continues to pursue his lifelong goal: **to continue growing, changing, and perfecting his art form.**



### **DREAMER'S MANIFESTO (EXCERPT)**

*So don't choke down that hopeful  
passion that you have inside,  
Don't try to tame the fire, as its  
flames have died,  
Dream wild and awake with your  
bright eyes open wide,  
For life is but a dream only if you  
dream alive!*

*We Rise Higher, p. 56*

## A PORTRAIT OF JOE DAVIS

What do you know about Joe Davis, poet, performer, and entrepreneur?

Summarize six facts and noteworthy details in the circles.

Feel free to add more information or sketches in the extra spaces.

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