

**Teaching Chapter 1 - Introduction**

**Intro**

(NB: Before starting the programme, the class should have seen the show, which you can find on the home page of the website)

Welcome to the programme! At this point your students might have a base knowledge of what spoken word poetry is, or they might have never heard of it at all. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the concept of spoken word, explain the ground rules, start building community and get the students into the habit of writing and sharing their work out loud.

At this stage you should also set the intention of the programme to the students. Let them know that at the end of the programme they will have all the skills and confidence to write and perform their own Introduction poem.

**Suggested Mini Exercise**

**‘Three Things I Know to Be True’**

This is the first exercise I get students to do as it was the first exercise I learned when I started in spoken word (from Sarah Kay and Phil Kaye from Project Voice).

* Get the students to write down three things they know to be true. It can be anything they want - about them, about their family, about what they had for breakfast that morning - the only rule is they don’t think too hard about it.

The purpose of this exercise is to get the students to write something down about themselves straight away and to show just how different everyone’s lists are. If the students started sharing their lists with others you would find 4 things.

1. Someone has the same thing on their list as you
2. Someone has the opposite on their list as you
3. Someone has something that you’ve never even heard of
4. Someone has something on their list that you *thought* you knew everything about, but they are introducing a new element.

All of these things would start a conversation. This is the starting point for great poetry; the intersection of what you know to be true and the connection with others who are interested in what you have to say.

**Poem and Learning Objectives**

**“Introduction” – Metaphor and Simile, Identity and Connection**

**Link - https://youtu.be/XLy4Uad-ioY**

**Introduction**

when I tell you to tell me a story

I really mean

welcome home

my ears are the AirBnB

on the holiday of your dreams

when I say your dreams

I really mean my purpose

if you’re on a journey then, baby,

I’m your designated driver

solid 5-star Uber review

you

passenger accomplice

 willing companion

 synchronised compass

northward

on the highways of our histories

have you ever rode the waltzers

solo

after stuffing your face full of fairground fodder

then you stand

and try go out through the in door

pushing at the pull gate

 dizzy

 and

 sick

afterburn of life rising in your throat

Earth’s rotation s p i n n i n g between your ears

I have

a lot

which is to say

I have a lot of experience

standing still when the way we move through space

Is the smallest force pushing me around

put another way

I’m a good man in a storm

I’m good at floating

the water never gets above my head

only directly to

I mean

I will never let you drown

when the oceans of this world

wash inwards

and carve coastlines to your front door

my body will be sandbag and sail

It’s been a while since I’ve had to bail out the storm

I mean

I won’t bail out on you

if you ask me, I will carry you

over every horizon

which is to say

I know I say a lot, have said a lot

I know I talk too much

but I’ve swallowed down

so many stories that didn’t agree with me

I got tired of bringing up the past

so tell me one of yours

lace your voice with starlight

cause god knows I’m scared of the dark

when I say the dark

I mean

the silence

when I say the silence

I mean

please

don’t leave me

I don’t want to be alone

alone this girl falls in the forest

and who cares if I make a sound

can you learn to love the garden

when it looks like the underbrush?

looks like the darkest part of the fairytale

the bit they leave out of the movies

I’m not a princess

 nor warrior

 not hero or sidekick

 not magic wand or spindle prick

I’m the witch they left out of the story

the (mostly) good kind

who comes and goes by bubble

and holds you as you cry

my magic can hold back the dark

I mean

I love you

my name is

the backbone of your question mark

that thing

you didn’t know

 you didn’t know

let’s find out together

I mean

hello

I can’t wait to get to know you

**Context – What’s the Poem About**

The poem is a concise introduction to myself and a first attempt to make a connection to an audience who might have never seen me perform before. In it, I try to convince them that this is everything they need to know about me. I want the audience to see it and be convinced that I am a narrator to listen to and the story I am about to tell is one they want to listen to.

**Group Discussion – Things to Ask the Class**

* At what point do you trust the author?
* What parts do you find relatable? Do you have anything in common with this poem?
* What can you tell about the author from the things she has told you in the poem?
* If you were writing an Introduction poem, what kind of things would you put in?

**Suggested Main Exercise**

**7 Minutes of Free Writing**

This exercise is to let students shake off any writing anxiety they have before undertaking a creative task. By taking their brains off the hook and just writing the first thing that comes into their head it clears away any cobwebs and wakes up the creative part of their brain, as well as showing just how strange and weird and wonderful a place the subconscious mind is.

* Put 7 minutes on the clock
* Instruct the students to write at the top of their page ‘Outside these walls I am…’
* Tell the students that when the clock starts, they cannot stop writing, even if their mind comes to a natural stop their pens must keep moving. If the student does come to a pause or a stop, they must write the phrase ‘I am writing’ over and over again until they are ready to move on and continue the thread.
* Start the clock

**Some things to think about**

Remind your students that throughout the programme we will be building toward them writing and performing their own Introduction poem. This is something they should keep in mind because they might find it helps with the writing exercises going forward.