

LEARNING EXCHANGE PROTOCOL

Duet Poem

Note: All protocols have multiple origins. The strength of a protocol is in the ability of facilitators or planners to adjust/revise for use in your context. <http://www.nsrharmony.org/free-resources/protocols/a-z> is a good source of multiple protocols for school, district, community and organizational use.



Public Art Sculpture by J. Parra from Colombia 2002
Seeing from two sides
Gallaudet Campus, Washington D.C.

Overview

Duet Poems come in multiple forms and can be written by a single person to represent two points of view – as if there is a conversation. Most of us are familiar with singing duets and taking turns to sing. In the case of the duet poem, the writers perform the poem as if taking turns.

Please look at example Duet Poem “On the Question of Race” by Quique Aviles and Michelle Banks.

Writing

The poem duet is co-constructed by two persons in “call and response” format – typically speaking to the same reality or identity from two points of view. The writers can choose to have a repetitive refrain or chorus as a “chorus” part to repeat. In the tradition of speaking one’s truth and naming one’s reality, the poems are about identity – personal and collective—and one’s sense of self in a society.

Presentation

Decide how to position yourselves – looking to the audience or talking to each other.

Practice the reading with inflection and strong voices.

Introduce yourselves to the audience and give title if you have title.

Read/perform poem



www.shutterstock.com 1303289

On the Question of Identity (with many thanks to the authors)

Tawanda Coston-Smallwood	Sophelia McMannen
<p>They ask me to write about being a black woman And I think and think very seriously will they understand Are you sure you want to travel in my size 8 shoes Think before you answer it's a life I did not choose</p>	<p>They ask me to write about being a black woman And I think and think very seriously will they understand Are you sure you want to travel in my size 8 shoes Think before you answer it's a life I did not choose</p>
<p>1 When I was born I had ten fingers and toes, a head full of hair and a wide nose As I grew I began to do things like walk talk write and sing but could never understand this one little thing Still to this day it still makes me ponder how you can demean being a baby momma That's what I am a giver of life and somehow ended up being a wife</p> <p>But all that can't change how I was born</p>	<p>2 When I was born I was their first girl The one they hoped would help change the world As I grew I dreamed of success I was ready for the world and all of its tests I am still working on my goals I have to play many roles I am a loving, supportive wife My best deed thus far was giving Taylor and Reggie life</p> <p>But all that can't change how I was born</p>
<p>3 Life can teach me lessons whether I'm ready or not Feeling like I have so much to prove to Mr. Big Shot Trying to get as much education in this big head of mine So I won't end up smelling of alcohol in the unemployment line Or rushing to the mailbox monthly on the first or third day Looking straight-ahead forgetting about the people I have to pay None of the aforementioned pertains to my personal situation But because of what I am on the outside it's so many people's observation</p>	<p>4 Life did teach me lessons whether I was ready or not I always have to prove how I got what I got They see the big house, immaculate yard and fancy truck However, they don't understand it didn't happen by luck. They were not there when I had to leave school because my parent didn't have the money The naysayers may have even thought it was the end of my journey Many don't understand how education was my only ticket out They only had their snickering laughs and many doubts</p>

<p>Do I try to prove them wrong and say hey wait I do have a brain Or will that just justify the reason why I'm sometimes called insane</p> <p>But all that can't change how I was born</p>	<p>I had to struggle to rebound and start with a new plan Thankful that God had already promised me a winning hand</p> <p>But all that can't change how I was born</p>
<p>5 Oh no times have definitely changed there are far more advancements But some didn't get that memo what happened to my handful of chances Being a black woman do you really want to know What goes through my mind or just the part I have to show If you can't beat em join em but what if you are denied Entry into this world by being judged and ostracized Some others are put on a pedestal with their Barbie like figure Look at me and my hips, wide enough for the babies I had to deliver We all look alike, eat watermelon and love some fried chicken Beat our kids, look for handouts so many others I could mention At least that's what you think or so you have been taught or told Close your eyes and imagine your loved ones being sold Yeah yeah yeah I know it's the same old story But the strength I have, my God gets all the glory If you walk a mile in my shoes you still wouldn't understand How it makes me feel to be thought of as less than my fellow man But all that can't change how I was born</p>	<p>6 Times have changed and there are far more advancements Some still just refuse to honor our chances Being a black woman sometimes seems like a curse When some people see us they just assume the worse They see the braids, natural hair and weave They automatically think we can't achieve Society tries to prove that color doesn't matter However, we all know it is the root of the battle Look at the President of The United States Never has a leader been so disrespected and greeted with such hate I now understand what my Grandma meant about having burdens to bare Trying to live in world that just doesn't seem fair Yet I keep trying to grow and succeed Praying that society won't judge me by my color but by my good deeds But all that can't change how I was born</p>

7 Trying to teach someone to see you
for who you really are
Is the dumbest thing I've heard in my
life so far
Having a scarlet letter on your back in a
crowd so deep
Some live by the notion you sow what
you reap
Often people say what's done in the
dark will surely come to the light
What's in your heart will show although
you try to hide it with all of your might
Trying to toe that line do you even
know what's right
You can't fool em all even blind people
have a sense of sight

They ask me to write about being a
black woman
And I think and think very seriously will
they understand
No is my answer because they have a
bird in the hand

**Are you sure you want to travel in my
size 8 shoes
Think before you answer it's a life I did
not choose**

8 They say don't judge a book by its
cover
Yet we don't take the time to truly get to
know each other
We preach that education is the key
However, when are we going to see the
equity
The state of North Carolina released its
charter school cap
Makes you wonder if they really want to
close the achievement gap
Public schools are almost once again
segregated
Makes the work of our ancestors look
suffocated
I know some things are not like they
seem
Just like Martin Luther King I still have a
dream
**Are you sure you want to travel in my
size 8 shoes
Think before you answer it's a life I did
not choose**

