

## Teaching activities: Poetry

**Level:** B1+

**Skills:** reading, speaking

**Interaction:** Individual, pairs, small groups

**Time:** 70–95'

**Learning objective:** By the end of the lesson, learners will be better able to use strategies to agree, disagree and give their opinions in a discussion.

These activities are inspired by World Poetry Day which takes place on 21 March. The activities include a short reading about a young poet and discussion around some of the issues mentioned in the reading.

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## Student worksheet

### Lead-in

#### A. Look at the picture and discuss the questions.



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1. What can you see in the picture?
2. What do you think she is doing?
3. What do you think her job is?

She could be ...

She might be ...

I think she's probably ...

### Reading

#### B. Read the text below and answer questions 2 and 3 above.

Amanda Gorman is a poet and was born in 1998 in Los Angeles. As a child, she had a problem with her speech which made it difficult for her to say some words and sounds. Her love of writing began when she was just five years old and when she was eight, she discovered poetry. She says that poetry helped her to speak and fix her speech problems.

In 2021, she became famous around the world when she read her poem *The Hill We Climb* at an event for a previous president of the United States. Her poem was about hope, connection and a better future. She was the youngest person to read her own poetry at this event.

Gorman writes about social issues like racism, equality and women's rights. She believes that words have the power to change the world. Today, she inspires young people to use their voices and speak up for what they believe in.



**C. Read the text again and answer the questions:**

1. What problem did Gorman have when she was young?
2. Why was poetry so important for her when she was young?
3. What was special about reading her poem in 2021?
4. Why does she think poetry is important now?

**D. Talk to your partner:**

- Have you or anyone you know had problems speaking? For example, difficulties speaking in front of other people. What did you/they do to solve the problem?
- Would you like to read Gorman’s poetry? Why/why not?
- Gorman thinks that ‘words have the power to change the world’? Do you agree? Why/why not? Can you give an example?
- What important issues would you like to use your voice for?

Discussion

**E. Put the phrases into the correct place in the table. Can you add more useful phrases to each column?**

I’m not so sure about that.		What about you?
What do you think about that?	As ...	This is because ...
I don’t think so.	I think so too.	Absolutely!

Agree with your partner	Disagree with your partner	Give a reason	Ask your partner

**F. Read the questions and think about your answers.**

- Amanda Gorman started writing when she was five years old. Do you have a hobby or interest that you have done since you were a child? What do you enjoy about it?
- Do you think you have to start an activity very young to be an expert? For example, music, sport, a language.
- In what ways is Gorman a good role model for young people?
- Gorman says: ‘I learned how to speak by writing poetry.’ What do you think she means?
- ‘Your voice is the most powerful tool you have.’ Do you agree with Gorman that young people’s voices can change the world? Can you give an example?

**G. Now discuss the questions with your partner. Remember to use the useful language, ask for extra information and to extend your answers.**



## Reflection

**H. Write three things you have learned today**

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**Draw an emoji to show how you feel.**

## Teacher's notes and answer key

**Level:** B1+

**Skills:** reading, speaking

**Interaction:** Pairs/small groups and individual

**Time:** 70–95'

**Learning objective:** By the end of the lesson, learners will be better able to give their opinion in a discussion.

These activities are inspired by World Poetry Day which takes place on 21 March. The activities include a short reading about a young poet and discussion around some of the issues mentioned in the reading.

Activity	Time required	Notes	Answer key
Share learning objectives	5'	Share the learning objective with the class, explaining what you are going to do. Give learners a couple of minutes to check understanding with their partner then clarify any questions.	
A – lead-in	5'	Ask learners to look at the image and questions. Elicit a couple of ideas using the useful language in speech bubbles: <i>She could be giving a presentation.</i> <i>I think she's probably a politician.</i>  In pairs, learners discuss.  Ask one or two learners to share their ideas in open class feedback.	
B – reading	5'	Learners read the text quickly and find the answers to questions 2 and 3. Allow them to compare in pairs before asking for feedback.  Clarify any difficult language such as <i>speech, racism, equality and women's rights.</i>	2. Reading her poem <i>The Hill We Climb</i> at an event for a previous president of the United States. 3. a poet



Activity	Time required	Notes	Answer key
C – reading	5–10'	Individually, learners read the text again and find the answers to the questions. They compare in pairs then feedback as a class.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. She had a problem speaking and couldn't pronounce some words and sounds. (para. 1)</li> <li>2. Poetry helped to fix her speech problems. (para. 1)</li> <li>3. She was the youngest person to read their poetry at the event. (Also, it made her famous.) (para. 2)</li> <li>4. Poetry can talk about important issues and help change the world. (para. 3)</li> </ol>
D – post-reading discussion	10'	<p>Give learners time to read the questions and check understanding. Then learners discuss in pairs. Encourage learners to extend their answers and ask their partner's opinion.</p> <p>Elicit some ideas from the class in feedback. Encourage learners to listen and comment on each other's ideas by asking 'Do you agree?' 'What do you think?'</p>	
E – useful language for discussing	5–10'	<p>Ask learners to read the phrases and look at the table. Elicit where to put the first phrase 'I'm not so sure about that.' – <i>disagree with your partner</i>.</p> <p>Learners organise the useful language in the table. As they finish, encourage them to add more phrases.</p> <p>Show completed table (see p.8) on the board. Elicit some extra phrases learners have added.</p>	<p><b>Agree with your partner</b> I think so too. Absolutely!</p> <p><b>Disagree with your partner</b> I'm not so sure about that. I don't think so.</p> <p><b>Give a reason</b> This is because ... As ...</p> <p><b>Ask your partner</b> What about you? What do you think about that?</p>



Activity	Time required	Notes	Answer key
F – preparing for the discussion	10'	<p>Ask learners to read the questions and think about their answers. Some of the questions require a deeper response from learners so they need time to consider what they think before they put it into words. Encourage learners to ask for any language they may need.</p> <p>Model the task. Tell learners to listen to your answers and think about which answer is better and why. Ask a learner to ask you a question.</p> <p>Provide a good model, for example – <i>I've been playing the piano since I was 9 and I love it! I find it helps me relax. Sometimes, if I've had a difficult day I just come home and start playing and I feel a lot better. What about you? Do you have any hobbies you've done for a long time?</i></p> <p>And give a bad model – <i>I've been playing the piano since I was 9. It helps me relax.</i></p> <p>Elicit from learners why the better model was more successful.</p>	<p>Possible answers – good model:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- used useful language</li> <li>- extended your answer with reasons</li> <li>- added extra information</li> <li>- spoke clearly</li> <li>- used eye contact</li> <li>- used intonation effectively, etc.</li> </ul>
G – discussion	10'	<p>In pairs, learners answer the questions. Listen to their discussions to hear how well they are completing the task. Make notes of successful and unsuccessful contributions to use in feedback later.</p> <p>End the discussions and ask one or two learners to share their ideas. Provide feedback on content and ideas at this stage, encouraging other learners to comment where appropriate.</p>	



Activity	Time required	Notes	Answer key
Feedback	10'          (10')	<p>Share examples of successful language from the discussion as well as examples that need improvement. Learners work in pairs to decide which examples to improve, and how.</p> <p>Go through each example and ask learners to share their ideas.</p> <p>If time, swap partners and learners repeat the discussion task. This gives them the opportunity to improve their performance based on feedback and have a better chance of success.</p>	
H – reflection	5–10'	<p>Ask learners what they have learned today. Elicit some ideas – these could be related to language or content.</p> <p>Individually, learners write and draw their reflections. Ask a couple of learners to share their thoughts.</p>	

The reflection activity is taken from [this booklet](#) where you can find further ideas on formative assessment.

For some ideas on how to use poetry in your lessons with young learners, read [this blog post](#).

*Answers to E*

Agree with your partner	Disagree with your partner	Give a reason	Ask for your partner's opinion
I think so too. Absolutely!	I'm not so sure about that. I don't think so.	This is because ... As ...	What about you? What do you think about that?