

I Am Not Poems
by Carolyn Ferrucci

OBJECTIVES:

Students will explore issues of identity and self-expression, finding voice within opposition

EDUCATION LEVEL:

Middle School (ELL)

GENRE:

Poetry

FORMAT:

Lesson Plan

TIME FRAME:

60 minutes

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS:

None

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

Media device to play poems if possible along with printouts, papers and pens

LITERARY MODEL:

“My Name is Hiwot,” by Hiwot Adilow and “My Honest Poem” by Rudy Francisco

Listening to the Poem (10 minutes)

Diving right into these poems, especially if they can be played and heard aloud in the room, is a powerful experience. While listening, if you have a printout of the poem, play it twice, the second time having students circle words they don't understand, and put words they like in a box (if these overlap, have them make a squiggly circle/ different shape!).

Brief Discussion (5 minutes)

Ask the students:

What stood out to you, what did you notice? What did it feel like to hear these poems read live, to hear someone's voice? How do you think the speaker of "My Name is Hiwot" is feeling? Anger can be an emotion we use in our poetry, just like happiness, or feeling calm— what does it mean to write against something? Do you feel ever like someone misunderstands you, or tries to say who and what you are, almost like giving you a different name? How do comparisons help or hurt us?

Go over new or exciting words.

Writing (25 minutes)

With younger or ELL classes, using templates like the one below can really help:

I don't know _____ and/ but I know _____

I am _____ and/ but I am not _____

I wonder _____
_____ (Free line!)

Honestly _____

I am like a _____ and/ but not like a _____

My name is _____

My name is _____

My name is _____ *

* They can repeat their name, or come up with new names for themselves.

** Challenge: students can use one of the words in their circles or rectangles in their poems

As you make up a group poem example together, talk about what having the word "but" or "and" means in the poems (to hold different opinions together, or to contradict maybe similar sounding images). Talk about what kinds of words need to go in the blanks (verbs, nouns) or how you would have to modify them.

Sharing (20 minutes)

Read aloud, and discuss what everyone notices, how it felt to write about what you are not and what you are within the limits and hopefully liberations of language.