

BONUS LESSON | A Voice for Hard Issues

Core Curriculum Standards

Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details

- RL.7.2** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

Reading Literature: Craft and Structure

- RL.7.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.

Reading Informational Text: Craft and Structure

- RI.7.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration

- SL.7.1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

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Lesson Goals

Outcomes

Students will discuss the benefits of poetry in difficult situations, such as when someone is bullied. Students will also learn about the resources available to them at their schools to help them deal with these problems. *Basic knowledge of personification and theme are needed for this lesson.*

Themes, Issues, Concepts

bullying, loneliness, dangerous environments, being an outcast, loss of hope

Literary Terms

theme, personification, repetition

Materials

“Is She Invisible,” by Gloria Haukap, 2004 7GP Winner

“If Kennerly Street Could Talk” by Camille Wilson, 2004 7GP Winner

¿Qué Pasó? by Evette Aguayo, 2012 7GP Winner

“This Little Song Called Darling” by Chloe Fletcher, 2014 7GP Winner

“Me” Kevin Cates, 2004 7GP Winner

“Best Friend” by Kalise Harris, 2013 7GP Winner

“Life” by Jemma, 2014 7GP Winner

“My Bully” by Haley Page, 2014 7GP Winner

“Bystander” by Emma Watson, 2014 7GP Winner

Information on your school’s resources for bullying and counseling

Writer’s notebooks

Teacher Tips — *The 7th Grade Poetry Foundation strongly believes in the positive impact that poetry can have on a seventh grader’s social and emotional well-being. Here are some other resources you may find helpful in regards to this topic:*

- 2015 Casel Guide Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs
<http://secondaryguide.casel.org/casel-secondary-guide.pdf>
- www.teensofamerica.net
- Edutopia “Kids Feel the Power of Poetry in Performance”
<http://www.edutopia.org/poetry-slam-global-writes>
- Video of Sophia Saitta, 2015 7GP Winner reciting her poem, “Seeing Myself”
<http://www.7gp.org/sophia-seeing-myself>
<http://tinyurl.com/o5ppcxm>

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Lesson Plan

PAGE 1

DO NOW (5 minutes)

Students will freewrite on the following prompt: Have you ever been bullied before, or have you seen someone bullied? What happened? How did you handle the situation?

WHOLE GROUP (20 minutes)

In light of recent events regarding bullying, schools have been spent more time focusing on developing anti-bullying programs. With your students, go over what they think it means to be a bully. Have they been bullied before? Have they ever been a bully? What do they do when they feel unsafe in their own environment? What resources does your school have to handle issues like these?

Writing poetry can be a great outlet for dealing with these matters. You can communicate what you are feeling, but you can also demonstrate what you see happening in your environment.

Pass out "Is She Invisible" by Gloria Haukap. Have a student read the poem out loud.

Afterward, ask students to answer the following questions:

1. What is going on in this poem?
2. What is the theme (or themes) of this poem?
3. How does this poem relate to being bullied or feeling like an outcast?
4. In relation to this poem, what does it mean to be invisible?

PARTNERS/SMALL GROUPS (15 minutes)

"If Kennerly Street Could Talk" is a poem about a bad environment. Kennerly Street is personified as being "abused" and "taken advantage of."

Hand out the "If Kennerly Street Could Talk" and put students into pairs. Ask students to read the poem. With their partner, have students discuss the answers to the following questions:

1. What is going on in this poem?
2. What is the theme (or themes) of this poem?
3. How does this poem relate to being bullied or abused?
4. What is the importance of the line "If Kennerly Street Could Talk?"
Why is this line repeated several times?

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Lesson Plan

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INDEPENDENT (10 minutes)

By themselves, students will read “¿Qué Pasó?” by Evette Aguayo and “This Little Song Called Darling” by Chloe Fletcher. Students will then answer these questions:

1. What is going on in this poem?
2. What is the theme (or themes) of this poem?
3. How does this poem relate to being in a negative environment?
4. What is the importance/significance of the title of this poem?

REFLECTION (10 minutes)

As a class, go over the answers everyone came up with for the INDEPENDENT section. You might want to ask students how the poems they read today are related. Which poem did they feel most connected to and why?

EXTRA — Additional Poems

“Me” and “Best Friend” are two poems that address bullying in powerful ways.

“Best Friend” by Kalise: <http://www.7gp.org/kalise-best-friend>

“Me” by Kevin: <http://www.7gp.org/kevin-me/>

Kalise Harris was also interviewed by KPLR, a St. Louis News Channel, about her poem and bullying: <http://kplr11.com/2013/06/13/7th-grade-poetry-winner>.

“My Life” by Jemma

“My Bully” by Haley: <http://www.7gp.org/haley-my-bully>

“Bystander” by Emma: <http://www.7gp.org/emma-bystander>

“This Time, It’s Queer” by Chloe Charbonneau, 2015 7GP Winner
<http://www.7gp.org/chloe-this-time-its-queer>

HOMEWORK

In their writer’s notebook, students will write two paragraphs (5 sentences each) on how poetry can be beneficial to handling a difficult situation. This can relate to bullying, being in a negative environment, and/or feeling like an outcast.

Is She Invisible

by Gloria Haukap (7GP Winner, 2004)

“Am I invisible?” she asks herself one day
Why do people walk right through me?

No one sees this hurt, lonely, defenseless little girl.
But I do. She’s sitting over there crying...

Crying and calling for that special person
I go over to her, scoop her up in my arms, and say to her

I know I am not that person you have been calling for
But maybe someday...maybe someday I can be that person for you.

She grew, and she grew with me
She may not be beautiful, she may not be great, but she isn’t invisible.

Some people still don’t see.
But that little girl was the little girl living inside of me.

If Kennerly Street Could Talk

by Camille Wilson (7GP Winner, 2004)

If Kennerly Street Could Talk,
It would tell of its past.
How people, unruly people, abused its beauty and how it could not last.

If Kennerly Street Could Talk,
It would sing a song of hurt and cry tears of sorrow,
searching for a new beginning, as if there is no tomorrow.

If Kennerly Street Could Talk,
It would tell you of all its wonders
and how it was taken advantage of, through drugs and drive-bys.

If Kennerly Street Could Talk.

¿Qué Pasó? ¹

by Evette Aguayo (7GP Winner, 2012)

What happened to the times when getting “high”
meant seeing who could go the highest on a swing set?
What happened to the times when going to the “corner”
meant you were getting in trouble?
What happened to the times when seeing how “low” you can go
meant playing limbo?
What happened to drugs being a cure for a tummy ache?
I thought Facebook and MySpace were safe.
I thought AIDS were Band-Aids.
I thought “race” meant who was the fastest.
I thought when you said, “I love you,” you had to mean it.
I thought the word “virgin” was only used when you’re praying.
What happened to grown-ups having kids, not kids having kids?
What happened?
¿Qué Pasó?

¹Spanish for “What happened?”

This Little Song Called Darling by Chloe Fletcher (7GP Winner, 2014)

There's this little song called *Darling*
That brings back lots of thoughts
For every time I hear this song
It haunts and haunts and haunts

This song brings back bad memories
That I've tried to just let go
This is why we all have secrets
For we can't let our sorrow show

This little song called Darling
Always brings me to tears
For when I hear the lyrics
I just want to shut my ears

Self-harm, Anorexia
All these things bring back great pain
These things can tear someone apart
And leave them deep in pain

I can see the hate in people's eyes
I can sense the sadness
I can tell if you want to stop and cry
Because I have dealt with this madness

You look in the mirror
And don't like what you see
So you turn around and walk away
Just leave the reflection be

You don't have a thigh-gap
You don't have a perfect figure
You don't have a flat stomach
And you couldn't possibly be bigger

These things I just described
Can poison one's mind
This thing is called
Anorexia And it is never kind

This Little Song Called Darling *continued* by Chloe Fletcher (7GP Winner, 2014)

You wear bracelets almost every day
That go all the way up your arm
You say it's only fashion
But I know it's self-harm

Every night after school
You go home and cry
Your dad doesn't like you
You can see it in his eyes

Your mom is always insulting you
And putting you down
She tells you you're not good enough
So you always wear a frown

All these thoughts spin through your head
You don't know what else to do
So you slide your blade against your wrist
Then down go your sleeves; no one has a clue

All these things I just described
Can drive someone insane
Especially when the thoughts won't leave
And they're stuck inside your brain

Someone out there cares about you
Don't let them tell you otherwise
You may think it's silly
But you're an angel in disguise

This little song called *Darling*
Is about all of these things
So please stop hating yourself
It's not time to grow your wings

Me

by Kevin Cates (7GP Winner, 2004)

I'm constantly running
On rough terrain.
Some days I feel
I may go insane.
I am chastised for
The color of my skin.
It seems there is no place
That I can fit in,
Too white to be black.
And too black to be white,
It seems I exist
Only to fight.
By the same spirit
We have all been created
But from my own kind
I have been berated.
I long for kind words
But only receive cruelty.
People notice my skin,
But ignore my ingenuity.
I hope and I wait
For a better day
One when my children
Are free to say
Accept me for what
I am inside
There's beauty in us all
We don't want to hide
I am as good as you
So just let me be me
Stop judging this person
By what you think you see
But for now all I can do
Is just live each day
And overcome the obstacles
That may come my way.

Best Friend

by Kalise Harris (7GP Winner, 2013)

I'm-a tell you a story 'bout my best friend,
about how she took her life and the world almost ended.
She was teased by some people who thought they were cool.
They were actin' like a fool and thought nothing of school.
I helped her through all the drama,
'cus she couldn't get help from her own momma.
And I'm going to spill a little secret.
When she got anything, she couldn't keep it.
If you wanna know why this secret is true,
she was in a foster home that's the worst times two.
She came up to me when she was feeling sore.
She said, "Kalise, I'm sorry I can't do it anymore."
And I swore to the day I die,
that she will be my friend in the afterlife.

Life

by Jemma Aline Moccasin (7GP Winner, 2014)

What is life?

Most people never realize how precious life is
Until their life is almost gone.
I've heard elders tell me regrets they have had in their lives.
I have many regrets just like the others.

After I had lost my father, I realized how precious one's life is.
He did lots to help other people, and he loved what he did.
He made the most out of his life for he knew he didn't have long.
He told me his reason for living was because he knew I was coming.

I hope to make my father proud.
I wish more people could be like him.
I wish people would love who they are
And what they do.

What is life?

Instead of hearing people say they love their life,
I hear them say they hate their life and themselves.
I know someone like this. She is a good person,
But she feels bullied and... for what reason?

She doesn't understand, so she doesn't talk anymore.
She isn't who she used to be; she's afraid to make a mistake.
I miss her; I miss who she used to be.
Why do people hurt others? Is it because they have been hurt themselves?

What is life?

Hurting others is not okay. When you see someone hurting others,
Have you ever thought why? Has he or she been hurt too?
Is that the cause of most bullying?
Everyone targets the bully, calling them bad.

At times I feel sorry for the bully.

Life continued by Jemma Aline Moccasin (7GP Winner, 2014)

I wonder what has happened to make him or her that way.
I hope one day the hurting goes away;
No pain, no fights, no violence.

What is life?

I want people to get along, and disagreements can be healthy.
Fights that turn to violence are not okay.
Not everyone has to like each other; not everyone has to be friends,
But we need to stand among one another and stick up for each other.

So...if you see someone being hurt
Then do something.
Anything would be helpful
To a person in need.

What is life?

Will this question ever be answered? I guess it doesn't matter.
All that matters is that you learn to love yourself.
Learn to love your life; learn to love your mistakes.
Mistakes are healthy; learn from those mistakes.

What is life?
Life is temporary,
Death is not.
What is life?

My Bully by Haley Pate (7GP Winner, 2014)

Please tell me where things went wrong
We were friends, best as can be
So, what happened?
Please tell me
Just give me a reason!
Is there a problem?
It's eating at me – "What did I do??!!"
I hear you laughing
I know it's at me
I see you point
I see you stare
I hear you laughing
My "bestie"
My bully

Bystander

by Emma Watson (7GP Winner, 2014)

I gaze at them
at the city being bombarded
at the buildings crashing down.
Amazement runs through me—
what a couple of words can do
to hurt someone,
to kill someone.

The murderer
and the others laugh
while the victim sits there
with such a pale
blank face,
so blank
it looks like a white piece of paper.

I gaze at them
while the bullies
kill their victim.
I gaze at them
knowing that I'm
a bystander...
but I'm no longer innocent.

This Time, It's Queer

by Chloe Charbonneau (7GP Winner, 2015)

This time, it's different.

This time it isn't the haircut,
thighs, height, weight, anxiety, laughs,
or shoves, or the in-betweens.

This time, it's queer.

Girl, they call me,
she, her.

An abomination of femininity shoved into my face,
shoved through my ears,
pushed to my brain and plastered to a body that I do not believe is mine.

This time, it is the separation between the boys and the girls.
And where do I belong?

I do not belong here,
I do not belong in that bathroom,
I am not meant to be placed in line with those girls in dresses,
with the makeup and beautiful, feminine clothes.

"Be yourself," I am told.
But little do they know,
you cannot be yourself when you are being told exactly who you need to be.
You cannot be yourself when you have families to approve of your choices, friends to accept who you are.

You cannot be yourself when who you are isn't even up to you to decide.

How am I supposed to become myself when I have an entire society to please?
How am I supposed to become myself when I do not even have
a gender to identify with?

She, she, she.
Girl, her, herself...
wrong!

You are female, you are girl, they tell me.
Wrong.

"It's wrong, it's all wrong."
I wish to plaster that phrase onto the insides of their eyelids,
I wish to give them a looking glass that would show them what I see,
give them the feelings that I feel,
the pain that I've felt...but not for too long.

This Time, It's Queer *continued* by Chloe Charbonneau (7GP Winner, 2015)

Because though I am hurt,
I do not wish it upon anyone else.
I do not want people to be scared,

I do not want people to be hurt because it hurts too much
and that kind of pain cannot be erased.

But how am I to be genderless when they tell me I have far too many feminine flaws?
People point them out as if I am blind to them,
as if I don't see them when I look into the mirror,
when I am forced to face my body,
when I take that step into the shower.
That shower that cannot be avoided,
the whispers that cannot go unheard,
the stares I can't help but see.
How am I supposed to be addressed as they, as them, as their?
When people only see it as plural.
And *ey*, *em*, and *eir* sound too foreign to use,
too unimportant to learn.

They say I am too short.
They tell me the glasses will never pass for neutral but there is nothing else I look okay in.
They tell me the button ups look gay – surprise, surprise! I am gay.
They say the hair is still feminine as if I couldn't tell.
They tell me my chest is not flat enough, that it will never appear flat.
They say I have no muscle that my arms are too thin and my body too curved.
They say these words as if I'm blind.
But no, they are blind for not realizing the harm they've put me through,
the struggles they've caused.

This time it's when I am told who I need to be
while asked what I want to be when I grow up,
as if demanding I be different than I am now.
I do not wish to be different when I grow up,
I wish to be they and them and their.

This time it's when I am told it's a phase.
Confused. Too young.
I don't know what I'm saying.
Don't know who I am.
Or which bathroom to step foot in.

This time, it's queer.