

## LESSON PLAN TITLE: A Litany For Survival

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**Writer-in-Residence:** Jassmine Parks

**Grade Level:** 9th-12th

**Model Works Used:** A Litany for Survival by Audre Lorde

**Literary Learning objective(s):** Students will be able to demonstrate use of stanzas, critically breaking down text, the use of repetition as a literary device, and how to make ideas clearer and more memorable.

**Themes:** Overcoming Adversity, Facing Fears, Celebrating Self

**MDE/SEL Standards:** Social Awareness, Self Awareness, Responsible Decision Making, Self Management; Demonstrates the knowledge of language & vocabulary acquisition and use.

**Materials Needed:** Pencil/pen and paper

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### Opening Activity

Think about the last time you felt fear. What happened as you process and experience the emotion of fear?

- What are your thoughts?
  - (ex: are you anxious, do you pick the fear apart, push it to the back of your mind, obsess over it, feel shame, etc)
- What happens in your body?
  - (ex: do you freeze, run, feel your blood get hot, do you shake, cry, laugh, etc)
- Do you believe the fear is a real threat or is it irrational and why?

### Pre-Discussion

A litany is a form of prayer that has repeating lines throughout.

- It is usually a petition for ourselves and others
  - petition is a request for someone to do something or change the circumstances

What are some prayers or petitions you have?

- Be descriptive
- Why do these things matter to you?

Do you include others in your prayer/petition? Why or why not?

### Model Poem Discussion

Read: “A Litany for Survival” by Audre Lorde

[A Litany For Survival by Audre Lorde](#)

[Reading OF "A Litany For Survival"\\*](#)

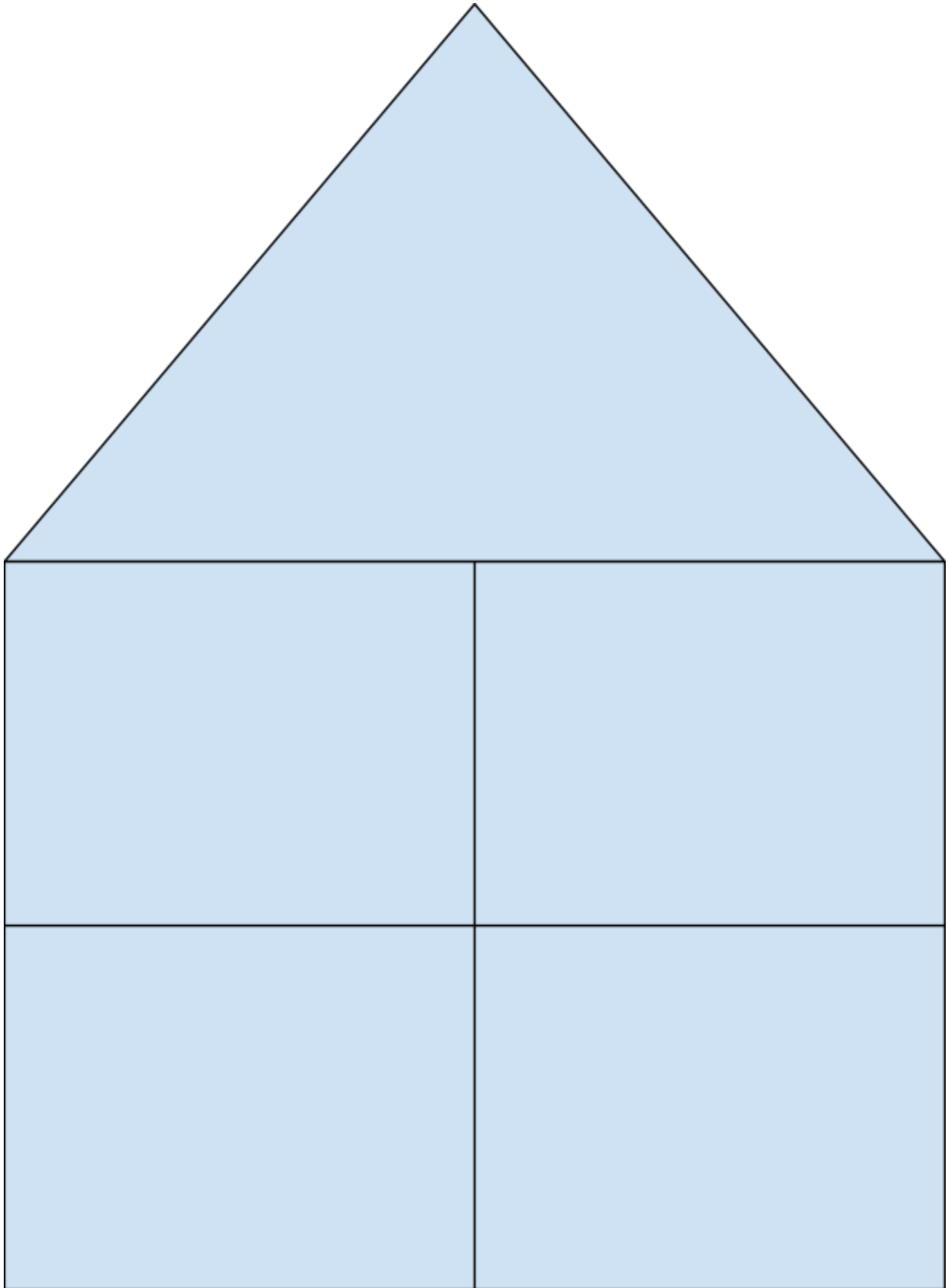
- The Poem is recited by Lauren Parker, at the time a youth poet/activist, for #blackpoetsspeakout to honor Mike Brown, the black teenager that was shot and killed by officer Darren Wilson, who was not indicted on charges of Mike Brown's death. You can also find the text of the poem below to follow along.
  
- A stanza is a grouping of lines
  
- The first stanza begins with "for those of us" as a dedication to people who:  
*have to make difficult decisions to ensure their survival*  
*do not have the luxury to chase their dreams*  
*work hard physically and internally to ensure their future/current children are able to chase their dreams unlike they were*  
*feel lonely*
  - Tell about a time you related to any part of this stanza, be specific.
  
- The second stanza returns to the line "for those of us" once again who have experienced:  
*fear since they were infants/children*  
*belief that hope and comfort were dangerous*  
*avoiding optimism because they have experienced loss*  
*the triumph of overcoming experiences that were difficult*  
*living past the pain and should be celebrated for "we were never meant to survive"*
  - What has fear prevented you from doing?
  - What has fear protected you from doing?
  - How would you celebrate your survival?
  
- The third stanza is a series of fears in which every two lines are contrasting situations and emotions.  
*sun rising vs. sun setting*  
*full stomach vs. empty stomach*  
*being loved vs. being alone*  
*speaking vs. silence*
  - How do you determine what fear is rational?
  - How do you determine what fear is worth pushing through to have an experience?
  
- The last and shortest stanza, Lorde states:  
*So it is better to speak/ remembering/ we were never meant to survive*
  - How would you interpret this?
  - Do you agree that it is better to speak? Why or Why not?

## Prewriting

Refer to the worksheet of a house. The house represents your mind/body. Inside of the house you will see 4 rooms.

For this activity, draw (stick figures or abstract art is ok). Be as detailed/descriptive as possible.

- In the first 2 rooms on the floor level
  - draw one fear you have in each room
  - consider the fears that Audre provided or determine your own fears
  
- In the other 2 rooms on the second level
  - draw one thing that you have survived in each room
  - think of the hardest things you had to overcome
  
- In the roof
  - draw you celebrating who you are because of your survival
  - what/who would you want at the celebration?



## Writing Prompt

You only need to choose 1 prompt. Be sure to use similes/metaphors and imagery. Please title your poem(s).

- A simile compares two things that are usually not related using the words “like” or “as”
  - example: My macaroni is like the sun.
- A metaphor compare two things that are usually not related without using “like” or “as”
  - example: My macaroni is the sun.
- Imagery engages the human senses using things that relate to:
  - sight
  - hear
  - taste
  - smell
  - touch
    - example: My macaroni stretched across my taste buds and melted in my mouth, it became the sun.

Use the line “for those of us” as a starting line to create a litany of your own and write a three stanza poem

- it could be for survival or whatever you feel is appropriate.

**OR**

Create a poem about your body’s response to fear. Use your answers to the opening activity to guide you and write a three stanza poem.

**OR**

Write a survivor's guide to overcoming fear. Your starting line can be from Audre, “we were not meant to survive”

## Share / Reflect

### Share via:

- If you have internet access and would like to share with fellow youth poets or myself use “Edublog” <https://edublogs.org/?join-invite-code=7652089-insideoutpoetry>
  - you will be prompted to create an account and then your very own blog in which you can upload your work
    - I will check the blogs on Wednesdays and Fridays to provide feedback
    - If you have any questions please leave a comment
- If you prefer to keep your work private, share your work with someone you trust, with friends, family and/or teachers. Ask for feedback or comments about what they think/feel when they read your poem.

### Reflect:

- Was it more challenging to write about: your fears or what you have survived?
- What is something you can do to ensure you celebrate yourself?

## Supplemental Materials

### ***“A Litany For Survival”***

by Audre Lorde

For those of us who live at the shoreline  
standing upon the constant edges of decision  
crucial and alone  
for those of us who cannot indulge  
the passing dreams of choice  
who love in doorways coming and going  
in the hours between dawns  
looking inward and outward  
at once before and after  
seeking a now that can breed  
futures  
like bread in our children’s mouths  
so their dreams will not reflect  
the death of ours;

For those of us  
who were imprinted with fear  
like a faint line in the center of our foreheads  
learning to be afraid with our mother’s milk  
for by this weapon  
this illusion of some safety to be found  
the heavy-footed hoped to silence us  
For all of us  
this instant and this triumph  
We were never meant to survive.

And when the sun rises we are afraid  
it might not remain  
when the sun sets we are afraid  
it might not rise in the morning  
when our stomachs are full we are afraid  
of indigestion  
when our stomachs are empty we are afraid  
we may never eat again  
when we are loved we are afraid

love will vanish  
when we are alone we are afraid  
love will never return  
and when we speak we are afraid  
our words will not be heard  
nor welcomed  
but when we are silent  
we are still afraid

So it is better to speak  
remembering  
we were never meant to survive.

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