Teaching Tips

General Tips

- Use the videos as a basis for **classroom discussion and activities**. The materials are designed to make the study of poetry exciting and engaging.
- For each **video**, there are questions/background information for pre-viewing, viewing and post-viewing discussions.
- Suggested **activities** are designed to be suitable for **multiple intelligences**. Teachers can present a choice of activities to the students or select one to assign. After each assignment, teachers can ask for volunteers to share their work with the class.
- Teachers may wish to **develop their own activities and discussion questions** to complement a particular unit they are introducing.
- The videos can be used as a **resource for independent study** projects, e.g. researching a poet/storyteller or particular genre or having a student present a poet's work to the class
- These guides can also be **inspiration** to explore and develop a wide range of **creative writing and performance skills**.
- Portions of this **study guide can be printed**, to distribute to students, or they can be given the URL to read on their own.

General questions to begin any unit on poetry or storytelling

- What poet do you like? (this could include a singer/songwriter). Why do you like his or her work?
- Have you ever heard a poet read or recite poems? How did that differ from reading it on the page?
- Have you ever written a poem? Performed it in public? What was that like?
- Has anyone heard of spoken word? What do you think that means?

Tips for helping students enjoy poetry

- Read *Introduction to Poetry* by Billy Collins, former US Poet Laureate. Collins offers another way of looking at a poem, besides the usual way: to "tie the poem to a chair with rope / and torture a confession out of it."
- When giving feedback, ask students to focus on positive parts of a poem, rather than on what they don't like.
- Get rid of self and group censorship – allow the students to express themselves freely.
- Let the discussions be student-driven. Know when to step back and when to step in with comments.
- Remember that great writing is a process, not a product.
- Have some fun! Let this be a time for exploration, stretching writing and performance muscles.

Special projects for students

- Pick a favorite performer, go to their website or other related links and present a profile of their work
- Use units in this guide to make a presentation
- Attend a live performance and report on that to the class.
- Memorize a poem or story and perform it
- Write a poem or story and perform it

Mature content advisory

Some of the performances include mature content, e.g., sexual references and swearing. This is noted in the pre-viewing section, where applicable. Teachers should preview these videos and decide whether they are appropriate for their class.