



YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2008 Volume II: American Voices: Listening to Fiction, Poetry, and Prose

Speak Words, Recite Messages: The Oral Interpretation of the Word

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This unit explores, discovers and recognizes how vocalizations of poetry and political speeches by African-Americans have influenced the students' community and American society. Students will learn to become listeners as another part of oral presentations. Students will be given opportunity to perform at spoken word venues and witness performances of speeches, spoken word poetry, and oral recitations.

Students will reflect on historical implications and political overtones of the oral performances. Students will learn prominent uses of vocal incantations, tone, lexis style, physical expression, and vernacular dialects. Students will be exposed to oral, video and audio recordings of spoken word poetry, and speeches drawing attention to their social function highlighting political occurrences in American society and the Black community. This unit gives a broader knowledge of orality and important texts, speeches and performed works in the history of African-Americans.

The unit is designed for use in an English Language Arts, American History, Civics, and General Law classroom at the high school level. The lessons can be adapted for use in Advanced Placement courses, as well as, in a learning support environment. This unit uses the Pennsylvania State Academic Standards from Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening; Arts & Humanities; and History.

(Developed for English I and IV, grades 9 and 12; recommended for English Language Arts and American History, grades 9-12)

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