



# Listening to the Trees: Social Justice Poetry

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# Lesson One: Poetry as Political

Do Now

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# Lesson One: Poetry as Political

## “Love Rejected” by Lucille Clifton

- What is this poem about?
- Do you relate to the idea? How do you feel when you read this poem?
- Who is the speaker?
- To whom is the speaker talking? Who is the subject of the poem?
- Talk about the use of “Love.”

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# Lesson One: Poetry as Political

## “not an elegy for Mike Brown” by Danez Smith

- What is this poem about? What difference do you think it makes that this is a poem and not an essay or article?
- How do you respond to the author’s question, “isn’t that what being black is about?”
- What message is the speaker sending by comparing the Trojan war (Greeks against the city of Troy) and the killing of a black boy?
- Who is the speaker? To whom is the speaker talking?
- What does the speaker demand? Why?

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# Lesson One: Poetry as Political

## “Sonnet for Police Officers Charged with Enforcing SB1070” by Karen S. Córdova

- How do you feel when you read this poem? What images does it conjure? What feelings, emotions does it bring up?
- Who is the speaker? To whom is the speaker talking?
- What is this poem about? What difference do you think it makes that this is a poem and not an essay or article?

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## Lesson One: Poetry as Political

**Writing Activity:** What issues of injustice and justice are most important to you right now? Why?

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# Lesson Two: Personal as Political Poetry

Do Now

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# Lesson Two: Personal as Political Poetry

“Who Said it Was Simple”

By Audre Lorde

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# Lesson Two: Personal as Political Poetry

## “Who Said it Was Simple?” by Audre Lorde

- What does this poem say to you? What is its overall argument?

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# Lesson Two: Personal as Political Poetry

## “Tonight, in Oakland” by Danez Smith

- What contrasting images do you notice between the first and second halves of this poem? (Marigolds, plums, garden, rain, honey vs. blood, wound, mean mug, bullet, bury, shovels, prison) How are these contrasting images mirrored in the last stanza?
- How does the speaker identify? What groups does he identify with (who is the “we” and “us”)?

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## Lesson Two: Personal as Political Poetry

**Writing Activity:** Brainstorm some aspects of your own personal history (or present) and how your story blends and bends with that of a larger, more expansive history (or present).

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## Lesson Three: Spoken Word and Topic Brainstorm/Selection

“...poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital  
necessity of our existence.”

- Audre Lorde

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# Lesson Four: Workshopping and Revision

**Readers:** Lead with something positive.

Be specific. Not, “I liked it!”

Talk it out, don’t be shy. You’re helping the author achieve their desired reaction.

**Authors:** Listen, ask questions, seek clarification. Don’t get defensive!

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# Lesson Four: Revising Your Poems

Based on the workshopped feedback, let's get to it!

Consider what you need to revise in your poem before you get too bogged down in what you need to edit in your poem.

Work on content first!