

# ***CA ETHNIC STUDIES MODEL CURRICULUM***

## ***Pacific Islanders Climate Devastation Poetry***

**Lesson Plan:** Pacific Islanders Climate Devastation Poetry

### **Themes:**

- Identity
- History and Movement
- Systems of Power
- Social Movements and Equity

### **Asian Americans Course Content:**

Unit 6: New Asian American Communities after 1965

Unit 7: Asian American Social Movements (ES)

**Disciplinary Area:** Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies

**Ethnic Studies Values and Principles Alignment:** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

### **Standards Alignment:**

CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy: L.9-10.5a, 6, RL.9-10.2, 4, 5, 6, SL.9-10.3, W.9-10.4, 5, L.9-10.5, 6.

### **Lesson Overview:**

Through this lesson, students will learn how climate change has had a devastating impact to the Pacific Islander population. Students will learn about pleas for action by Pacific Islanders in solving the climate devastation to their home islands. Students will also explore Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner's poetry in order to craft and inspire their own poetry. After analyzing and interpreting the poems, students will recognize poetry as a vehicle to express untold stories about events/issues both small and large. This lesson will help students expand their viewpoints as they explore the readings and begin to work with poems. This lesson focuses on poetry's central ideas, similes, and metaphors. Students will learn how to craft central ideas for their poems, and use similes and metaphors in conveying their messages.

### **Lesson Objectives** (Students will):

1. Learn about how climate change impacts the Marshallese, the people of the Marshall Islands.
2. Find the central idea of each of the readings/poems.
3. Identify and analyze similes and metaphors as effective devices in discussing everyday details/issues.
4. Analyze the impact of word choice in the creation of a particular mood.
5. Craft a poem with a central idea, similes, and metaphors.

### **Essential Questions:**

1. What are the consequences of climate change to the Marshallese people?
2. What is Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner pleading when she says, "We are nothing without our islands"?
3. Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner addressed the United Nations' Climate Summit in 2014. Do you think the world has made any progress on climate change? Do you think we need to do more? Do you think the problem with rising sea levels still threatens the livelihood of the Marshallese?
4. Do you think poetry can be an effective way to advance and advocate for social changes?

## **Vocabulary:**

**Climate Activist:** a person who actively campaigns to have issues of climate change recognized and addressed. (Collins Dictionary)

**Forced Migration:** a general term referring to the movements of refugees and internally displaced people (by conflicts within their country of origin), as well as people displaced by natural or environmental disasters, chemical or nuclear disasters, famine, or development projects. (Columbia Public Health)

**Hiroshima-sized explosions:** referring to the first atomic bomb dropped by the United States on the city of Hiroshima, Japan during World War II, resulting in an estimated 145,000 deaths due to radiation-related ailments including cancer and chronic diseases among survivors; and over 90% dead within a quarter mile of where bomb was dropped, 33% at within one mile, and 10% within 1.2 miles (AtomicBombMuseum.org)

**Militarism:** the belief that it is necessary to have a strong military force in order to have a political or economic advantage. (Cambridge Dictionary)

**United Nations:** an organization which most countries belong to and whose role is to encourage international peace, cooperation, and friendship. (Collins Dictionary)

## **Assessment, Application, Action, and Reflection:**

### **Lesson Steps/Activities:**

#### **Activity 1:** Structure of a poem and introduction of the poet

Explain to students: We will study Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner's two poems on climate change and the consequence of climate change to the Marshallese people of the Marshall Islands, and her plea for a solution to the climate devastation there.

We will begin with an introduction to the basic structure of a poem.

#### 1. Basic Structure of a Poem:

<u>Prose Structure:</u>	<u>Poetry Structure:</u>
Sentence	Line
Paragraph	Stanza

Point out to students that in poems, lines do not necessarily have to be complete sentences. Likewise, a stanza can range from only one line to multiple lines.

#### 2. Provide Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner's background:

- Kathy was born in the Marshall Islands. She moved to Hawai'i at the age of 7, and moved back to the Marshall Islands at the age of 25
- She is a climate activist, and addressed the United Nations' Climate Summit in 2014
- She writes about the nuclear testing conducted in the Marshall Islands, militarism, the rising sea level as a result of climate change, forced migration, and racism in America
- From 1946 to 1958, the U.S. conducted 67 nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands, which equates to 1.6 Hiroshima-size explosions per day
  - In 1945 during World War II, the U.S. dropped two nuclear bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—later leading to the end of the war

- A. More information can be found on page 5 at: [https://advancingjustice-la.org/sites/default/files/AAPIWVPOETRY%20Women\\_Voices\\_Untold\\_Stories\\_through\\_Poetry-2.pdf](https://advancingjustice-la.org/sites/default/files/AAPIWVPOETRY%20Women_Voices_Untold_Stories_through_Poetry-2.pdf)

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## **Activity 2:** Central Idea of a Poem:

- Identify the central idea of the poem conveyed by the poet
  - Identify details from the poem that support the central idea
1. Explain to students that the class will watch a short video about Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner at a United Nations climate conference.
    - a. Play the video: *Fighting Climate Change with Poems: Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner* [run time 03:56] ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65nhzhZ\\_x8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65nhzhZ_x8))
      - Select a couple of students to share something they learned and found interesting from the video they watched.
      - This is a good opportunity to bring up the significance of the lesson: Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner says in the video that she's using poetry as a way to fight climate change. She's using poetry to tell the story of her homeland and to share the concerns of her people.
  2. The "2 Degrees" poem can be found on page 6 at: [https://advancingjustice-la.org/sites/default/files/AAPIWVPOETRY%20Women\\_Voices\\_Untold\\_Stories\\_through\\_Poetry-2.pdf](https://advancingjustice-la.org/sites/default/files/AAPIWVPOETRY%20Women_Voices_Untold_Stories_through_Poetry-2.pdf)  
Display the poem on a screen for the entire class to see.
    - a. Have students popcorn read the poem.  
Instruct students to do the following while reading.
      - Think about what the central idea of the poem is, and write down the lines or stanzas that support the central idea.
      - Ask students to pay close attention to the last stanza of the poem which is the conclusion of the poem and similar to the conclusion of an essay.
    - b. What is the central idea and the message that Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner is conveying in the last stanza of her poem "2 Degrees"?
      - Kathy is trying to make the point that while discussions about climate change are important, it is also important and necessary to remember and think about how climate change impacts people, specifically those in the Marshall Islands.

### Activity 3: Similes and Metaphors

Explain to students: In this lesson you will learn what similes and metaphors are, and how to identify, create and analyze them.

1. Use these examples to explain literal and figurative language:
  - a. Literal language: "It was raining a lot, so I rode the bus."
    - In this example of literal language, the writer means to explain exactly what is written: that he/she chose to ride the bus because of the heavy rain.
  - b. Figurative language: "It was raining cats and dogs, so I rode the bus."
    - In this example of figurative language, there weren't actual cats and dogs falling from rain clouds, instead, the rain was so heavy and large in quantity that it was almost as if small animals were falling from the sky.
2. Similes and metaphors are figurative language:  
Review the following examples and ask the students to explain what each means.

	<b>Simile</b>	<b>Metaphor</b>
	<b>using "like" or "as"</b>	<b>Not using "like" or "as"</b>
1	Life is <b>like</b> a journey.	Life is a journey.
2	You are <b>like</b> sunshine on a cloudy day.	You are my sunshine on a cloudy day.
3	You are <b>like</b> a hurricane: there's calm in your eye, but I'm getting blown away.	You are a hurricane.

	<b>Simile</b>
4	Her mind is <b>as</b> sharp <b>as</b> a razor.
5	For I knew his eyes <b>like</b> an old, old song.
6	Her long, blue skirt was <b>like</b> a river, flowing behind her in the breeze.
7	His hands were <b>as</b> cold <b>as</b> ice after walking home during the snowstorm.
8	My good intent has fallen short <b>like</b> an air ball.

	<b>Metaphor</b>
9	His answer to the problem was just a band-aid, not a solution.
10	The path of resentment is easier to travel than the road to forgiveness.
11	The teacher planted the seeds of wisdom.
12	The wheels of justice turn slowly.

3. Ask students to identify which is a simile or a metaphor. After giving students a few minutes to write down their answers, call on them to share their answers.

		<b>Simile or Metaphor</b>
13	He is <b>as</b> tall <b>as</b> a tree.	<b>Simile</b>

14	My bookbag feels <b>like</b> a bag of rocks.	<b>Simile</b>
15	The snow is a white blanket.	<b>Metaphor</b>
16	She dances <b>like</b> she was trying to shake a spider off her leg.	<b>Simile</b>
17	He is the Michael Jordan of his basketball team.	<b>Metaphor</b>

4. Analyzing similes & metaphors:

- Similes and metaphors (and other figurative language) are used to compare one thing to another, showing how the two things are similar or different.
- Looking back at the table #3, think about what is being compared to what in each example.
- Circle the two parts of the sentence that are being compared to one another.

13	<b>He</b> is as tall as a <b>tree</b> .
14	My <b>bookbag</b> feels like a <b>bag of rocks</b> .
15	The <b>snow</b> is a <b>white blanket</b> .
16	She <b>dances</b> like she was trying to <b>shake a spider off her leg</b> .
17	<b>He</b> is the <b>Michael Jordan</b> of his basketball team.

**Activity 4:** Figurative Language in Poetry: “Tell Them”

- Play the video *Marshall Islands Poet to the U.N. Climate Summit: “Tell Them We Are Nothing Without Our Islands”* [Run time 04:01] ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YUO\\_qijo0us](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YUO_qijo0us)).
- Figurative language is one way that poets express themselves and create imagery. Students will identify, and analyze similes and metaphors using the poem “Tell Them.”

Phrases from the Poem:	Simile or Metaphor	What is being compared?	To what?	What is the author trying to say with this comparison?
black pearls glinting like an eye in a storm of tight spirals	simile	the black pearls	an eye	This is a description of the package of earrings that she is preparing for her friends.
a proud people toasted dark brown as the carved ribs of a tree stump				
our islands were dropped from a basket carried by a giant				
the hallow hulls of canoes as fast as the wind				

- Is the phrase listed a simile or a metaphor?
- What is being compared (the subject)?

- What is that subject/thing being compared to?
  - What did the author mean by making this comparison?
3. The poem “Tell Them” can be found on page 7 at: [https://advancingjustice-la.org/sites/default/files/AAPWVPOETRY%20Women\\_Voices\\_Untold\\_Stories\\_through\\_Poetry-2.pdf](https://advancingjustice-la.org/sites/default/files/AAPWVPOETRY%20Women_Voices_Untold_Stories_through_Poetry-2.pdf)  
Display the poem on a screen for the entire class to see.
    - a. Ask students to:
      - Write down the phrases that have similes and metaphors.
      - Identify them as similes or metaphors within each of the phrases.
      - Write down the significance of each comparison.
    - b. Divide the class into small groups. Have the students discuss the following:
      - How Marshallese people celebrate their culture and their islands (home).
      - How climate change has impacted the Marshallese.
      - How the author uses similes and metaphors to convey her message.

### **Activity 5:** Lesson assignment – Write your own poem.

1. Begin by telling students they will be writing their own poem which will incorporate the concepts they’ve learned so far.
  - a. Have students write down the central idea of their poem—the message they want to convey.
  - b. Have students write out their poems.
  - c. Have students review their poems in order to think of similes and metaphors that can be included in what they have written.
2. Peer discussion  
Ask students to go back to their same assigned groups to discuss their poems and help one another out on central ideas, smiles, and metaphors.
3. Have students turn in their poems. Invite students to share their poems by reading them aloud in front of the class or by posting them on a board for students to view later.

### **Materials and Resources:**

- Asian Americans Advancing Justice Los Angeles – Lesson Resource: <https://advancingjustice-la.org/what-we-do/leadership-development/untold-civil-rights-stories/aapi-women-voices-untold-stories>
- *Marshall Islands Poet to the U.N. Climate Summit: “Tell Them We Are Nothing Without Our Islands.”* Democracy Now. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YUO\\_qjjo0us](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YUO_qjjo0us).
- *Fighting Climate Change with Poems: Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner.* United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65nhzhZ\\_x8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65nhzhZ_x8)
- Sutter, John D. *You’re Making This Island Disappear.* CNN, Cable News Network. June 2015. <http://www.cnn.com/interactive/2015/06/opinions/sutter-two-degrees-marshall-islands/>.