



Essential Words: LTAB Online 2020

Lesson plans and writing prompts for teens



Navigating Identity & Perception

by Brittany Rogers

DURATION: 1.5 hours
GRADE LEVEL: High School
WRITING LEVEL: ALL
FOCUS: identity

EXAMPLE POEMS

[Alternate Names for Black Boys](#)
by Danez Smith

[Poem Full of Worry Ending with My Birth](#) by Tarfia Faizullah

Check in | 15 minutes

*"People have the right to call themselves whatever they like. That doesn't bother me.
It's other people doing the calling that bothers me."*

Octavia Butler, Author

What does this quote mean to you? How do you like to be defined? More importantly, how do you define yourself?

Once you have reflected, write a 6 word memoir that could be used to introduce you to others.

RESOURCE | [Six Word Memoirs](#)

Resource Building | 15 minutes

EXERCISE | **Create a T-Chart**

On one side, list the ways that you have been described by other people. On the other side, list the ways you describe yourself. Be as specific and descriptive as possible.

DISCUSSION | Evaluate the similarities and differences in the lists.

Close Reading | 20 minutes

Alternate Names for Black Boys by [Danez Smith](#) (Poetry Foundation)

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What do you think the writer is saying about people's perceptions of black boys?
- What seems to be the writer's perceptions?
- What literary devices can you identify in this poem?



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Poem Full of Worry Ending with My Birth by [Tarfia Faizullah](#) (American Academy of Poets)

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How are the speaker's worries rooted in perceptions?
- How do the line breaks/ page spacing contribute to your understanding of this poem?
- What things do you worry about? What is their motivation?

Writing Prompt | 20 minutes

After the model of Danez Smith, **write a poem that gives 12 alternate names for YOU.** Write about yourself in the third person: How do you describe your identity? How do people define you?

OR

Write a poem that illustrates how you think you are perceived. Whose opinions are you most concerned with? What do these perceptions affect? How? Why?



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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

[Alternate Names for Black Boys by Danez Smith, Poetry Foundation](#)

AUDIO IS AVAILABLE FOR THIS POEM



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[Poem Full of Worry Ending with My Birth](#) by Tarfia Faizullah

I worry that my friends
will misunderstand my silence

as a lack of love, or interest, instead
of a tent city built for my own mind,

I worry I can no longer pretend
enough to get through another

year of pretending I know
that I understand time, though

I can see my own hands; sometimes,
I worry over how to dress in a world

where a white woman wearing
a scarf over her head is assumed

to be cold, whereas with my head
cloaked, I am an immediate symbol

of a war folks have been fighting
eons-deep before I was born, a meteor.

[Poem Full of Worry Ending with My Birth](#) by Tarfia Faizullah, Academy of American Poets

AUDIO IS AVAILABLE FOR THIS POEM