

# THIS IS NOT a small voice



Poems by  
**BLACK  
POETS**

Selected by  
**TRACI N. TODD**

Illustrated by  
**JADE ORLANDO**

## SCHEME OF WORK

### PERFECT FOR:

Students aged 8+; exploring a range of beautiful, inspiring poems about Blackness; writing poetry; historical research; artwork inspired by the night sky and dreams; exploring food from around the world; nature walks; sharing a selection of stirring, moving and funny poems.

### KEY FOR CROSS-CURRICULAR OBJECTIVES:

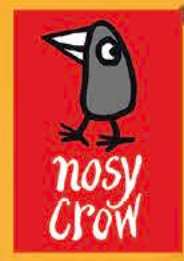
English: Reading Comprehension; Poetry; Creative Writing; Writing to Entertain and Inform  
Drama, Speaking and Listening  
Design Technology & Art  
Geography  
Music  
History

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WEEK 1 THEME: NIGHT-TIME DREAMS

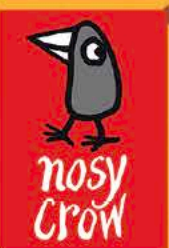


SUGGESTED OBJECTIVES	COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS	EXTRA ACTIVITIES
<p><b>Reading: Comprehension</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analyse an author's style of writing and identify different techniques and vocabulary used.</li> <li>- Describe relationships between characters.</li> <li>- Compare themes across poems.</li> </ul> <p><b>Design Technology &amp; Art</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create a piece of artwork depicting the magical, dazzling night-time scenes featured in these poems.</li> <li>- Create a piece of artwork in the style of the Surrealists.</li> </ul> <p><b>Music</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use your voice and instruments with control and expression to create a magical soundscape.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The poems chosen this week are about the night sky. Before reading, create a semantic map of words, ideas and themes linked to 'NIGHT-TIME'.</li> <li>2. Who or what is the 'dream keeper' on page 8? What do they promise to do? Do you trust them?</li> <li>3. What dreams and 'heart melodies' do you have? Draw a picture or write a poem about your own dreams. (page 8)</li> <li>4. Spend time exploring <i>Happy Birthday Moon</i> by Raymond Antrobus (page 106). What can you infer about the relationship between the narrator and their dad?</li> <li>5. What do you think the stars in <i>The Ghosts Of Women Once Girls</i> by Aja Money (page 107) might represent? Could they symbolise more than one thing?</li> <li>6. What do you notice about the use of sibilance in <i>Spirit Enchantment</i> by Ed Bullins. What sort of atmosphere does it create? How might you read the poem? Quietly? Loudly?</li> <li>7. Use a Venn Diagram to compare and contrast <i>Spirit Enchantment</i> with <i>Lullaby</i> (page 111). How are these poems similar and different?</li> <li>8. How can night be like 'purple flakes of snow' (page 113)? Can you describe the night sky using similes and metaphors?</li> <li>9. How does the artwork on pages 114–115 help develop your understanding of <i>Poem</i> by Langston Hughes. Is this a strange title? Who are the 'my people' in the poem?</li> <li>10. How do each of these poems make you feel about night-time? Can you describe each poem using one word only?</li> </ol>	<p>Use the beautiful descriptions in these poems to <b>paint a star-filled night sky</b>. You could use the <i>Night Skies</i> series by Vija Celmins or <i>Starry Night and the Astronauts</i> by Alma Thomas to explore a range of styles. You could also use the artwork on pages 112–113 to <b>create your own night-time 'quilt'</b> using different fabrics and shades of blue.</p> <p>Dreams are an important part of these poems. Use the work of Black artists such as Jean-Michel Basquiat, Betye Saarto and Kara Walker to <b>inspire a piece of artwork</b> based on the poem <i>Fantasy</i> by Gwendolyn Bennett (page 111). After, try creating a class display of your artwork.</p> <p>There are lots of night-time sounds in the poem <i>Night Songs</i> by Lynn Joseph. Can you <b>create a magical soundscape</b> to accompany this poem? You could use your voices, body percussion and instruments to create strange, ethereal sounds. You could also use symbols to create a graphic score to represent your composition.</p>



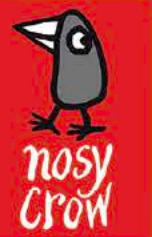


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<p><b>Reading: Comprehension</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Define vocabulary, thinking carefully about its meaning and impact.</li> <li>- Retrieve information.</li> </ul> <p><b>Writing to Entertain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use appealing adjectives and alliteration to write a description of your favourite meal.</li> </ul> <p><b>Geography</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create a food map, exploring national dishes from around the world.</li> </ul> <p><b>Design Technology &amp; Art</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create a piece of food-themed artwork.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The poems chosen this week are about food. Have a class discussion about your favourite foods. Are there any special foods you eat on special occasions?</li> <li>2. How does the mother in <i>Latch Key Kid</i> (page 36) express her love through food?</li> <li>3. What smells might you like to greet you when you return home? Can you use a similar structure as the poem on page 36 to describe which foods might 'hook my nostrils'?</li> <li>4. Do you notice anything interesting about the layout and use of repetition in <i>Mammie's Coo Coo and Callaloo?</i> (page 98) What effect does it have?</li> <li>5. Print each line from <i>Jamaica Market</i> (page 99) on to strips of paper and distribute them between the class. Can the children 'make' a poem with the strips of paper? Encourage them to think about rhyme.</li> <li>6. Why do you think <i>STANDING TALL</i> is written like this? (page 102) What effect does it have?</li> <li>7. Who are the 'captive audience' in <i>Saturday Morning Pancakes?</i> How do they feel about their dad? (page 102)</li> <li>8. Can you use the poem by Yesenia Montilla on page 103 to write your own ode to a delicious breakfast?</li> <li>9. The food mentioned in <i>Ode to a Dominican Breakfast</i> (page 103) is actually called Los Tres Golpes. Perhaps you might like to cook it and share it with your class.</li> <li>10. Choose one of the poems to perform in a group, thinking about your voice, tone and volume.</li> </ol>	<p>Can you describe the appearance, taste and smell of your favourite meal? Now, <b>write a persuasive piece</b>, explaining why you like it. Can you encourage someone who has never tried it to taste your food? Use alliteration, adjectives and refer to the five senses.</p> <p><b>Create a food map</b> that explores the national dishes of different countries. You could label a world map with famous dishes from each country or create an 'Around the World' recipe book to showcase a variety of dishes and foods. You may even wish to invite an adult into school to discuss and share the foods that are important to them.</p> <p>Several Black artists use food in their work. Spend time exploring the artwork of Haneefah Adam, Kemar Keanu Wynter and Ghetto Gastro – how do they portray food? What might the food represent? You could also look at Andy Warhol's <i>Campbell's Soup Cans</i> or Arcimboldo's food-based creations. Afterwards use this artwork and the poems in this collection to <b>create your own food-themed painting</b>.</p>





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<p><b>Reading: Comprehension</b> - Use clues from the text to infer information about a character and what they might be thinking and feeling.</p> <p><b>Poetry</b> - Write a poem about a special friend or family member. - Write a nature-themed poem in the style of Rio Cortez.</p> <p><b>Geography</b> - Explore the features of your local area.</p> <p><b>Design Technology &amp; Art</b> - Create a piece of artwork in the style of Cornelius Annor.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The poems chosen this week are about family and friends. How do you think the narrator feels about Narcissa on page 16? How do you know?</li> <li>2. What does Gwendolyn Brooks mean when she describes looking in a mirror and seeing a stranger? Is this a positive or negative thing? (page 17)</li> <li>3. What can you infer about the relationship between the narrator and their mother in <i>Latch Key Kid</i>? (page 36)</li> <li>4. Imagine you are standing in the setting described in <i>This Is Not A Small Voice</i> (page 56). What can you see, hear, taste, touch and smell? Is there anything unusual about how the poem is set out? Why might this be?</li> <li>5. What trouble might the narrator be referring to in <i>Photograph</i>? (page 60) What effect does the repetition in the last line have?</li> <li>6. How old do you think the narrator on page 89 is? What makes you think this?</li> <li>7. 'Timmy and Tawanda are mischievous and naughty.' Do you agree with this statement? Why? Why not? (page 87)</li> <li>8. What do the verbs 'pose' and 'strut' suggest about the children on page 88?</li> <li>9. How do the poems on pages 90 and 91 capture a sense of joy? Think about things like rhyme, repetition and layout. Can you think of a new title for each poem?</li> <li>10. Which of these themes is the most important in the poems you've read: <i>pride, community, showing you care.</i></li> </ol>	<p>Use the poem <i>Granddaddy</i> by Dinah Johnson (page 86) as a template to <b>write about a special family member or friend.</b> For example: <i>Nobody has a best friend like my best friend.</i> OR <i>Nobody has a step-brother like my step-brother.</i> Afterwards you could perform your poems, create a class display, or even share them with your special person.</p> <p>The family in <i>Climbing Together</i> by Rio Cortez go on a wonderful journey and see lots of beautiful things while they're walking. As a class, <b>go outside and wander around your local area.</b> Make a note of any interesting things you see. When you return to your classroom, <b>write your own poem inspired by your walk.</b></p> <p>Spend some time looking at Cornelius Annor's artwork, which focuses on family. Can you <b>recreate some of his beautiful paintings,</b> focusing on pattern and using oil pastels?</p>





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<p><b>Reading: Comprehension</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify and discuss the main themes in the story.</li> <li>- Create character profiles.</li> <li>- Summarise information.</li> <li>- Make comparisons within and across books.</li> </ul> <p><b>History</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conduct research into the lives of Touissant Louverture, Shaka Zulu and Mary Seacole.</li> </ul> <p><b>Writing to Inform</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plan and write a biography.</li> </ul> <p><b>Poetry</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Write a poem in the style of Charles R. Smith Jr.</li> <li>- Create a class poetry book to celebrate all the poems you've read throughout your school year.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The poems this week all link to history and finding out about ourselves. How does the narrator in <i>This Body II</i> (page 14) feel about themselves? Can you write a similar poem?</li> <li>2. Use <i>Checking Out Me History</i> (page 28) to explore what you are (and are not) taught in school. How inclusive and diverse is your curriculum?</li> <li>3. What is <i>American Gothic</i> (page 51) about? How do the verbs used capture a sense of movement and celebration?</li> <li>4. Should books ever be banned? Have a class debate about book banning, arguing both for and against. (page 55)</li> <li>5. Who was Eric Garner? What role did his death play in the development of the Black Lives Matter movement? Does the poem do a good job of honouring his legacy? (page 64)</li> <li>6. Use <i>You Are On Your Way To Greatness</i> (page 68) to discuss what you would like to be when you grow up. What does the narrator mean by a 'pioneering pathway'? How does the poet use the imagery of nature and plants?</li> <li>7. Who do you think the poem on pages 68 and 69 is addressing? How does the poem make you feel?</li> <li>8. What does the narrator in <i>Iris Song</i> (page 93) mean when they talk about 'touching the sky'? What does this symbolise?</li> <li>9. Do you notice anything interesting about the layout and use of space in <i>Who Can Be Born Black</i> (page 93)?</li> <li>10. AFTER you have read all these poems, read the Introduction by Traci N. Todd. Do you think the collection has celebrated Blackness and reminded you to never give up?</li> </ol>	<p>Spend some time conducting research into the lives of the famous people mentioned in these poems, including: Touissant Louverture, Shaka Zulu and Mary Seacole. Can you <b>write a biography</b> about your chosen person? Make sure you write in the past tense and include information about their childhood and achievements.</p> <p>Use the poem <i>Allow Me To Introduce Myself</i> (page 50) to create a class display with the same title. Can you <b>write your own kennings</b> in a similar style, introducing yourself to any visitors who might come into your class? You could even draw a self-portrait to accompany your poem.</p> <p><b>Create a class poetry book!</b> Every time you read or discover a new poem, copy it out on to a piece of paper and illustrate it, before putting it into a class book. Share your poems throughout the year, discuss which ones are your favourite, perform them for each other and turn your classroom into a poetry-filled room full of magic and wonder!</p>

