



# SPEAK 4 LIFE

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WHERE WORDS &  
VERBS MAKE YOU  
RIGHT FOR LIFE

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**BEYOND MEASURE**

# Speak 4 Life (S4L):

## Where Words & Verbs Make You *Right For Life*

### Program Overview:

The goal of this program is to empower youth and provide a safe space for them to develop and strengthen their writing and speaking skills, and lead them toward their freer and more expressive selves.

### Grade Level:

Middle - High School (11-17 years old)

### Program Goals:

- Explore art and creativity
- Explore self-expression and identity
- Form their own storytelling voices
- Freedom of expression
- Literacy skills enhancement
- Communication and literacy skills enhancement (reading, writing and speaking)
- Amplify student voice
- Explore social justice issues that may lead to taking on a more active role in activism
- Peer collaboration and cultivation of one another's self-esteem and confidence
- Build self-efficacy
- Redemption, healing and community building

### Resources:

1. Videos
2. Song Lyrics
3. Poems
4. Photos & Images
5. Literature

## Workshop Model:

1. Opening the Room
2. Warm Up
3. Discourse Analysis
4. Discussion & Prewriting
5. Independent Writing
6. Share Out
7. Closing the Room

### Sessions:

1. This is Who I Am: *Identity*
2. Daring to Dream
3. Emotions
4. I am strong: *Resilience*
5. Brave and Bold
6. Expressions of Self: *Art and Hip-Hop*
7. Expressions of Self: *Art and Hip-Hop*
8. I am free: *Self-Efficacy*
9. Slam Poetry Performance

# Session 1

## *This is Who I am: Identity*

### Session Goals:

- History of Storytelling and Poetry
- Who you are and where you're from?
- Describe, express, and consider their own identities and selves

### Resources:

1. YouTube Video - [Be who you want to be](#)
2. Poem - "Hanging Fire" by Audre Lorde
3. Photos/images

### Introduction: (5 minutes)

#### Opening the Room / Warm up:

1. Begin by setting ground rules for the entire program and ensuring everyone has a sense of what "poetry" is:
  - a. Ask the class: What is poetry? What do you think poetry is?
    - i. Brief handful of answers shared out loud. Offer your own thoughts.
  - b. Explain the goal and agendas of the overall program:
    - i. To learn about poetry, to write poetry, and to ultimately perform poetry.
    - ii. To give students the tools to express themselves and engage in a critical study of themselves and the world around them via various forms of media and text.
  - c. Set some ground rules for writing poetry:
    - i. Consider your paper to be a playground for language
      1. Poetry does not have to rhyme
    - ii. Consider your writing utensil to be a paintbrush
      1. You get to use words to make ideas from what's happening inside your head and how you're thinking, feeling, and observing.
    - iii. Consider your voice to be its very own language - this is your opportunity to tell your story and talk about the world the way you see it.

### Discussion and Prewriting: (25 minutes)

1. Today's session is going to ask the question: *Who are you and what is it like to be you?*
2. Together, the class is going to read Audre Lorde's "Hanging Fire" to prepare them to write their own poetry.
  - a. Poem is below.
  - b. Depending on your teaching style and your class's readership - either split the poem up to be read aloud by students and/or by the teacher. Depending on time and needs, also consider incorporating close reading/strategy work, such as Reciprocal Teaching, partner reading, collaborative annotation, double-entry journaling, or other reading routines you favor to engage students further with the poem as text.

- c. After reading through the poem, as students:
- i. What jumped out at you?
  - ii. What did this poem make you think about?
  - iii. What do you think the speaker was saying in this poem?  
Did anything in the poem make you think of anything in your own life?

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## **Hanging Fire**

BY AUDRE LORDE

I am fourteen  
and my skin has betrayed me  
the boy I cannot live without  
still sucks his thumb  
in secret  
how come my knees are  
always so ashy  
what if I die  
before morning  
and momma's in the bedroom  
with the door closed.

I have to learn how to dance  
in time for the next party  
my room is too small for me  
suppose I die before graduation  
they will sing sad melodies  
but finally  
tell the truth about me  
There is nothing I want to do  
and too much  
that has to be done  
and momma's in the bedroom  
with the door closed.

Nobody even stops to think  
about my side of it  
I should have been on Math Team  
my marks were better than his  
why do I have to be  
the one  
wearing braces  
I have nothing to wear tomorrow  
will I live long enough  
to grow up  
and momma's in the bedroom  
with the door closed.

### Independent Writing: (20 minutes)

1. To help the class transition from reading Audre Lorde to writing their own poetry, open the following discussion:
  - a. Ask the class to consider:
    - i. What do you like to do?
    - ii. How do you spend your free time at lunch, recess, or outside of school?
    - iii. Who are the most important people in your life?
    - iv. What sorts of things make you happy?
    - v. What sorts of things make you unhappy?
    - vi. What does your family do on holidays? How does your family celebrate?
  - b. Ask a few people to share their thoughts/answers.
2. Now students will start to write their own poems answering: *Who are you and where are you from?*
  - a. Ask students to choose one to two words that describe who they are in each of the following categories:
    - i. Noun
    - ii. Adjective
    - iii. Verb
  - b. Ask students to choose to write a sentence that describes who they are using a word from each of the categories.
  - c. Ask students to choose one to two words that describe where they are from in each of the following categories:
    - i. Noun
    - ii. Adjective
    - iii. Verb
  - d. Ask students to write a sentence that describes where they are from using a word from each of the categories.
  - e. Now, ask students to write a poem that explores who they are or where they are from - or both - using the words and sentences above. They can also use the ideas they considered earlier - how they spend their free time, what's most important in their lives, etc.

### Share Out: (5 minutes)

Invite volunteers to share what they've written.

### Closing the Room: (5 minutes)

Close the room with key take-aways and affirmations.

## Discourse Analysis Samples

### Street Art



Photo credits: 1-3, 5 & 6 Lois Stavskv; 4 Sara C Mozeson



Bold and engaging, the murals that surface in Trenton, New Jersey are largely site-specific, many paying homage to those who call Trenton and its neighboring towns *home*. The image featured above — painted collaboratively in 2014 by [Will Kasso](#), [Luvonesta](#), [Andre Trenier](#) and [Lank](#).— looms large over a colorful playground, a short distance from the Trenton Transit Center. Several more artworks, far more recent, captured earlier this week on my first visit to Trenton follow:

Trenton-based legendary artist [Leon Rainbow](#) — two of four murals paying homage to frontline workers





## Bed-Stuy

There's a collection of [Notorious B.I.G. paintings](#) on view in Bed-Stuy, a trend that gained traction after the artist's death in 1997. These monumental portraits proclaim the hip-hop legend as the undisputed king of the borough where he was born, raised, and made a name for himself. In 2017, there was talk of the beloved two-story mural of Biggie Smalls, located on the corner of Bedford Ave and Quincy street, coming down. But [after public outcry](#), the work was protected; landlord Samuel Berkowitz shifted sides and saved the cultural landmark.



Mother Teresa and Mahatma Gandhi Mural on a rainy day in NYC.

## 10: Gandhi And Mother Teresa Mural [Map]

On 18th Street and Tenth Avenue in Chelsea, you will spot this lovely piece on the side of a building, created by the Brazilian artist Eduardo Kobra. It is to pay tribute to two great men of humanity, Mother Teresa of Calcutta and Mahatma Gandhi. The best spot to enjoy this artwork is from the High Line.

If you don't know who these two people are, I don't blame you. Neither did I before I wrote this article.

Gandhi was an Indian lawyer, anti-colonial nationalist, and political ethicist who led India in its quest for independence from British rule by pursuing a campaign of non-violence. Mother Teresa was an Albanian-Indian Roman Catholic nun and missionary. She was granted sainthood by the Catholic Church for her work ministering to the poor of Calcutta.

# Song Lyrics & Poetry

## Alicia Keys: A Woman's Worth

### Lyrics

You could buy me diamonds  
You could buy me pearls  
Take me on a cruise around the world  
Baby you know I'm worth it  
Dinner lit by candles  
Run my bubble bath  
Make love tenderly to last, to last  
'Cause baby you know I'm worth it

Wanna please wanna keep wanna treat your woman right  
Not just dough but to show that you know she is worth your time  
You will lose if you chose to refuse to put her first  
She will if she can find a man who knows her worth

'Cause a real man, knows a real woman when he sees her  
And a real woman knows a real man ain't afraid to please her  
And a real woman knows a real man always comes first  
And a real man just can't deny a woman's worth

If you treat me fairly  
I'll give you all my goods  
Treat you like a real woman should  
Baby I know you're worth it  
If you never play me  
Promise not to bluff  
I'll hold you down when shit gets rough  
'Cause baby I know you're worth it

She walks the mile makes you smile all the while being true  
Don't take for granted the passions that she has for you  
You will lose if you chose to refuse to put her first  
She will if she can find a man who knows her worth

'Cause a real man, knows a real woman when he sees her  
And a real woman knows a real man ain't afraid to please her  
And a real woman knows a real man always comes first  
And a real man just can't deny a woman's worth

No need to read between the lines spelled out for you (spelled out for you)  
Just hear this song 'cause you can't go wrong when you value (better value)  
A woman's (woman's)  
Woman's (woman's)  
Worth!

## You Tube Videos: Spoken Word



Melissa Lozada-Oliva - "My Spanish"



#AGT #AmericasGotTalent

Brandon Leake Will Make You EMOTIONAL With His Spoken Word - America's Got Talent 2020



#DailyShow #TrevorNoah #AmandaGorman  
Amanda Gorman - "The Hill We Climb" & Activism Through Poetry | The Daily Social Distancing Show  
[Fundraiser](#)



#BNV15  
2015 - Brave New Voices (Finals) - "McKinney" by Fort Worth Team

# Songs



Lecrae - Blessings (Video) ft. Ty Dolla \$ign



**Enquire:**

**[info@mindsbeyondmeasure](mailto:info@mindsbeyondmeasure)**

**+1 917 365 6730**

**New York, NY**



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