



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

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## **Making Our Communities Visible: Poetry, Rhetoric and Social Justice**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 17.03.03, published September 2017

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This unit centers around the way a variety of contemporary African American, American Indian and Chicano poets have addressed issues of social justice, with the goal of increasing the visibility of marginalized communities in America, and drawing attention to acts of injustice. Students will study the way these poems build community, such as the way performance poetry can create a sense of community by exposing people to different perspectives, and poetry focused on increasing visibility can empower communities by helping people see their worlds differently.

Students will be immersed in reading and writing poetry, as well as discussion of contemporary issues that are important to them. They will also study the rhetorical elements at work in these poems, giving them a fresh understanding of how those elements interact, while they develop a voice to express their own views on issues they are passionate about.

Activities include keeping a poetry notebook, writing a variety of forms of poetry, and creating a photo poem to document community life.

This unit was written for 11<sup>th</sup> grade English III and English Language and Composition students, but it would be well suited for any 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade American Literature or American Studies class.

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

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