



Patricia Smith, Language Arts

MINNESOTA STATE STANDARDS

Language Arts

Reading and Literature Strand

- Understand the meaning of texts using various strategies
- Demonstrate interpretive, inferential, and evaluative comprehension

Writing Strand

- Compose various pieces writing
- Write clearly and coherently for effective communication

Speaking, Listening, and Viewing Strand

- Demonstrate understanding and communicate effectively using active listening and dynamic speaking

Arts - Theater Strand

- Use movement, sound, and language to create and express ideas

Arts - Visual Art Strand

- create visual artwork from various materials

THEMATIC LEARNING GOALS

- examine and learn about the life and work of three African American **artists**
- understand that everyday occurrences can serve as inspiration for creative expression
- find joy in creating visual and literary art

BASIC ACTIVITIES FOR EACH LESSON

- read, listen to, and view artwork
- participate in discussion using **critical response**
 - * what did you *sense*? Describe in detail
 - * what does it remind you of? Something heard, seen or felt before
 - * feeling? What emotion or mood is communicated?
 - * what questions would you ask the artist about the work?
 - * what do you think this work is about? What observation/experience supports your idea? What evidence does the artist give to support your

idea?

- creative time — focusing on your own ideas to create work
- sharing created works with the class or wider community

LESSON PLAN

Patricia Smith (June 25, 1955 -) is widely known as the most successful competitor in slam poetry history. She holds four Individual National Champion titles. After reading her work, you soon learn that she is so much more than that. Her expressions of creativity are as varied as the subjects of her five books of poetry. One covers the inner thoughts of young Black men; another, growing up and coming of age in Chicago and Detroit. Her most recent book gives hurricane Katrina a personality with thoughts both ravaging and healing. She has written books for children and co-authored a work of historical non-fiction. Some of Ms. Smith's poems have been produced as plays, recorded on CD, and have served as the inspiration for films. Ms. Smith is as comfortable in the classroom as she is on stage. She is a much in demand instructor of poetry, performance and creative writing, and is most pleased when "young people suddenly realize that their voices are legitimate, that they're able to completely own and craft their own stories." She learned the tradition of the "back porch" from her father and is constantly on the look-out for stories of everyday people and places. Ms. Smith honors the strong connection between written and performed poetry. She knows and proves that the carefully crafted poem must come before the moves and inflections in order to satisfy the reader/listener.

NOTE: The poem for this lesson has been carefully selected and is appropriate for students in grades 6 - 12. Some of Ms. Smith's poems contain adult language/themes and may not be appropriate for all learners. The classroom teacher will determine if alternative works/texts should be used to explore Ms. Smith's aesthetic as an African American author.

Activity: Using **poetry** to tell a story

Text: *WON'T BE BUT A MINUTE* from Blood Dazzler by Patricia Smith

1. project 2-3 images of the aftermath of Katrina (do not show any people or bodies)
2. whole class discussion about what is shown, what information is given, what is the purpose of these images
3. read the poem *Won't Be But A Minute* silently. Write down any word(s), phrases that stand out. Write down any questions you might have.
4. listen while 2 different classmates read *Won't Be But a Minute* out loud. Write down other words/phrases that you like or that stand out.

5. have a large group discussion about what was noticed, **critical response questions** decide what the most significant word/line/phrase in this poem is. What story does this poem tell?
6. write a 10 - 12-line poem/essay that continues the story in *Won't Take But a Minute*. Try to use the same voice as Ms. Patricia Smith.
7. share your interpretations and narratives with your classmates.

RESOURCES, REFERENCES, MATERIALS for PATRICIA SMITH

Smith, Patricia, Blood Dazzler, Coffee House Press, Minneapolis, MN 2008

Smith, Patricia, Janna and the Kings, Lee & Low Books, New York 2003

Video interview with Patricia Smith: African American Registry®

The Arts in K-12 Education

Language Creativity

POEM

Won't Be But A Minute
by Patricia Smith

Tie Luther B to that cypress. He gon' be all right.
That dog done been rained on before,
he done been here a day or two by hisself before,
and we sho' can't take him. Just leave him
some of that Alpo and plenty of water.
Bowls and bowls of water.
We gon' be back home soon this thing pass over.
Luther B gon' watch the place while we gone.
You heard the man—he said *Go*—and you know
white folks don't warn us 'bout nothing unless
they scared too. We gon' just wait this storm out.
Then we come on back home. Get our dog.