

* SPARK

"The Hill We Climb"

GRADES 6–12

TYPE
POETRY

Students discuss the 2021 inaugural poem by Amanda Gorman and write their own poems in response to “The Hill We Climb.”

WHAT YOUR STUDENTS WILL LEARN

- Students will consider author intentions in delivering a message
- Students will analyze a piece of poetry, discussing personal and political connections and implications
- Student will write an original poem in response to a mentor text

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- [“The Hill We Climb” by Amanda Gorman](#) — video
- [Full transcript of the poem](#)

WHAT YOU WILL DO

1. Share [Inaugural Poems in History](#) with students, noting that Amanda Gorman is the sixth and youngest Inaugural Poet in U.S. history. Ask students to consider the purpose of poetry within inauguration ceremonies. Why do some presidents choose poetry to mark their inauguration?

2. Next, ask students to reflect on Amanda Gorman’s quote from [*The New York Times*](#) about her intentions in writing her inaugural poem, “The Hill We Climb:”

What I really aspire to do in the poem is to be able to use my words to envision a way in which our country can still come together and can still heal...It’s doing that in a way that is not erasing or neglecting the harsh truths I think America needs to reconcile with. — Amanda Gorman

3. Watch Amanda Gorman perform [“The Hill We Climb](#) .” Re-read the transcript out loud, marking lines that stand out to students. What do they connect with? What do they question? What surprises them?

4. Discuss the poem in small groups, asking students to first share the lines and questions that they noted with each other. In small groups or as a class, also consider:

- What “harsh truths” does Gorman reference in her poem? How does she frame these truths?
- What words does Gorman use to point toward the future? How does she start to answer the question she poses in the first lines of the poem, “Where can we find light in this never-ending shade?”
- Do you see yourself represented anywhere within the lines of this poem? If so, where?

5. Write a poem in response to “The Hill We Climb.” Students can choose from one or more of the following prompts, or create their own:

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Create a found poem, rearranging the words and lines you marked in “The Hill We Climb.”

- Start your poem with a line of your choosing from “The Hill We Climb.”
- Choose a phrase from “The Hill We Climb” and create a repetition poem, repeating the chosen phrase at the beginning of several of your lines ([like this one](#)).
- Amanda Gorman utilizes internal rhyme to create a lyrical quality in many of her poems. Write a poem about this inauguration that plays with internal rhyme.
- Write the poem you would read if you were invited to be the inaugural poet.