**Poetry Speaks to Children: Celebrating African-American Poetry**

adapted by J. White

**INTRODUCTION**

Narrator 1: Good afternoon, everyone. We welcome you to our first Poetry Jam at Washington School. I am your Narrator 1, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Narrator 2: And I am \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, your Narrator 2. Thank you for joining us in…

Both: Poetry Speaks to Children: A Celebration of African-American Poets

Narrator 1: What is poetry? you ask. Poetry is literature in meter form.

Narrator 2: It is a form of written word that has pattern and rhythm and rhyme.

Narrator 1: It can be serious or it can be fun. Poetry is as creative as you make it.

Narrator 2: We are surrounded by poetry in our every day life: in music, greeting cards, commercials on TV and much more.

Narrator 1: Today our celebration of poetry takes the form of a Poetry Jam. All of the poems in the jam were written by African-American poets.

Narrator 2: Our poet masters will recite poems for each letter of the alphabet. Let’s meet our poet masters now.

SONG: Jazzy Alphabet

Narrator 1: Thank you poets. Now this is how the jam is going to work. The students have been divided into five groups.

Narrator 2: Each group work is called a set. Each set will end with a song or a dance.

Narrator 1: So hold your applause until each set is over and at the end of the jam, you can vote on your favorites.

[All students go and sit down, except ‘A’ through ‘F’.]

**SET ONE**

Narrator 2: Let’s get started. Help me encourage the poet masters from Set One, letters ‘A’ through ‘F’. [Encourage clapping. Students get in place.]

[Each poet will announce the letter and the word before they start.]

**Allow Me to Introduce Myself**

Poet Master A: We got this! [The other poets protest.]

**Black Girl**

**Comes Walking**

**Dream Boogie**

**Each Man**

**Words like Freedom**

**SONG**: Freedom

**SET TWO**

Narrator 1: Awesome job! Set Two is made up of the letters ‘G’ to ‘K’. Give them some encouragement! [Students get in place.]

**God Never Planted a Garden**

**Harriet Tubman**

**If**

**J**uly

**Kojo**

**DANCE: African Beats**

Poet Master K**:** [After the dance]Top that!

Poet Master A**:** That was okay, but we’re still the best!

All:Sit down!

**SET THREE**

Narrator 2: Calm down. [Pause] In the beginning there was Africa, and it is from Africa that all today’s black American music comes, be it Jazz, R'n'B, or Soul. Poetry is music and music is poetry. With that in mind, here are the poet masters from Set Three, Letters ‘L’ to ‘P’. [Students get in place.]

**Lean On Me**

**My, My, My**

**Nothing**

**The Old of Our People**

**Paula**

**Queenly**

Narrator 2: Two of the poems in the last were written in tribute to our grandmothers. The next song was written by Bill Withers. As a boy Withers would attend church with his grandmother where she would sing and clap along with the hymns.

**SONG: Grandma’s Hands**

**SET FOUR**

Narrator 1: This next set is going to be an exciting one. It includes poets representing the letters ‘R’ through ‘W’. [Students get in place.]

Poet Master A: Not as good as us.

Poet Master R: You’ll see!

**Rapper’s Delight**

Poet Master A: Not fair. Those our words to a song.

All:Sit down!

**The Song of the Smoke**

**Things**

**Urgent**

**Vividness**

**Who**

**Narrator 1:** (speaking to the person reciting ‘Who’)Alright “W”! In the words of the great poet James Brown, Here’s: Say It Loud, I’m Black and I’m Proud.

**SONG/DANCE: Say It Loud, I’m Black and I’m Proud**

**SET FIVE**

Narrator 2: Now we will give a good listen to the poet masters in our last group, Poems from ‘X’ to ‘Z”

Poet Master Z: Saving the best for last.

Poet Master A: We will see.

**Without eXpectation**

**Young Neptune**

Poet Master Z: Hey, Poet Master A! I would like to say my poem directly to you.

Poet Master A: Bring it!

**Talking All That JaZZ**

[Poet ‘A’ applauds Poet ‘Z’ and they shake hands.]

Narrator 1: Well the Poetry Jam has come to an end. We know you all had your favorites. So we’ve decided that everyone is a winner.

Narrator 2: We have enjoyed bringing all of these great poems to you!

Narrator 1: Maybe one day we will be reciting the words written by students in this audience. Now we bring out the letter “L” to bring our program to a close.

Narrators 1 & 2: Thank you for coming!

**SONG: Lean on Me**