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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2014 Volume II: Playing with Poems: Rules, Tools, and Games

Life Happens: Thinking about Key Life Transitions and Identity through Poetry

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Students in middle school face a multitude of changes as they progress through adolescence. Changes such as growing up, dealing with death, moving, changing friendships, changing relationships with family and peers, and losing and gaining different things become key changes that often impact students emotionally and academically. Even though these changes often consume the attention and focus of students, they are often not addressed in class. This unit seeks to provide students the opportunity to reflect on these issues and pursue some of their thinking through poetry. Poetry induces kids to grapple with difficult emotions and provides a creative outlet that is often not fully addressed in many teaching situations. Poetic form is taught through carefully selected mentor texts that can be used as frames for students to organize their ideas and produce poetry.

(Developed for English Language Arts, grade 8; recommended for English Language Arts, grade 8)

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