



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2017 Volume III: Poetry and Public Life

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## **Poetry in Public Discourse: Reading, Writing, and Circulating the Political Poem**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 17.03.01, published September 2017  
by Richard Cuminale

This unit aims to give students a sensitivity to the value of political poetry and an understanding of how it works and can work for them. They will read a variety of poems and consider the political situation of the poem and poet while at the same time considering their own political situations and how poetry can speak for them. Students will ask and answer questions like, “Why would this poet write this poem?” or “What in this poet’s life and circumstances led to this poem?” The unit includes opportunities for students to refine their close reading and essay writing skills, collaborative analysis and composition, and discussion through Socratic Seminars and writing workshops. The students will also practice responsive writing through a poetry reading journal and creative writing as they write their own political poetry. The resources for this unit list contemporary political poems and books for approaching political poetry and poetry in general.

(Developed for English 3, grade 11; recommended for English, grades 10-12, and AP Literature and Composition, grade 12)

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