



## RISE UP! AN AMERICAN CURRICULUM INSPIRED BY HAMILTON: AN AMERICAN MUSICAL



# HEAVY IS THE HYPHEN: THE LISTENER

## LISTENING IS AN ACT OF LOVE AND LITERACY

By Michelle Lee

### THEME

Lineage

### LENGTH

Two 50-min sessions

### GRADE LEVEL

9-12

### SUBJECT

English Language Arts  
US History

**Lessons in this module support learners to better understand the complexities of themselves and others to have a fuller engagement with their voice in the world.**

Listening skills unearth students' perceptions of self and belonging to tell a new story about themselves in a voice that lives naturally on their tongue. Heavy Is the Hyphen: The Listener develops learners' capacity to listen deeply as a preparation for future introductory poetry and letter-writing lessons, inviting students to see and be seen, hear and be heard. This lesson is to be followed by Heavy is the Hyphen: The Letter.

# LESSON OBJECTIVES

## CREATIVE INQUIRIES

**What is the potential of self discovery when we put inquiry and listening at the heart of learning?**

### FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE

Students will know...  
How listening is a skill that all writers need in order to respond to their audience.

### PROCEDURAL KNOWLEDGE

Students will know...  
How to make the connection between listening, self development, and community culture.

### CONCEPTUAL INQUIRY

Students will understand...  

- The purpose of intentional listening.
- Ways contemporary artists and poets rely on listening to create and think.

## PERFORMANCES OF UNDERSTANDING

- Journal writings [Journaling for metacognition](#)

## OUTLINE

Session one: Listening is an Act of Love and Literacy  
Session two: Hear You, See You, Feel You

## HAMILTON HOOKS

How to build anticipation for learning



**READ: DEAR FOUNDING FATHERS**

See You, Hear You, Feel You, invites learners and teacher to co-construct a learner-centered, culturally responsive value system (norms) for speaking and listening. When introducing students to the activity of listening, you may draw from Mush's poem "Dear Founding Fathers," to underscore the importance of naming specific behaviors tied to values that create the conditions

## LESSON PREREQUISITE

Read the [background information on the writer](#): Michelle "Mush" Lee.

## PEDAGOGICAL MOMENT

Hip hop music, spoken word lyricism and battle-rap culture is the principle discipline/expression through which the story of Alexander Hamilton is told. Though distinct in origin and sonic structure, spoken word and hip hop each have deep ties to African oral tradition, which has long amplified the intrinsic, energetic relationship between storyteller and listener in creating a historically resonant moment.

**PEDAGOGICAL  
MOMENT**

“Verbal performance, in its continuation from early Black vernacular to the Black Arts Movement, has endured and with the aid of the hip-hop music culture in the 1980s, gave birth to its latest verbal innovation: slam poetry.” - Shawnkeisha Stoudamire, *From the African American Oral Tradition to Slam Poetry: Rhetoric and Stylistics* (2012)

“[A speaker’s] potential to have an impact on social structures is shaped partly by the varying intensity of (1) the degree to which the audience assumes responsibility for the performance through a participatory/evaluative role and (2) the engagement of the audience through the elements of emergence and uncertainty contained within the performance structure. In other words, a [speaker’s] potential for affecting social structures depends on the degree to which the audience is an active participant and on the degree of risk and uncertainty that the [speaker(s)] and audience are willing to embrace.” - Richard Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance*

**EXTENSIONS**

Invite students to think about letter-writing in preparation for the follow-up lesson, *Heavy is the Hyphen: The Letter*. Hold a group discussion or have students write responses to the following in their journals:

*Have you ever seen, received or written an analog (paper and pen) letter?*

*What are your earliest memories of receiving or writing letters?*

*Have you had pen pals or know what a pen pal is?*

*Have you ever written or received a postcard?*

*Do you keep analog (paper and pen) diaries or personal journals?*

## LESSON RESOURCES

### BACKGROUND ON WRITER MICHELLE (MUSH) LEE

Mush is first-generation Korean American born to immigrant parents. For her, like most people, respect take several shapes. As an American born spoken word artist and educator, she uses language and poetry as a vehicle to critique American culture and write herself into a new world. In Korean culture, as in most East Asian cultures, it is considered culturally taboo for one to speak directly or hold sustained eye-contact with someone of with positional/relational power or perceived authority (i.e. elder, parent, teacher, law enforcement). It may be perceived as an act of defiance, disrespect, or worse, lacking home training (weak moral upbringing). Much is lost in translation: an expression of respect that demands grace, humility, discipline, and recognition of the importance of continuum. While traditional behaviors and attitudes brought from the Old Country have soften with time, particularly in 2nd, 3rd, 4th generation children of immigrants, unspoken and embodied cultural stances often become the primary tongue spoken by Korean and Asian diaspora.

### DEAR FOUNDING FATHERS POEM

Read out loud and/or print out the following poem for students to paste into their journals.  
[Dear Founding Fathers: A Poetic Address to America's Founding Fathers](#)

### ADDITIONAL REFERENCE LINKS

2-5 links to research/gain depth of knowledge. This can go in the content of your workshop/lesson design as well.

Stoudamire, Shawnkeisha (2012) "From the African American Oral Tradition to Slam Poetry: Rhetoric and Stylistics," *McNair Scholars Journal*: Vol. 16: Iss. 1, Article 10. [Article](#)

Starting with Self: Teaching Autoethnography to Foster Critically Caring Literacies, Patrick Camangian, *Research in the Teaching of English* Vol. 45, No. 2, RESEARCH ON LITERACY IN DIVERS EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS (November 2010)

Story Circle Process Discussion Paper [Link](#)

Liz Lerman Dance Exchange: An Aesthetic of Inquiry, an Ethos of Dialogue [Link](#)

Peace Circle Protocol Worksheet [Link](#)

Story circle protocol – roadside theater website [Link](#)

Music listening circles: contributions from development education to democratising classical music [Link](#)

The critical cultural cypher: remaking paulo freire's cultural circles using hip hop culture [Link](#)

## SESSION 1 OF 2

# HEAVY IS THE HYPHEN: THE LISTENER

## LISTENING IS AN ACT OF LOVE AND LITERACY

The Listener invites students to see and be seen, hear and be heard, and develops learners' capacity to listen deeply as a preparation for future introductory poetry and letter-writing lessons. Listening skills unearth students' perceptions of self and belonging to tell a new story about themselves in a voice that lives naturally on their tongue. This lesson is to be followed by The Letter: Heavy is the Hyphen.

### SESSION OVERVIEW

**LENGTH**  
50 min

**GRADE LEVEL**  
9-12

**SUBJECT**  
English Language  
Arts  
US History

### CREATIVE INQUIRIES

What is the potential of self discovery when we put inquiry and listening at the heart of learning?

### EQUIPMENT

- Projector / laptop
- Stopwatch/ timer

### MATERIALS

- Copies of **Mush Lee's "Dear Founding Fathers"**
- 2 Post-It pads (2 different colors)
- Copy of a listening framework of your choice. (One is provided for your use.)
- **Story Circle Protocol**

### OUTLINE

Activity #1: Listening Framework Introduction 10 MIN

Activity #2: Story Circle 30 MIN

Activity #3: Watch, reflect on Mush Lee's Dear Founding Fathers 10MIN

## 1 LISTENING FRAMEWORK INTRODUCTION

10 MIN

Briefly introduce an active listening framework of your choice. One is provided below for your use.

Project the listening framework so that all learners can see it. Ask students to use their journals to respond to the question:

*When was the last time you deeply listened to someone?*

### PEDAGOGICAL MOMENT

"[A speaker's] potential to have an impact on social structures is shaped partly by the varying intensity of (1) the degree to which the audience assumes responsibility for the performance through a participatory/evaluative role and (2) the engagement of the audience through the elements of emergence and uncertainty contained within the performance structure. In other words, a [speaker's] potential for

affecting social structures depends on the degree to which the audience is an active participant and on the degree of risk and uncertainty that the [speaker(s)] and audience are willing to embrace." - Richard Bauman, Verbal Art as Performance

## 2 STORY CIRCLE

30 MIN

**SHARE**  
Story Circle protocol



Have students respond to an open-ended question using a Story Circle protocol. The Circle is responsible for embodying engaged listening.

Before posing a Story Circle question, **remind students to mentally stretch their memories** to surface all the juicy granular details. When you pose a question to your students have them consider the following aspects of their thinking towards that question:

*What exactly were the words that were spoken? To whom?*

*How did you know you were heard?*

*What other conversations may have been happening around them?*

*Do you remember the time of day?*

*Do you remember where the sun was positioned in the sky at that moment of your memory?*

Each student will have 60 seconds to share a few choice words. Use a stopwatch or phone to ensure equal speaking time for every student. Reach back to the listening framework and ask the group to try acting as an engaged listener for each speaker /storytelling - remind them to avoid responding, asking follow-up question.

### STORY CIRCLE QUESTIONS

#### ROUND ONE

*When was the last time you felt truly heard?*

#### ROUND TWO:

*How did you get here?*

*During this questions, students share their journey of how they got "here" in 60 seconds. Here can mean the city where they live, school, neighborhood, the present moment, this country, personal, academic or spiritual enlightenment, so on and so forth.*

---

### PEDAGOGICAL MOMENT

The educator / facilitator should be explicit about the distinction of speaking versus being heard. The question is less concerned with what was said (content) and more interested in the quality of the listener's presence. How did you know you were respected, felt trust, were loved? Offering these inquiries at the top of the activity should provide both structure and expansiveness. Listen closely. Stories should convey to the group something about the desired conditions each learner requires in order to speak honestly, courageously, and in a voice that feels most natural to them.ence are willing to embrace." - Richard Bauman, Verbal Art as Performance

"The teacher must also consider a change in discourse patterns and views of authority, knowledge, curriculum, and learning. A [story] circle does not evolve simply by having students sit in a circle. The challenge for the educator is to provide a focus without dismissing the voices of participants in the dialogue. Teachers must recognize both conscious and unconscious attempts to derail the discourse...Knowing absolutely where a circle is headed would be antithetical to critical pedagogy and would exclude the teacher as a participant-learner in the circle; in essence, this practice promotes the notion that the curriculum should be dynamic, always in construction, and responding to the needs of the learners. Rather than dismissing the life experiences of each student, the teacher recognizes that students can only make new meanings based upon prior understandings anchored in the organic nature of their knowing."

**3 READ, REFLECT ON MUSH LEE'S DEAR FOUNDING FATHERS**  
10 MIN

**READ**  
Dear Founding Fathers  
by Mush



Read Mush's "Dear Founding Fathers." Ask students to listen for words or lines that stand out to them. Popcorn reflections from the large group about the poem.

## SESSION 2 OF 2

# HEAVY IS THE HYPHEN: THE LISTENER

## LISTENING IS AN ACT OF LOVE AND LITERACY

### SESSION OVERVIEW

#### LENGTH

50 min

#### GRADE LEVEL

9-12

#### SUBJECT

English Language  
Arts  
US History

The Listener invites students to see and be seen, hear and be heard, and develops learners' capacity to listen deeply as a preparation for future introductory poetry and letter-writing lessons. Listening skills unearth students' perceptions of self and belonging to tell a new story about themselves in a voice that lives naturally on their tongue. This lesson is to be followed by The Letter: Heavy is the Hyphen.

#### CREATIVE INQUIRIES

What is the potential of self discovery when we put inquiry and listening at the heart of learning?

#### EQUIPMENT

- Projector/ monitor to screen video
- Sticky-board or wall for post-its

#### MATERIALS

- Copies of *Mush Lee's "Dear Founding Fathers"*
- 2 Post-It pads (2 colors)
- Copy of a listening framework of your choice. (One is provided for your use.)
- "See/Think/Wonder" protocol

#### OUTLINE

Activity #1: Community Agreement Activity: Pt1 15 MIN

Activity #2: Community Agreement Activity: Pt2 20 MIN

Activity #3: Critical Reflection 15 MIN

## 1 COMMUNITY AGREEMENT ACTIVITY: PT1

15 MIN

Provide each student with two separate color Post-Its. **Have students respond to the following questions:**

*Post-It #1 - What is a value you need in order to feel safe or brave when you are speaking?*

*Post-It #2 - What is a behavior that embodies or expresses that value? (one observable behavior that represents the value above.)*

Support students' thinking by inviting them to stretch their ideas. Have them consider what respect looks like when someone they trust embodies it. Have them consider what someone is doing and not doing when they're respecting them.

Students can give an example from their life or use the example from the outline in Mush's background statement from the Anticipatory Hook section above.

## 2 COMMUNITY AGREEMENT ACTIVITY: PT2

20 MIN

**Ask students to group and display Post-Its** on a wall or sticky board.

**Lead the group in a Silent Gallery Walk** asking them to read each other's definitions of Value/Behaviors.

**SHARE**  
See/Think/Wonder  
protocol



**Have students reflect on what they read and wrote** by using a “See/Think/Wonder” protocol.

I See...  
I Think...  
I Wonder..

**Come to agreement. Make a pact.**

Have students agree to the set of values and behaviors as a way that their community will support and encourage each other's best growth. This can be a verbal agreement or a signed document.

**Document**

Have students decide what form to put the values and behaviors in. Can they write it up as a collective poem? A poster? An essay? Allow time for students to collectively document their thinking.

---

### PEDAGOGICAL MOMENT

#### A Note from Mush

The idea here is to try and get behind the rhetoric of safety designed for young people, where conversations about how youth learn best are often discussed without energetic input from students themselves. As you may already know, there can be a tendency for this precious, recursive practice to be established in the abstract, glossed over and rarely hashed out in concrete terms with students (versus for students). If our classroom philosophy and practice (pedagogy) is more-or-less guided by an assumption that The Space essentially shares the same definition for a set of ideas as intimate and

complex as safety and bravery, we set ourselves up to miss out on creating a culture of critical care<sup>©</sup> and responsiveness<sup>©</sup> that we often find in learning environments where students are juiced to be; where their inspiration for the curricular content and instruction can manifest as deep care for their own learning and the learning of the group.

### 3 REFLECTION

20 MIN

#### READ

Dear Founding Fathers  
by Mush



Read Mush's "Dear Founding Fathers." Ask students to listen for words or lines that stand out to them and reflect on the idea of deep listening and self development. Popcorn reflections about the poem.

#### SET-UP 3 MIN

##### Whole Group Reflection

Teacher / facilitator thanks the group for sharing their stories and listening. Invite students to reflect in their journals or on a shared Thinking / Graffiti Wall.

#### PROMPT 10 MIN

Invite students to offer an appreciation / inspired thought from the activity using the following thinking frames:

*I heard...*

*I appreciate ...*

*I felt...*

*I didn't know \_\_\_\_\_ / Now I know \_\_\_\_\_...*

*I want to know more....*

*How can I observe professional artists/choreographers/performers who use metaphor and meaning to build a movement in order to better understand my own social gesture?*

#### TASK 5-10 MIN

**Hold a whole group discussion circle** to allow students to offer their appreciations or inspired thoughts. If you need to conserve time, students can write these down in their journal.

#### PEDAGOGICAL MOMENT

##### What is a Thinking Wall?

A thinking wall in our classroom is a visual representation of an ongoing conversation taking place throughout the school year. It is a place where students can link systems thinking with artifacts they find and display on the wall. Our goal in a larger context is to understand interdependencies, complexity, and the promotion of positive change.