**Teaching Ideas for the Concept Writing Contest – Pen A Poem For Justice after studying the song “Glory.” Created by Cristy Desormeaux**

**General Ideas**

* Discuss the meaning of **justice** and **equality** and what they mean in our world. Review poems and songs that deal with this topic and relate them to the everyday lives of the students.
* Create a dialogue between John Legend and MLK – Bridging the gap between the past and present day experiences.
* Interview MLK about Selma. Find out how the actions in Selma contributed to the CRM.

**Elementary School Students (grades 3-5)**

**1. Literary Devices:** Discuss imagery and metaphor and how it is used. Create some original metaphors surrounding vocabulary of social justice, equality and fairness. Choose one original metaphor and one from the song “Glory” that are particularly impactful for you. Write a description of what they mean to you.

**2. Journal**: Reference one of three journal entries created regarding equality and justice as it applies to our society. Using this entry as a guide, create an original poem on the topic of social justice. Students can use personal experience as a launching point.

**3. Song:** Using the song “Glory” by Common and John Legend, choose one overall feeling/image and create a visual representation of the song’s content. Write a paragraph explaining how the visual representation accurately depicts topics in the song.

**4. Research:** Listen to the song “Glory” by Common and John Legend. Identify one of the historical references contained within. Research the individual or the topic from the perspective of the participants and identify contributions to civil rights.

**Middle School Students (grades 6-8)**

**1. Literary Device:** Choose a multiple meaning phrase from the song. Compare the two references and how they add to the meaning of the lyrics. Answer the question as to why the songwriter included such phrases. Write a two paragraph response.

**2. Journal:** As you listen to the song “Glory” by Common and John Legend, write questions that arise from the lyrics and images portrayed. Choose one of the questions generated and write a journal entry discussing possible answers.

**3. Song:** Using the song “Glory” by Common and John Legend, create a double entry journal of phrases contained within the song and the visual and emotional result of the words evoked in the listener.

**4. Research:** Listen to the song “Glory” by Common and John Legend. Identify one of the historical references contained within. Research the individual or the topic from the perspective of the participants and evaluate her/his impact.

**High School Students (grades 9-12)**

**1. Vocabulary:** Identify 10 vocabulary words and state how those particular words add to the overall meaning of the song. Replace each of those words with a different word (synonym or antonym) to see how meaning or visuals change, if at all. Write an analysis of how words can impact meaning.

**2. Journal:** Read the lyrics of the song “Glory” by Common and John Legend. Write your reaction to the words. Listen to the song. How does the music add to the meaning/feel of the words in the song? Watch the video. Does watching the images of the time period as the words are being sung change the impact?

**3. Songs/Poems:** Identify additional poems/songs from the time period or present day that address the topic of social injustice as “Glory” does. Compare the approaches of the two and analyze their effectiveness, determining which does more to further the cause of civil rights.

**4. Research:** Listen to the song “Glory” by Common and John Legend. Identify one of the historical references contained within. Research two individuals/events from the perspective of the participants and evaluate who had a greater impact.

**Students create poems that reflect their understanding of the following and then expand upon the ideas they have read about.**

**People/Events Referenced:**

* Ferguson
* Selma
* Rosa Parks
* MLK
* Jim Crow

**Images Referenced:**

* Heaven
* Skin color
* Bald eagle
* War
* Hands-up
* Police
* Resistance
* Weapons
* Freedom
* Jesus’ crown

**Metaphoric Phrases or Multiple Meaning Words/Phrases**

* Movement is a rhythm and has two meanings: Civil Rights Movement and a song
* Jim Crow’s face under a bald eagle
* Glory can have religious meanings, something in its splendor or having prestige and honor.
* Uses literary device of allusion
* War = a fight
* The “hands-up” image is a powerful visual representation of the issue.
* Beginning of the song sounds like a hymn.
* Mountain top has religious meanings as well as representing achievement of a struggle
* The importance of bonding together for a cause
* We can’t win individually. We have to work together utilizing the wisdom of our elders and the energy of youth.
* Music is the cut we bleed image
* One of the questions could be to analyze what “sins against our skin become our blessings” means.
* Another question could be what it means to “run to the top of the mountaintop.” To what end?
* Another question could reference the march. What is the “finish?” Who has marched in the past? Jesus’ persecutors marched him to the cross. MLK marched in Selma.
* Image: Those who marched in the past have passed the torch to those in the present. Now they have to take what has been done and paved for them and continue to run to the future for the cause.
* Has borrowed lyrics “mine eyes have seen the glory…”
* “Dark roads (times) King led the way. Double meaning: King as in heavenly king or MLK – regal – will light the way.”