

# Rhapsody in Black



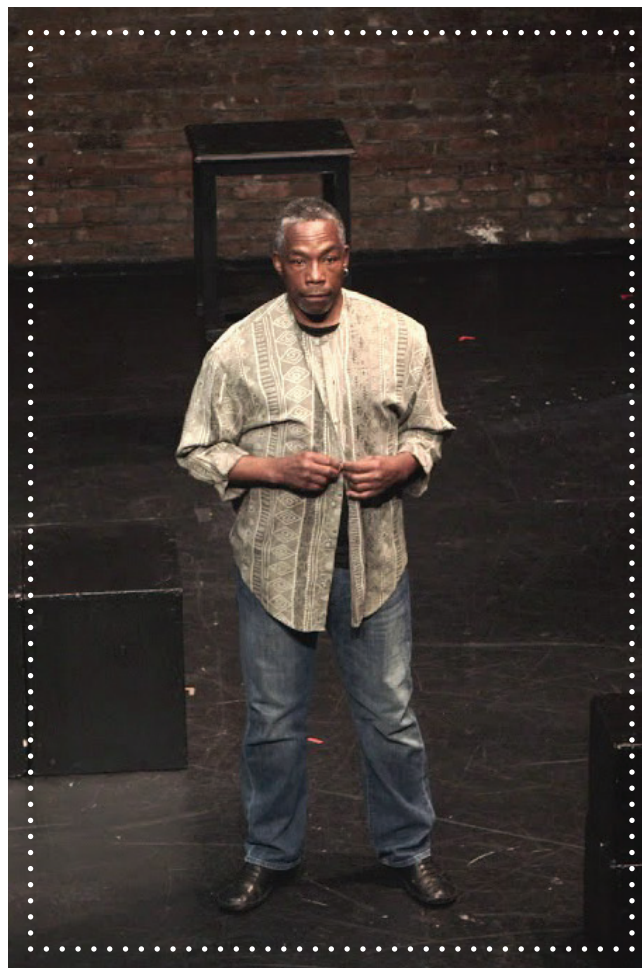
## TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE

# Rhapsody in Black

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

About the Cincinnati Arts Association	3
About the Performance	4
Pre-Show Activities	5
Post-Show Activities	8
Resources	10
Curriculum Standards Index	11

### EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



The lessons and activities in this guide are driven by the Ohio Learning Standards in English Language Arts (2017) and Social Studies (2018-2019).

21st century skills of creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration are embedded in the process of bringing the page to the stage. Seeing live theater encourages students to read, develop critical and creative thinking skills, and to be curious about the world around them.

This Teacher Resource Guide includes background information, questions, and activities that can stand alone or work as building blocks toward the creation of a complete unit of classroom work.



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The Ohio Arts Council helps fund economic growth, educational excellence, and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans.

Playhouse Square is supported in part by the residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture.



# ABOUT CINCINNATI ARTS ASSOCIATION

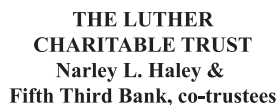


Founded in 1992, the Cincinnati Arts Association (CAA) is a not-for-profit organization that oversees the programming and management of two of the Tri-state's finest performing arts venues – the Aronoff Center for the Arts and Music Hall – and is dedicated to supporting performing and visual arts. Each year, CAA presents a diverse schedule of events; serves upwards of 600,000 people in its venues; features the work of talented local, regional, and national artists in the Weston Art Gallery (located in the Aronoff Center); and supports the work of more than one dozen resident companies. Since the inception of its acclaimed arts education programs in 1995, CAA has reached more than 1.8 million students.

CAA is proud to be a member of Ohio Citizens for the Arts, Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber, Greater Cincinnati Convention & Visitors Bureau, Greater Cincinnati & Northern Kentucky African American Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Over-the-Rhine Chamber of Commerce, and Performing Arts Center Consortium.

## THANK YOU

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# ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

A one-man show, written and performed by LeLand Gantt, *Rhapsody in Black* is about Mr. Gantt's journey as an African American to rise above racism, from the time of his youth in the 1960s and throughout his adult life, as he built a career as a professional actor – a struggle that brought him to a challenging, but life-affirming, conclusion. Directed by the award-winning actress, Estelle Parsons, it was developed under the auspices of New York City's legendary Actor's Studio.

Straddling the color line, not at home in any hue, a young man struggles with what it means to be black, and discovers what it means to be a man.

Charting one man's odyssey through the juggernaut that is racism in America, *Rhapsody in Black* is a prismatic look at life on the color line – a poignant, enraging, and often hilarious travelogue through the psyche of the

perpetual "other," as he spends a lifetime struggling with what it means to be black and finally comes to understand what it means to be a man. A blistering indictment of tribalism in all forms, *Rhapsody in Black* deconstructs notions of race and identity-provoking thought, realigning perspectives and sparking precisely the sort of conversation we all really need to be having right now.

As a society today, we are all culpable; caught up in enabling this demon racism, LETTING it pervade every aspect of American life to such deleterious effect as to actually stymie the efforts of a President to govern. But we need to talk; illuminate our similarities and celebrate our differences; understand and appreciate EVERY-ONE'S contributions to this country; and accept and forgive ourselves, and each other, for past transgressions.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

LeLand Gantt first unveiled *Rhapsody in Black* at the Workshop Theater Company's Sundays@Six reading series in March 2013. Further development at The Actors Studio yielded a slot in their Playwrights/Directors Unit's spring festival in May 2013 and, subsequently, a three-week workshop run in the fall 2014.

**Regional credits include :** *Two Trains Running* and *Radio Golf* (Syracuse Stage); Walter Mosley's *The Fall of Heaven*, world premier (Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park); *Gem of the Ocean* (Arena Stage), *Jitney* (Pittsburgh Public Theater), and *In Walks Ed* (Longwharf Theater).

**Broadway/Off-Broadway:** *Slippery When Wet* (La Mama), *Another Man's Poison* (Peter Jay Sharpe Theater), *Oyamo's Killa Dilla* and *Let Me Live* (Drama Desk and Audelco Award nominee for Featured Actor), and the revival of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (u/s Rock Dutton).

**Film and television credits include:** *Miracle at St. Anna*, *Requiem for a Dream*, *Malcolm X*, *Presumed Innocent*, *Law and Order*, *Law and Order SVU*, *J.A.G.*, and HBO's *The Affair*.

## ABOUT THE DIRECTORIAL CONSULTANT

**Estelle Parsons** won an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress in 1967 for her role as Blanche Barrow in *Bonnie and Clyde*. Among her most noted television roles, she played Roseanne's mother on the award-winning sitcom *Roseanne*. She played the title role in *Miss Margarita's Way* on Broadway and the National tour, and Violet Weston in *August: Osage County* on Broadway and the national tour.

Ms. Parsons' directing credits include: a multi-cultural *Anthony and Cleopatra* described as "the most exciting and innovative presentation in English since Peter Brook's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Belasco Theater; Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* adapted by Adrienne Kennedy at the Signature Theater, NYC; *Oedipus the King* (Yeats adaptation) and *Salome: The Reading* (Oscar Wilde) with Al Pacino on Broadway and the National Tour. Nominated four times for the Tony Award, Ms. Parsons was inducted into the American Theater Hall Of Fame in 2004.

## ■ PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

# Preparing for the Show

The Ohio Learning Standards below are addressed in the following Pre-Show

Activity: Contemporary World Issues: Civil and Human Rights

CCR.SL.9-10.1, CCR.SL.11-12.1

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Start this unit by talking with students about respectful discourse. It is ok to disagree with someone; however, it is critical that disagreements are respectful, polite, and courteous. As a class, create a set of expectations that each person will meet in order to have a safe and welcoming environment for all students to learn. These speaking and listening standards that you create should encourage appropriate discourse and should be included in each of the pre- and post-show activities.

*Rhapsody in Black* is a one-man show that explores LeLand Gantt's personal journey to understand and eventually transcend racism in America. In the show, its actor and creator, Leland says, "I'm just trying to start a conversation." In this activity, students will join in on

the conversation with their peers to tackle some complex issues we face in society today.

To familiarize your students with the performance have them read the 2013 *Huffington Post* review *Discriminating Taste: Rhapsody in Black Puts Audiences on the Path to Transcending Racism* (see resource page for link). This review was done in the first year of Leland's performances and the writer calls to attention events that occurred around the same time, specifically mentioning the Oscar Grant and Trayvon Martin shootings. Ask your students to familiarize themselves with these incidents. Then, challenge them to reflect on the past year and compare current events to those mentioned in the review from 2013.

While some of these topics can be difficult and triggering, be sure to have a conversation with students about respectful discourse and encourage them to be open about their feelings in the safe space of your classroom.



# Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Ohio Learning Standards listed below are addressed in the following Pre-Show Activity:  
CCR.W.9-10.7, CCR.W.11-12.7, CCR.RI.9-10.7, CCR.RI.11-12.7



Have students read the *Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (see resource page). If you are unable to assign the entire book, you may elect to assign one or more of the following chapters as independent or stand-alone chapters.

- Chapter 14, which describes the peaceful protests, particularly the sit-ins, led by Martin Luther King Jr.
- Chapter 18, which focuses on Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail."
- Chapter 20, which highlights his "I Have a Dream" speech and the monumental March on Washington.

In addition to reading these chapters, have students watch MLK's "I Have a Dream" speech (see resource page for link). Use the below questions for small group discussion.

## Chapter 14 Discussion Questions

1. What elements make a protest successful?
2. What lessons can the protests from the '60s teach us today?
3. What similarities between the protests during the '60s and today's protests do you see?
4. In your opinion, are protests successful?

## Chapter 18 Discussion Questions

1. Do you have to be disobedient if you want justice?
2. Are people ever justified for being disobedient? Provide examples?
3. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s saw lots of protests. Today, people still are fighting for these rights, and we see this manifested in the following movements: #MeToo, #TakeAKnee, Black Lives Matter, and others. What similarities and differences exist between MLK and the Civil Rights Movement and the movements of today?

## Chapter 20 Discussion Questions

1. Why do people find MLK's "I Have a Dream" speech so powerful more than 50 years after it was delivered?
2. What do you find powerful or moving in this speech? Explain.

After discussing with their group, students should respond individually to the following writing prompts. Have them cite evidence to support their responses.

1. If Martin Luther King Jr. was alive today, would he say that his dream was achieved?
2. What progress would he notice?
3. What progress would he say that we still need to make?

If you are limited on time, divide the group into subgroups, subgroups, and assign each subgroup one chapter. After reading the chapter and answering the discussion questions, they will come back together to finish the assignment as one whole group.



# Rhapsody in Black Content Vocabulary

The Ohio Learning Standards below are addressed in the following Pre-Show Activity:  
CCR.L.9-10.4, CCR. L.11-12.4, CCR.W.9-10.1, CCR.W.11-12.1

The following word list is a compilation of academic vocabulary that is explored throughout the performance through dialogue, thoughts, or themes.

**Adversary**

**Bigotry**

**Conversation**

**Discrimination**

**Diversity**

**Hypocrisy**

**Racism**

**Rhapsody**

**Resonance**

**Prejudice**

**Racial Identity**

**Transcending Adamantine Rapier**

**Minotaur**

**Ubiquitous**

**Subterranean**

**Largess Indoctrinate**

**Fraudulent**

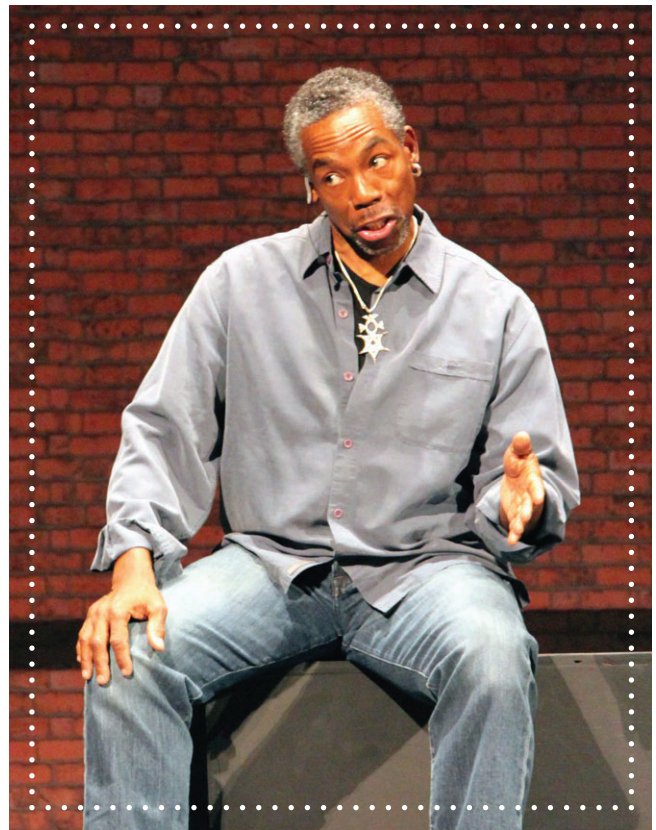
**Vitriol**

**Amalgamation**

**Aberrations**

Have students familiarize themselves with the meanings of the listed terms, then have them reflect on the following questions to formulate their opinion on racism in the United States.

1. Do you think our country has made acceptable progress in race relations since the Civil Rights Movement?
2. Based on what you know, how would you explain the fact that racism is still prevalent in many parts of American society today?



## ■ POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

# *Huffington Post* RE-View

The Ohio Learning Standards below are addressed in the following Post-Show Activity:

CCR.RI. 9-10.6, CCR.RI.11-12.6, CCR.SL.9-10.3, CCR.SL.11-12.3, CCR.W.9-10.1, CCR.W.11-12.1

An effective theatrical review provides detailed context about a production without giving away the entire plot. Most potential audience members want to know if they will enjoy a show based on the storyline, the quality of the production, and the value of the storytelling by the actors involved. A quality review expresses an opinion of the writer that is supported by thoughtful analysis of the production.



After viewing *Rhapsody in Black*, have students re-read the 2013 Huffington Post review: *Discriminating Taste: Rhapsody in Black Puts Audiences on the Path to Transcending Racism*, in addition to reading the 2016 *Lincoln Journal Star* review: "Rhapsody in Black' Poses Serious Question" (see resource page for links.) Discuss the qualities and characteristics of an effective review as a class, using examples from either of these reviews. Then ask the students to write their own theatrical review of *Rhapsody in Black* using critical thinking skills to formulate their own opinions about the play.





# Perspectives in Poetry

The Ohio Learning Standards below are addressed in the following Post-Show Activity:

CCR.RL.9-10.4, CCR.RL.11-12.4, CCR.SL.9-10.3, CCR.SL.11-12.3, CCR.SL.9-10.4, CCR.SL.11-12.4

Have students read and analyze the poem, “You Don’t Know, Or Do you?” by East Chapel Hill School Student, Sheri M. Based on students’ reflections during pre-show activities, their reactions to the play, and their interpretation of this poem, have them create a poem

of their own to communicate their response to the experience. Have students present their poems to the class.

## Required Resource

### “YOU DON’T KNOW, OR DO YOU?”

Written by Shari M., East Chapel Hill High School

You don’t know, or do you?

Who are you to tell me who I am?

Who are you to tell me who I will be?

Although you think you do, you don’t know jack about me.

You don’t know the pain, the hate, or the sorrow inside.

You don’t know how it feels to have to compete and to constantly have to prove yourself.

You don’t know how it feels to battle the stereotypes and the prejudice.

You don’t know, or do you?

Who are you to tell me how to act?

And who are you to tell me how to dress?

How dare you deny me the right to be me?

It is killing me softly, can’t you see?

You want me to assimilate, yet you still want to put me on a leash.

You smile in my face and yet you stab me in my back.

You only want me to be a reflection of you and not me, Shari.

You don’t know, or do you?

Who are you to judge me?

And who gave you the right?

If you can’t accept me, my brain, my love, my hate, my heart, my soul,

my ghetto-fabulousness and all the rest.

Then your best bet is just to step.

Because before you can judge me, tell me who I am, who I’m gonna be, how to act and dress,

You’d better take the time to look at yourself.

Do you know what I’ve been through?

You haven’t experienced what I have.

You haven’t been judged based solely on your looks.

You haven’t been discriminated against.

You haven’t walked into an honors class and gotten the dirty looks.

Ignorance, pride, strength, have you experienced them?

You don’t know, or do you?

# RESOURCES

## WEB RESOURCES



Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech – <https://youtu.be/3vDWWy4CMhE>

*Huffington Post* Review – [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jaime-lubin/rhapsody-in-black\\_b\\_4209595.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jaime-lubin/rhapsody-in-black_b_4209595.html)

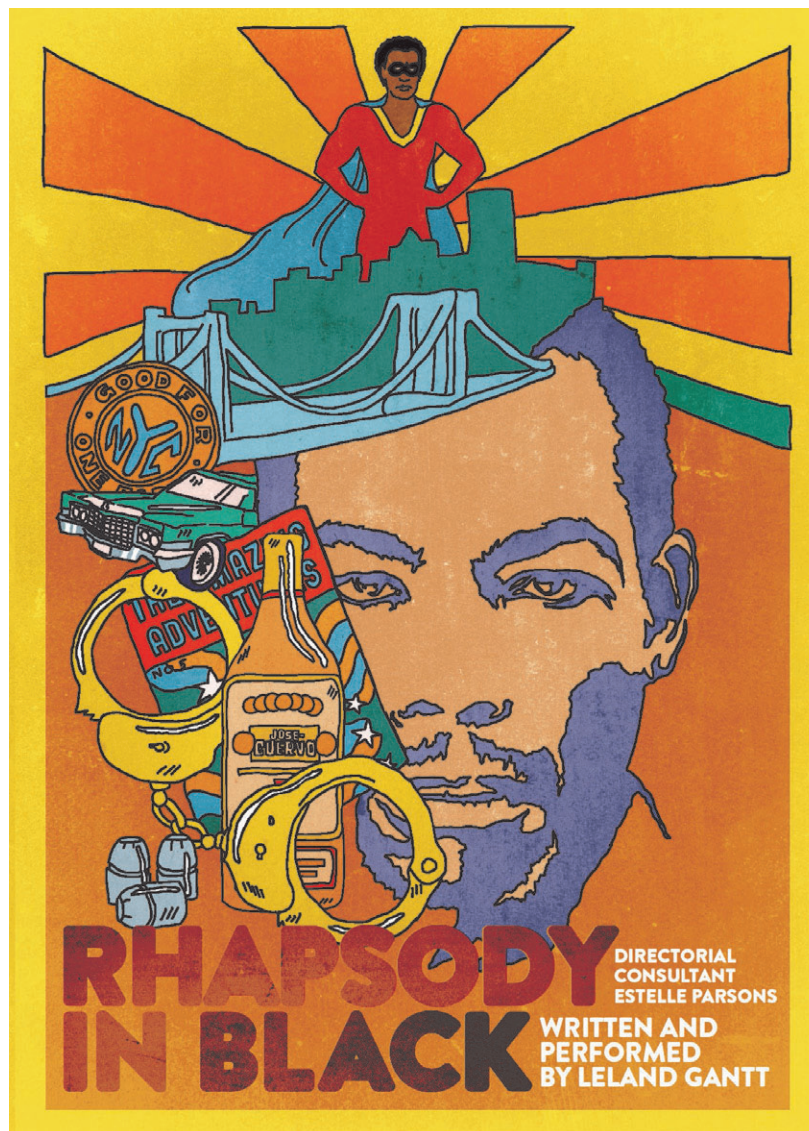
*Lincoln Journal Star* Review – [https://journalstar.com/entertainment/performing-arts/review-rhapsody-in-black-poses-serious-question/article\\_56a5b154-60ed-564b-8e3f-fe982c231a26.html](https://journalstar.com/entertainment/performing-arts/review-rhapsody-in-black-poses-serious-question/article_56a5b154-60ed-564b-8e3f-fe982c231a26.html)

## BOOK RESOURCES

*The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Carson, Editor) (Warner Brothers, 2001)



(Clayborne





# CURRICULUM STANDARDS INDEX

Standard	Description	Grade	Activity	Page
Contemporary World Issues: Civil and Human Rights	There are challenges to civil rights and human rights throughout the world. Politics, economics, and culture can all influence perceptions of civil and human rights.	9-12	Preparing for the Show	5
CCR.SL.9-10.1	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.	9-10	Preparing for the Show	5
CCR.SL.11-12.1	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.	11-12	Preparing for the Show	5
CCR.W.9-10.7	Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.	9-10	Martin Luther King, Jr.	6
CCR.W.11-12.7	Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.	11-12	Martin Luther King, Jr.	6
CCR.RI.9-10.7	Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.	9-10	Martin Luther King, Jr.	6

CCR.RI.11-12.7	Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.	11-12	Martin Luther King, Jr.	6
CCR.L.9-10.4	Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 9–10 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.	9-10	<i>Rhapsody in Black</i> Content Vocabulary	7
CCR.L.11-12.4	Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 11–12 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.	11-12	<i>Rhapsody in Black</i> Content Vocabulary	7
CCR.W.9-10.1	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.	9-10	<i>Rhapsody in Black</i> Content Vocabulary <i>Huffington Post</i> Re-View	7 8
CCR.W.11-12.1	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.	11-12	<i>Rhapsody in Black</i> Content Vocabulary <i>Huffington Post</i> Re-View	7 8
CCR.RI.9-10.6	Determine an author's perspective or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that perspective or purpose.	9-10	<i>Huffington Post</i> Re-View	8
CCR.RI.11-12.6	Determine an author's perspective or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.	11-12	<i>Huffington Post</i> Re-View	8
CCR.SL.9-10.3	Evaluate a speaker's perspective, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence.	9-10	<i>Huffington Post</i> Re-View Perspectives in Poetry	8 9
CCR.SL.11-12.3	Evaluate a speaker's perspective, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.	11-12	<i>Huffington Post</i> Re-View Perspectives in Poetry	8 9



CCR.RL.9-10.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning, mood, and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place or an emotion; how it sets a formal or informal tone).	9-10	Perspectives in Poetry	9
CCR.RL.11-12.4	Determine the connotative, denotative, and figurative meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text; analyze the impact of author's diction, including multiple-meaning words or language that is particularly evocative to the tone and mood of the text.	11-12	Perspectives in Poetry	9
CCR.SL.9-10.4	Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.	9-10	Perspectives in Poetry	9
CCR.SL.11-12.4	Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.	11-12	Perspectives in Poetry	9

