



Essential Words: LTAB Online 2020

Lesson plans and writing prompts for teens



How We Create Language

by Yumna Daghar

DURATION: 1.5 hours

GRADE LEVEL: High School

WRITING LEVEL: Developing &
Experienced Writers

FOCUS: language, ode

EXAMPLE POEM

[Ode to the High Top Fade](#)
by Joshua Bennett

FOR TEENS, BY TEENS
A lesson plan from InsideOut's Youth Advisory Board

Check in | 15 minutes

What is your favorite word, phrase, or saying in a different language? This can be “official” language or slang. Why do you like it? How do you think language can define a culture?

Resource Building | 15 minutes

Think about a moment you interacted with someone who was unfamiliar with your language.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How did that interaction make you feel?
- What makes your language different from other people's?
- How else is language communicated? How do different people use their non-verbal language to communicate?

Close Reading | 20 minutes

READ | [Ode to the high top fade by Joshua Bennett](#)

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How does Joshua Bennett establish a sense of community in the piece?
- How does he create identity?
- What words stand out as specific and special? What instances within the poem signify that feeling?



Essential Words: LTAB Online 2020

Lesson plans and writing prompts for teens



WATCH | [Alien Suite by Safia Elhillo \(YouTube\)](#)

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How does the use of words in a different language make you feel? Does it add or detract from your experience with the poem?
- What is a line that stands out to you?

Writing Prompt | 20 minutes

Pick that one word or phrase that is special to you, your friends, or your family. Write an ode to that word or phrase.

DEFINITION | **ODE**: a poem written in praise of a person, place, or thing.

OR

Choose one or more phrases that you brainstormed earlier. Write a poem with each of those phrases starting a stanza. Try to re-create something using random language that is close to you.

Share Out | 15 minutes



Essential Words: LTAB Online 2020

Lesson plans and writing prompts for teens



Ode to the high top fade by Joshua Bennett

You stand like a black box theatre in a one-pony town where no one likes theatre, except for the one pony, who loves August Wilson, especially the way August Wilson describes juba & inheritance & regret. I do not regret your genesis. I was simply unprepared for the side effects. How you announce my entrance for everyone on the A train, how they fictionalize my vertical leap, my Spades telepathy, my court vision in overtime, you get what I'm getting at here. You're rocking the boat, my man! You grow out of this body in small black fists, like a poplar you could scale to Alpha Centauri, like a shadow arguing for a body. You make this body unfamiliar. Mom & Dad loved you at first, but now you are three weeks past acceptable, an inch too long for phase or interview or the gravity of hard bristle & shea butter you refuse to obey. You refuse to obey & I do not know how to care for anything or anyone that dares to break into this vault I built from scholarship money & easy praise, this armory skin. Teach me to raise the flesh they flayed. My silhouette's gorgeous speed. The many contradictions of this name you redeem.

[Ode to the high top fade by Joshua Bennett, StoryScape Literary Journal](#)