

## Blues #3- Lorenzo Thomas Lecture excerpts

**CONTENT AREA & GRADE LEVEL:** Poetry/Literature, Upper Level High School

**TIME:** One Class Period

**FOCUS:** Students will become more familiar with the blues as a musical and poetic form and will determine if blues poems are political and when personal issues are also political.

### **STANDARDS ASSESSED:**

**Colorado Reading and Writing Standard 4: Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.**

As students in grades 9-12 extend their knowledge, what they know and are able to do includes:

- recognizing an author's point of view, purpose, and historical and cultural context;

**Colorado Reading and Writing Standard 6: Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience.**

As students in grades 9-12 extend their knowledge, what they know and are able to do includes:

- reading, responding to, and discussing novels, poetry, short stories, non-fiction, content-area and technical material, plays, essays, and speeches;
- identifying recurrent themes in United States literature; and
- developing and supporting a thesis about the craft and significance of particular works of literature, both classic and contemporary, from a variety of ethnic writers.

**ASSESSMENT:** Monitor classroom discussion for students determination of whether blues poems are political and when personal issues are also political.

### **MATERIALS/BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

- Naropa Archive Lecture excerpts from Lorenzo Thomas' class lecture. (See URL listed below 89P116 00:14:47-00:30:17.)

Previously in this unit, students have listened to, read, and discussed several US American poets including blues singers Bessie Smith and Robert Johnson. Students wrote their own blues poems.

### **POSSIBLE PROCEDURES:**

1. **Do Now:** Read blues poems that students previously wrote.
2. Review historical references of Baraka and Ginsberg poems and blues poems heard so far (see Allen Ginsberg's "America" lesson, covered previously).
3. To make the connection between the art/poetry and the historical events that informs the work, as a class, make a timeline with events, poets, people, places in US history that the class has covered previously.
4. Referring to the timeline, as a class answer:
  - When were the poems/songs in question written?
  - What was going on in the US at those times? In the world?

- What was going on in the lives of the narrators of the poems as far as you can tell from the writing?
  - Do any of the blues poems students wrote contain historical references?
  - Are students' blues poems lyric?
  - What personal information about the narrators is revealed in students' poems?
3. **Introduce and play** Lorenzo Thomas lecture starting with song by Lightning Hopkins "War is starting again" written in 1958 (See URL listed below **89P116 00:14:47 – 00:30:17**).  
Audio:  
[http://www.naropa.edu/archive/audio/thomas\\_lorenzo\\_89p116\\_clip\\_war\\_is\\_starting\\_again.mp3](http://www.naropa.edu/archive/audio/thomas_lorenzo_89p116_clip_war_is_starting_again.mp3)
  4. Have students take notes on songs, lecture.
  5. Discuss "War is starting again" and "Vietnam Blues".  
What do the historical events of the songs mean to the singer/narrators?  
What is the form of the poem?
  6. **HOMEWORK/FOLLOW UP LESSON:**  
Research a blues artist we have not covered in class. Have the students present their research.

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