

LESSON PLAN TITLE: My Name

Writer-in-Residence: Christiana Castillo

Grade Level: 6th-12th

Model Works Used: “Alternate names for black boys”- Danez Smith

“My Name”- Sandra Cisneros

“When You Say My Name”- Zachary Caballero (slam poem)

"To All the Little Black Girls with Big Names" by Sha'Condria

Literary Learning objective(s): Students will be able to write their own poem exploring what their name(s) mean to them.

Themes: Identity, Poetic Forms

MDE/SEL Standards: Self-awareness, key ideas and details, craft and structure

Materials Needed: poems, writing utensil

Opening Activity:

If you could change your name, what would you change it to?

Pre-Discussion:

Names are incredibly important. They are given to use and sometimes we get to choose them. They hold history and identity. Sometimes other people give us names that are not always kind and we acquire nicknames. Today we are going to explore three different poems to see what names can hold and mean.

Model Poem Discussion:

1. *Read Alternate Names For Black Boys* by Danez Smith. Annotate the poem. You can highlight or underline lines of the poem that you like, circle words you do not know, put question marks next to things you have questions about. Notice how Smith focuses on Black culture, the color black, and stereotypes.
 - a. Danez Smith’s poem is an example of a list poem. Today when you write your own poem you can experiment using this form if you would like.

About Danez Smith: Danez Smith is a black non-binary poet from Minnesota. They are a millennial and lover of hip hop and fashion. They have five published books.

2. Read “*My Name*” by Sandra Cisneros

Annotate this poem as well. What imagery does Sandra Ciseneros give to us in this poem? How does the writer feel about her name?

Try to find where Cisenero's used simile and metaphor in her poem.

About Sandra Ciseneros: Sandra Ciseneros is a Mexican-American author and poet. She has published 13 books and is 65 years old. She has won various prestigious awards for her writing. One of her best known works is the novela *The House On Mango Street*.

3. Watch "When You Say My Name" Zachary Caballero

How does Zachary Caballero feel about his name? What does his name mean to him?

About Zachary Caballer: Zachary Caballero is an attorney practicing law in Houston, Texas and a nationally recognized, award-winning, Mexican-American Poet

4. Watch *To All the Little Black Girls With Big Names* (Dedicated to Quvenzhane' Wallis) by Sha'Condria "iCon" Sibley.

Are names important to Sibley? What does her name mean to her? How is this poem similar to Sandra Ciseneros' and Danez Smith's? How does this performance piece make you feel? Is watching the poet share this poem different than reading a poem?

About Sha'Condria "iCon" Sibley: Sha'Condria "iCon" Sibley is a Black poet from New Orleans and is an award winning slam poet. She is an artist, poet, and actress.

Prewriting:

Review the list of questions below. Write responses to at least four to help you get ready to write your poem.

1. Is there a story behind your first name? How and why was it chosen for you?
2. What people, places, events, things or ideas do you associate with your name?
3. If you go by a nickname, did you choose it or did others? What is the story behind it?
4. What do you know about the history of your last name? Do you feel a connection to an ancestor who also had your last name?
5. How does your name represent and reflect who you are?
6. If you don't like your name, what name would you choose for yourself? Why?
7. What names have been given to you?

8. Do people ever say your name incorrectly? How do they say it or spell it wrong?

Writing Prompt

Write a poem about your name. You can focus on the various responses you had from the prewriting activity, or choose one of the prewriting prompts to focus on to write your poem. You can also explore poetic form such as a list poem or performance piece.

Share / Reflect

If you can upload your poem or a video of you sharing the poem to social media - use the hashtag #MyNameinsideOut.

Reflection: Why do you think names are important?

What are the names you use only for yourself?

What are other names you have known your friends by?

Supplemental Materials

“Alternate names for black boys”- Danez Smith

“When You Say My Name”- Zachary Caballero (slam poem)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ST3LBmJt3nM>

“My Name”- Sandra Cisneros

"To All the Little Black Girls with Big Names" by Sha'Condria "iCon" Sibley

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbS8LPkohCc>

Check/Highlight all that apply

- Text by a contemporary/diverse author
- Translated text
- Visual Thinking Strategies
- Close reading or other analysis
- A step of the writing process
- Planning & Reflection Strategy



- New device, concept or theme
- Social-Emotional Learning
 - Self-Management
 - Social Awareness
 - Relationship Skills
 - Responsible-Decision Making
 - Self-Awareness

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alternate names for black boys

BY DANEZ SMITH

1. smoke above the burning bush
2. archnemesis of summer night
3. first son of soil
4. coal awaiting spark & wind
5. guilty until proven dead
6. oil heavy starlight
7. monster until proven ghost
8. gone
9. phoenix who forgets to un-ash
10. going, going, gone
11. gods of shovels & black veils
12. what once passed for kindling
13. fireworks at dawn
14. brilliant, shadow hued coral
15. (I thought to leave this blank
but who am I to name us nothing?)
16. prayer who learned to bite & sprint
17. a mother's joy & clutched breath

“My Name”

by Sandra Cisneros

excerpted from The House on Mango Street

In English my name means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters. It means sadness, it means waiting. It is like the number nine. A muddy color. It is the Mexican records my father plays on Sunday mornings when he is shaving, songs like sobbing.

It was my great-grandmother's name and now it is mine. She was a horse woman too, born like me in the Chinese year of the horse--which is supposed to be bad luck if you're born female-but I think this is a Chinese lie because the Chinese, like the Mexicans, don't like their women strong.

My great-grandmother. I would've liked to have known her, a wild, horse of a woman, so wild she wouldn't marry. Until my great-grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off. Just like that, as if she were a fancy chandelier. That's the way he did it.

And the story goes she never forgave him. She looked out the window her whole life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow. I wonder if she made the best with what she got or was she sorry because she couldn't be all the things she wanted to be. Esperanza. I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place by the window.

At school they say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth. But in Spanish my name is made out of a softer something, like silver, not quite as thick as sister's name Magdalena--which is uglier than mine. Magdalena who at least- -can come home and become Nenny. But I am always Esperanza. would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees. Esperanza as Lisandra or Maritza or Zeze the X. Yes. Something like Zeze the X will do.