Our unit covers a variety of genres within modern poetry that we believe will interest students and engage them by being current and relevant to students’ lives. The various genres should provide students with a wide view of the different forms modern poetry can take, including music, a free verse novel, and spoken word poetry. The unit will culminate in a poetry slam performance in which students will perform their own original works for an audience.

The first week of our unit strives to be as relevant to students as it possibly could. Music is a nearly universal medium for expression. In recent years poetry has seemingly gone out of vogue. However, most students do not realize that when they listen to their favorite pop song on the radio they are indeed listening to poetry. During this week students will learn about themes in musical poetry, the use of literary devices in musical poetry, the use of complex rhyme scheme in song lyrics, and how performance style and context can change a poem’s theme or meaning. The first day of this week is devoted to recognizing songs as modern poetry set to music. Using the modern R&B hit “Where is the Love” by the Black Eyed Peas, students will recognize themes and support them with evidence from the text. The second day will focus on literary devices, especially irony, in Dave Matthews Band’s “Funny the Way It is.” This is a fairly simple lesson, but it is necessary to solidify in students’ minds that songs can be analyzed just as any literature they have encountered in class before. This will also make poetry a less intimidating genre as a whole. The third lesson of the week revolves around rhyme scheme in modern poetry. Using a video of an analysis of rhyme usage in Eminem’s “Lose Yourself,” students will be exposed to rhyme usage that is typical and atypical in traditional poetry. Student will then examine a song of their own choosing for rhyme scheme in a similar manner as the video. This helps students understand how poetry is crafted and how song writing is a complex process. The fourth lesson of the first week is largely discussion based and focuses on how performance style and context shape what a poem or song convey to the reader or audience. This lesson will require students to think critically about themes being changed according to performance and context. The fifth lesson of the week will be an in class writing assignment that will act as assessment of what the students have learned during the week. Students will bring In a school appropriate song of their choice and analyze it according to what was covered that week. Performance, themes, literary devices and rhyme scheme should all be written about by students so that the teacher can assess their understanding of the material taught that week.

In our second week, we are transitioning to a style that most students are comfortable with, a novel. This novel is the young adult hit *The Realm of Possibility,* written by David Levithan, an author known for his use of diverse and underrepresented narrators. Since the novel uses so many styles of poetry, it is a good step next step after a week going over music. In fact, some of the poems in the text are written in the style of song lyrics. Although this novel is not very long, it will need two weeks to cover it completely. The first week will be spent looking more at the literary devices and the use of them in the novel. On the first day, we will be covering one of the most essential literary devices, the use of symbolism. Students will play a game to realize that they already know how to spot a symbol, giving them examples from their daily life (example a heart as love). This will then progress into an analysis of the first story’s use of symbolism. The next day will be spent on the style of poetry used in these texts. Students will need to explore two different styles and determine which provides a better understanding of not only the character, but the text itself. This day will be the closest to a traditional poetry lesson, one that closely studies form over content. We then move onto the use of sensory images. Students will explore not only how a sensory image is used and how to identify it, but also how to properly convey a sense using just your words. This use of sense is a nice tradition into our lesson on themes. As many characters have been introduced by this point in the text, the students will need a day to just grasp an understanding of them all. So, we will be breaking up each chapter into groups to explore what the character is like and what they are trying to teach us. We will finish this week with the unconventional use of ABC poetry, which is where each new stanza begins with the next letter of the alphabet. Now that the students have been shown what encompasses a poetical work, they are ready to start using their creative skills, which will be needed for the final project. On the last day, they will be writing their own version of an ABC poem on whatever topic is of their choosing, with no line limit. This first poem will serve as a stepping stone for the next two weeks of instruction.

The second week of text will focus on the students writing their own free verse poems incorporating many of the devices learned in week one. Students will be able to show their knowledge of poetical devices by creating their own poems and publishing them to a classroom blog. The first day is somewhat of an extension from the first week, focusing on how different perspectives can affect a text. Students will spend time looking at optical illusions with two images to see how different perspectives work visually. They will then look to the text for examples of multiple perspectives. Throughout the novel, many of the characters stories’ intersect and include similar, often times the exact same, situations and offer differing opinions and analysis. The students will explore how perspectives enhance the story. The next day students will be introduced to the writing assignment. Like the novel, students will be writing from different perspectives. Students will be given situations to respond to and each will have a pair with an alternative perspective. Students will share their differing views and talk about them. They will then work on altering the form of their writing to create a free verse poem, utilizing ideas mentioned in the first week. The following day will begin with students sharing their form choices with partners, justifying why lines end where they do and any other choices they made. Students will then work together to find examples of symbolism and sensory images in the days reading. They will look back to their poem and enrich their work. Students will learn to incorporate techniques they have learned to make their writing more vivid. The next day students will type their final versions of their poem and post it to the blog for all to read. In doing so, they will create their own novel modeling *The Realm of Possibility.* Students will practice their computer typing and formatting skills. They will work to manipulate the text to match their ideas and form they created on paper. On the final day of the week, students will work in groups to discuss the larger picture of the novel, the idea of “the realm of possibility.” They will work together to define the phrase and relate it to the world and their lives (focusing on the past and the present). After having successfully written, edited, and published their own free verse poems, they will move on to the slam poetry week where they will work on the performance aspect of poetry.

The final week of the unit is focused on slam, or spoken word poetry. The first day will be spent talking about what slam is, watching Youtube examples, and discussing ideas for the culminating poetry slam at the end of the week. The next day will move into getting students writing their own poems. We will watch a TedTalk by the prominent slam poet Sarah Kay, in which she discusses how she writes and teaches poetry. The students will then engage in a writing activity in which they follow her advice and brainstorm lists of possible poem topics and start writing their own poems. Students will also learn concepts of vocal performance in slam poetry by practicing vocal exercises and learning about how vocal style and inflection can change the meaning of the poem and performance as a whole. Students will practice on lines of poetry and speaking them in different ways, looking at sound, rhythm, emphasis, and emotion. The last two days will be spent practicing for the poetry slam and holding the poetry slam itself. On the practice day, students should practice their poems or songs and give critique and feedback to their classmates on how to improve for the next day. The slam can be held in the school library, where other classes will be invited to spectate. The week follows the model of introducing new concepts of slam little by little, each with a corresponding student activity that will assess their understanding as they go. The culminating poetry slam will serve as a creative assessment of what the students accomplished throughout the unit as a whole, as the students will be asked to write their own poetry, employing poetic elements that have been discussed throughout the four weeks.