

Suggested poems and monologues for High School and Adults

The following selections can be performed for your video! Please note: these are just suggestions. You may perform a poem or monologue of your choosing.

#1

SEVEN

from *This Is Modern Art* by Kevin Coval

Nah, I ain't tweakin', I'm inspired, yo! On my way to work, almost everyday, I walk by the Art Institute. And I look at that Modern Wing. Every day I see that bridge that hangs over Monroe like a staircase to heaven for the rich. Every day I see it. Every day I see tourists go in and northside schools groups and hip young trust fund art students in their five hundred-thousand-dollar eye glasses and I'm like: "Who is this art for?" and even more "Who is this art by?" You feel me?

#2

The Sonnet-Ballad
by Gwendolyn Brooks

Oh mother, mother, where is happiness?
They took my lover's tallness off to war,
Left me lamenting. Now I cannot guess
What I can use an empty heart-cup for.
He won't be coming back here any more.
Some day the war will end, but, oh, I knew
When he went walking grandly out that door
That my sweet love would have to be untrue.
Would have to be untrue. Would have to court
Coquettish death, whose impudent and strange

Possessive arms and beauty (of a sort)
Can make a hard man hesitate--and change.
And he will be the one to stammer, "Yes."
Oh mother, mother, where is happiness?

#3

JC

from *This Is Modern Art* by Kevin Coval

First time I went to the Art Institute was in the seventh grade. I had this art teacher, Ms. Simkins. She'd take us on field trips all the time. One spring she took us to the Southside, to the DuSable Museum. We met the woman who started it, Margaret Burroughs. This 80-year-old black woman in a bright purple African dress and a pair of Jordans. Like for real. I mean, I never knew museums could be started by old black women . . . wearing Jordans. And she said she spent time as a student in Mexico learning from The Mexican Muralists. Which I thought sounded like a graffiti crew. And I guess in a way they were. She worked with Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros. And I never heard of them. But I remembered Jose Clemente because of the ball player, Roberto Clemente. So when I got to school, Ms. Simkins helped me look up Jose Clemente the painter and we found these murals he did on a college campus. These murals were cold! They told the story of his people, the Latino people...my people. I wanted to tell the stories of my people, too.

#4

Pop Off (excerpt)

from *Can I Kick It?* by Idris Goodwin

After some racist rapper with a confederate flag
started kicking those time-tested hits
"Welfare Queen"
"Chicago is a war zone"

“Get off your knees Kaepernick”
and course “Muslims”

I let off some shots along the back of the bluebird
And an old friend shot back
It’s not that rappers can’t be conservative
hip-hop knows no political affiliation
hip-hop is also vulnerable to schisms and isms
done its share of damage, rocked
salt into bleeding wounds

It’s an ocean which is to suggest
it’ll soothe, wave, reflect light
but also tsunami, and play host
to all manner of hammerhead

#5

“Hey, Black Child”
by Countee Cullen

Hey Black Child
Do you know who you are
Who you really are
Do you know you can be
What you want to be
If you try to be
What you can be

Hey Black Child
Do you know where you are going
Where you’re really going
Do you know you can learn
What you want to learn
If you try to learn
What you can learn

Hey Black Child
Do you know you are strong
I mean really strong

Do you know you can do
What you want to do
If you try to do
What you can do

Hey Black Child
Be what you can be
Learn what you must learn
Do what you can do
And tomorrow your nation
Will be what you what it to be