

Review

I. Let's review our review! Reread (or read) and discuss Denice Frohman's poem "Accents." To deepen your understanding of "Accents," watch the following two presentations of it:

a. Denice Frohman – Accents: [youtube.com/watch?v=qtOXiNx4jgQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtOXiNx4jgQ)

b. "Accents" by Denice Frohman: [youtube.com/watch?v=84ZcTIjDCjk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84ZcTIjDCjk)

"Accents" by Denice Frohman

my mom holds her accent like a shotgun,
with two good hands.
her tongue, all brass knuckle
slipping in between her lips
her hips, all laughter and wind clap.

she speaks a sanchocho¹ of spanish and english,
pushing up against one another,
in rapid fire

there is no telling my mama to be "quiet,"
she don't know "quiet."

her voice is one size better fit all
and you best not tell her to hush,
she waited too many years for her voice to arrive
to be told it needed housekeeping.

English sits her her mouth remixed
so "strawberry" becomes "eh-strawbeddy"
and "cookie" becomes "eh-cookie"
and kitchen, key chain, and chicken all sound the same.

my mama doesn't say "yes"
she says "ah ha"
and suddenly the sky in her mouth becomes a Hector Lavoe song

¹ A thick soup consisting of meat and root vegetables

her tongue can't lay itself down flat enough
for the English language,
it got too much hip
too much bone
too much conga²
too much cuatro³
to two step
got too many piano keys
in between her teeth,
it got too much clave⁴
too much hand clap
got too much salsa to sit still
it be an anxious child wanting to
make Play-Doh out of concrete English
be too neat for her kind of wonderful.
her words spill in conversation
between women whose hands are all they got
sometimes our hands are all we got
and accents remind us that we are still
bomba⁵, still plena⁶

say "wepa"⁷
and a stranger becomes your hermano.
say "dale"⁸
and a crowd becomes your family reunion.

my mama's tongue is a telegram from her mother
decorated with the coqui's⁹ of el campo.¹⁰

² A Latin American dance of African origin, usually with several people in a single line

³ A small guitar, typically with four (or five) single or paired strings

⁴ Key or clef

⁵ A traditional Puerto Rican drum consisting of a barrel with a goatskin head

⁶ A style of Puerto Rican music having a highly syncopated rhythm and often satirical lyrics

⁷ Slang exclamation used to express excitement, congratulations, and joy

⁸ Go ahead

⁹ Common name for several species of small frogs native to Puerto Rico

¹⁰ Field

so even though her lips can barely
stretch themselves around english,
her accent is a stubborn compass
always pointing her
toward home.

2. Reread (or read) and discuss Elizabeth Acevedo's poem "Hair." To deepen your understanding of "Hair" watch Elizabeth's Acevedo's performance of the poem: [youtube.com/watch?v=0II1xCfnzXs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0II1xCfnzXs)

"Hair" by Elizabeth Acevedo

My mother tells me to "fix" my hair.
And by fix, she means straighten, whiten,
but how do you fix this shipwrecked
history of hair? The true meaning
of strand-ed. When tresses¹¹ hug tight
like African cousins in ship bellies.
Did they imagine that their great grand-children
would look like us? And would hate them
how we do? Trying to find way to erase
them from our skin; iron them out of our hair.

This wild tangle of hair that strangles air,
you call them wild curls, I call them breathing,
ancestors spiraling. Can't you see them
in this wet hair that waves like hello?

They say Dominicans can do the best hair.
Wash, set, flatten the spring in any lock.
But what they mean is we are the best at
swallowing amnesia in a cup of morir soñando¹²:
die dreaming. We rather do that than live
in this reality between orange juice and milk
between reflections of the sun and whiteness.

¹¹ A long lock of a woman's hair

¹² A Dominican beverage usually made of orange juice, milk, cane sugar, and chopped ice

What they mean is: Why would you date a black man?

What they mean is: a prieto¹³ cocolo?¹⁴

What they mean is: Why would two oppressed people come together? It's two times the trouble...

What they really mean: Have you thought of your daughter's hair?

And I don't tell them that we love like sugarcane.

Brown skinned, pale fleshed, meshed and pure sweetness.

The children of children of fields.

How our bodies curve into one another like an echo.

How I let my curtain of curls blanket us from the world.

How our children will be beautiful of dusked skin, diamond eyes. hair of reclamation. How I will braid pride down their back

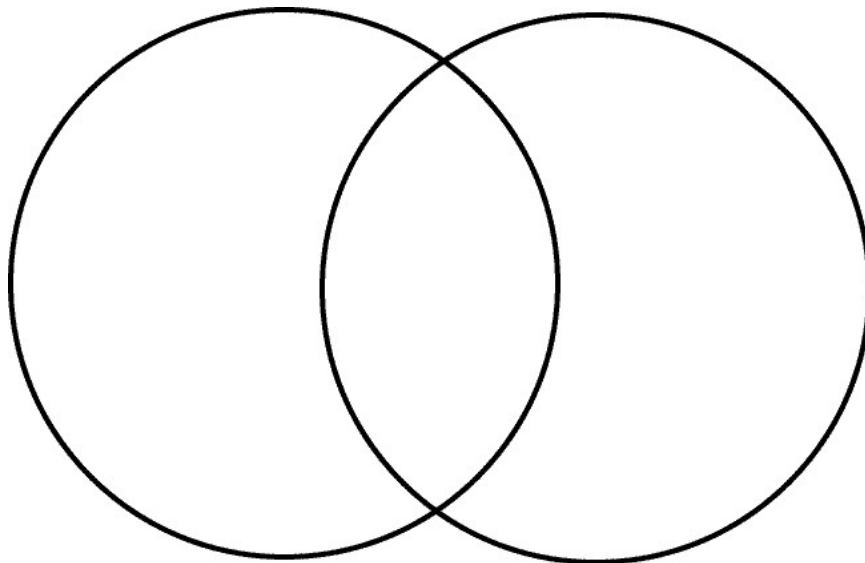
and from the moment they leave the womb

they will be born in love with themselves.

My mother tells me to fix my hair and so many words remain unspoken, because I, I don't reply:

You cannot fix what was never broken.

3. Compare and contrast the poems "Accents" and "Hair."



¹³ Tight or dark

¹⁴ Slang term used sometimes to refer to non-Hispanic African descendants

Louder Than a Bomb

4. Watch the first 24 minutes and 45 seconds of the documentary *Louder Than a Bomb* (2010) and answer the following questions:

- a. Why did Lamar Jorden's father cry for the first time when he heard him perform poetry?
- b. How was Steinmetz College Prep's poetry slam team profiled? Why did Lamar Jorden remark that "we were like looked at as if we didn't belong or whatever, like we were looked down upon?"
- c. Why has Nova Venerable written a lot about her dad? What does her reason tell you about poetry?
- d. How does Nate Marshall defy stereotypes?
- e. According to Adam Gottlieb, what is the primary function of slam?
- f. Who do you think will win Louder Than a Bomb, Steinmetz College Prep (Lamar Jorden), Oak Park and Rivers High School (Nova Venerable), Whitney Young Magnet High School (Nate Marshall), or Northside College Prep (Adam Gottlieb)?

5. Congratulations! You have been chosen to perform at Louder Than A Bomb Toronto on the behalf of Olympiads School. Individually or in groups, prepare a performance.

- a. Listen to three pieces of instrumental music as if the music were from the soundtrack to your own film. While listening, write complete sentences describing the imaginary scenes that the music might accompany.