

In this unit, students study poetry using lessons designed in partnership with Poetry in America, whose mission is to bring poetry into classrooms and living rooms around the world. Each sub-unit contains three lessons focused on one poem; students may work through all sub-units at one time, or each sub-unit may be taught independently. In the three lessons within each sub-unit, students look carefully at the language and form the poet uses and reflect on the poem's topic and themes. They have conversations about the poem with their classmates and also listen to poets, celebrities, academics, and everyday citizens discuss the poem in embedded videos within the lessons. Students have the opportunity to try on the poet's use of language, craft, and structure in creative writing assignments.

In Sub-unit 1, students read Ed Hirsch's poem "Fast Break," which describes the action of a fast break in a basketball game in ways that reflect the feel of the game and offer an ode to a friend.

In Sub-unit 2, students consider the personal and cultural background that African American poet Richard Hayden drew on for his iconic poem "Those Winter Sundays."

### **Core texts your student will read:**

- "Fast Break" by Ed Hirsch
- "Those Winter Sundays" by Robert Hayden

### **What my student will do/learn:**

In Sub-unit 1, students work with Ed Hirsch's poem, "Fast Break."

- Students work alongside NBA players like Shaquille O'Neal (appearing in embedded videos) to analyze how the poem uses word choice, figurative language, punctuation, and the form of the lines to mimic the pace and action of a fast break.
- Students explore how this vivid description of one specific moment in a basketball game operates as an elegy.
- Students experiment with elements of "Fast Break" to create their own poem centered around a favorite activity.

In Sub-unit 2, students read Richard Hayden's poem "Those Winter Sundays."

- Students build their knowledge of the blues musical form and the sonnet poetic form and discuss how those influences are reflected in Hayden's poem.
- Students use his poem as an inspiration for writing their own ode to an unsung hero in their life.

**Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student.**

Read the poem "Fast Break" with your student.

1. Watch the video (found in your students' lesson materials) of players making and discussing a fast break as you look at the poem. What was one thing you noticed in the poem that really captured the motion and speed of a fast break?
2. What is the relationship like between the players described in the poem? How did the poem convey that idea? Why might the poet have chosen this poem as the way to remember his friend?
3. Can you share the poem you wrote in the style of "Fast Break"? (Provide feedback to your student by celebrating their poem and responding to something specific as a reader. For example, "The line in your poem, 'balanced between smooth motion and hard concrete' really captures the setting of your skateboarding!")

Read the poem "Those Winter Sundays" with your student.

1. In these lessons, you watched President Biden discuss the poem and his relationship with his father. What did you learn about the President's understanding of this poem?
2. What do you think this poet wants to say about the relationship between this speaker and his father? Which line really seems to communicate this idea to you?
3. Can you share the poem you wrote in the style of "Those Winter Sundays"? (Provide feedback to your student by celebrating their poem and responding to something specific as a reader. For example, "This poem about our neighbor's patience in caring for her elderly mother really celebrates her gentle manner. It is really important to notice things like this. Thank you for sharing it.")