

The Power of Storytelling: Celebrating Youth Voices

This lesson presents an opportunity for students to apply their understanding of critical self-reflection, identity, and social location to the development of their own stories as they demonstrate—and celebrate—the power of youth voice.

Introduction/Tips for Facilitator:

- Resources to assist facilitators in preparing students to share their stories, including lessons related to active listening and the power of storytelling, are available on the StoryCorps website at: <https://storycorps.org/discover/education/>
- Not all students may feel ready or comfortable sharing their stories publically. Provide students with alternative options to sharing, including through written word or in small groups.
- If time and resources permit, invite other members of the broader community to attend this showcasing of lived experiences and youth leadership possibilities expressed through art, photography, spoken word, video, or other format. Allow time for students and participants to network and explore potential partnerships to extend the scope of their efforts.
- Interested students are encouraged to submit their completed piece to the [#PassTheMicYouth](#), a youth-led, youth-centered podcast aimed at amplifying the voices and experiences of young people. All featured contributors will receive an inspirational gift to nurture continued leadership. ****Note: All contributors under the age of 18 will be required to sign a release form.*

Background/terminology:

- **Blog** [bläg] (noun): A fully functional website that is simple to create and can be updated directly from a web browser.
- **Blog post** [bläg pōst] (noun): A piece of writing that is uploaded to a blog.
- **Podcast** [päd₁ kast] (noun): An episodic series of audio files that can be downloaded and listened to.
- **Digital storytelling** [dijidl stōrē₁ teliNG] (noun): Storytelling through the use of digital tools, including audio and video podcasts, film, and computer games.
- **Spoken word** [spōkən wərd] (noun): A poetic performance that may include music, sound, and movement to tell a story and connect with an audience.

Objectives:

- Students will gain an understanding of the various mediums for storytelling and the use of storytelling to raise awareness about a social issue(s) and inspire change.
- Students will utilize active listening skills to listen to their peers' stories.
- Students will apply their cumulative knowledge from previous units to develop and share a story related to a lived experience or a social justice issue.

Learning outcomes:

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Identify various mediums for storytelling.
- Apply methods of critical analysis to examine the ways in which their social identities and lived experiences shape their stories.
- Synthesize their knowledge of identity, social location, and critical self-reflection to create and share a story related to social justice or personal experience.

Time: Varies according to the number of students presenting; allow at least two hours for youth to prepare their pieces

Materials needed:

- Internet access for research purposes
- Any resources students may need to facilitate self-expression (e.g., art supplies, an audio or video recorder, or a smartphone)

Do:

In this two-part lesson, students will:

- 1) Identify and research (if necessary) a social issue that is foregrounded in social justice or activism and/or connected to their own lived experiences and social identities.
- 2) Students are then expected to produce a piece using the directions outlined below:
 - a) Submissions must relate to lived experiences and social identities and/or a social justice issue.
 - b) Formats include, but are not limited to: blog posts, audio recordings of personal essays or narratives, spoken word poetry, original music, paintings, or an interview(s).
 - i) Facilitators are encouraged to review examples with students, some of which are provided below.
 - (1) [Spoken word](#)
 - (2) [Blog post](#)
 - (3) [Podcast](#)
 - (4) [YouTube video](#) to raise awareness about a social justice issue
 - c) Ideas include, but are not limited to: sharing a personal experience; a think piece related to a social justice issue; shining a spotlight on the voices of an

underrepresented group(s); and highlighting small-scale or large-scale, on-the-ground change.

Reflect:

- What was the experience of developing a story like for you?
- What was challenging?
- What do you need from us, the audience, before you share your story publically?

Apply/Action:

Showcase pieces in an open mic-like setting.

- This should be an informal presentation and celebration of students' work, experiences, ideas, and passions. As many of the themes involved with each piece may be personal, students should only present if they feel inclined.

Reflect:

- What was that experience like for you, both as a listener and a speaker?
- What does it mean, in this context, to take the mic? What does it mean to pass the mic?
- How can we best listen after we have passed the mic to someone else?
- In what ways is passing the mic related to allyship? In what ways is it related to leadership?
- Celebration—of progress, of resilience, of our own and others' willingness to take risks—is an important though often overlooked part of social change efforts. Why do you think this is the case? Why is it important to celebrate ourselves and one another and to include resilience as part of the broader narrative of youth leadership and social change?

***Youth reflection time for facilitator**