

APRIL MADNESS

National Poetry Month, April, begins just as NCAA March Madness ends. This project integrates the two events as students develop skills in speaking and listening.

Working together, students determine the qualities of a good poetry presentation. Then they individually select a poem to present and rehearse it.

Students are assigned to competition brackets similar to March Madness brackets. Each day two students present their poems. Their teacher and classmates vote on each presentation, and one of the two advances.

This continues throughout the month until someone wins.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

This project is designed for 11th grade but can be adapted for any grade level.

Anchor Standards for Reading

- By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11–CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening

- Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Anchor Standards for Language

- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
 - a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text.
 - b. Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.

DAY ONE

Preparation: Select the videos you will show tomorrow from [the Poetry Out Loud video series](#). Find the text for the poem in each video. Give each student a copy of each text to read before coming to class the next day.

1. Present an overview of the April Madness project using the “April Madness” handout (p. 4). If students do not have to memorize their poems for your project, address the issue of using note cards now. If students are required to memorize their poems, you may want to adjust your timeline.
2. Ask students to think about a time they listened to someone read or recite a poem. What elements of that presentation enhanced it, made it easy to understand, made it memorable? List these on the board or screen.
3. Use [the criteria from the Poetry Out Loud site](#) to affirm or add to student lists. Compile a class checklist of criteria for the project.
4. Show students [Poetry Out Loud videos](#) of the poems they read before coming to class. Ask students to critique the presentations using the checklist they created. (If opportunity permits, consider showing some YouTube videos of Poetry Out Loud students who were not finalists. Ask students to identify possible weaknesses in their presentations.)

Ticket out: Students identify the 2 criteria they believe are most important to a successful poetry presentation.

Assignment: Students are to find one or two poems they would be comfortable reciting to the class. They should bring a copy of the poems to class the next day.

DAY TWO

Preparation: Use an online bracket generator to create a schedule of the competition for each class. Hang the schedule in the room in a location that lets you update them easily. You may wish to give each student a copy to help them keep track.

1. Return to the previous day’s discussion of the qualities of a successful poetry presentation. Do students want to add anything to the checklist they designed together yesterday?
2. Working with a partner, students practice saying the poem aloud with expression.
3. The teacher observes and coaches as needed.
4. Introduce students to the schedule of competition.

DAY THREE

1. The first two students recite their poems.
2. When they have finished reciting, the other students cast ballots for the presentation they believe was better. (Decide in advance whether the presenters will vote. If they vote, assure them that they are allowed to vote for themselves if they want to.) The teacher also votes.
3. When the ballots have been collected, the teacher says a few words about each presentation and announces his/her vote.
4. Student ballots are counted, the totals are tallied, and the winner is announced.
5. Repeat as needed at the beginning of class for the rest of the competition.

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In honor of National Poetry Month, we will have a class poetry competition. Each day, two students will present a poem of their choosing. The teacher and class will vote on the best presentation, and the winner will advance.

- All poems must be appropriate for school. Aside from that, choose a poem you like: Shakespeare, Dr. Seuss, song, psalm, something you wrote – it's all good.
- You do not have to memorize your poem. If you do not memorize, your notes should not distract from your presentation.
- Begin your presentation by stating the title of the poem and its author.
- Every day we will vote on which presentation we believe is better. Students each cast one ballot. The teacher will cast the same number of ballots as there are students in the class that day, divided between the presenters as s/he sees fit.
- You are assessed on the quality of your first presentation. This grade is based on the rubric, not the number of ballots received.
- Each time you advance in your bracket, you earn 2 bonus points.
- You can select a new poem each time you advance, or you can keep the one you used before.
- If you miss a presentation, your opponent automatically advances. If you miss your first (assessed) presentation, be prepared to make it up the day you return.
- If you have a field trip or other scheduled absence, you are allowed to trade with someone. You must trade at least 24 hours in advance and tell your teacher.