Pacific Islanders Climate Devastation Poetry

Subject	Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies Pacific Islander Studies English Language Arts
Grade Level(s)	9-12
Topic	AAPI Women: Untold Stories Through Poetry
Themes	Identity History and Movement Systems of Power Social Movements and Equity
Overview	Through this lesson, students will learn how climate change has had a devastating impact on the Pacific Islander population. Students will learn about pleads for action by Pacific Islanders in solving the climate devastation to their home islands by exploring Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner's poetry on this topic. By analyzing and interpreting the poems, students will recognize poetry as a vehicle to express untold stories about events and issues, both small and large. This lesson helps students expand their viewpoints as they explore the readings and begin working with poems, focusing on central ideas, similes, and metaphors. Students will learn how to craft central ideas for their own poems, and use similes and metaphors in conveying their messages.
Common Core Standards Assessed	**College- and Career-Readiness Anchor Standards (CCSS):** L: Language, R: Reading, SL: Speaking & Listening, W: Writing **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L9-10.5:** Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L9-10.5A:** Interpret figures of speech (e.g., euphemism, oxymoron) in context and analyze their role in the text. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L9-10.6:** Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2:** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone). **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5:** Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.6:** Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.3:** Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.4:** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

	CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L11-12.5:** Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L11-12.5A:** Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L11-12.6:** Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2:** Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5:** Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6:** Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement). **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.3:** Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.4:** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.5:** Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
California Standards Assessed	**English Language Development Standards:** **ELD.PI.9-12.1:** Exchanging information and ideas with others through oral collaborative discussions on a range of social and academic topics. **ELD.PI.9-12.5:** Listening actively to spoken English in a range of social and academic contexts. **ELD.PI.9-12.9:** Expressing information and ideas in formal oral presentation on academic topics. **ELD.PI.9-12.10:** Writing literary and informational texts to present, describe, and explain ideas and information, using appropriate technology. **Ethnic Studies Values and Principles Alignment:** 1. Cultivate empathy, community actualization, cultural perpetuity, self-worth, self-determination, and the holistic well-being of all participants, especially Native peoples and people of color. 2. Celebrate and honor Native peoples of the land and communities of color by providing a space to share their stories of struggle and resistance, along with their cultural wealth. 3. Center and place high value on pre-colonial, ancestral, indigenous, diasporic, familial, and marginalized knowledge.

	4. Critique empire and its relationship to white supremacy, racism, patriarchy, and cisheteropatriarchy. 5. Challenge imperialist/colonial hegemonic beliefs and practices on the ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized levels. 6. Connect ourselves to past and contemporary resistance movements that struggle for social justice on the global and local levels. 7. Conceptualize, imagine, and build new possibilities for post-imperial life that promotes collective narratives of transformative resistance, critical hope, and radical healing.
Learning Objectives	Students will: 1. Learn how climate change impacts the Marshallese, the people of the Marshall Islands. 2. Identify the central idea of each of the readings/poems. 3. Identify and analyze similes and metaphors as effective devices in discussing everyday details/issues. 4. Analyze the impact of word choice in the creation of a particular mood. 5. Craft a poem with a clear central idea, similes, and metaphors.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the consequences of climate change for the Marshallese people?
2. What is Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner pleading when she says, "We are nothing without our islands"?
3. Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner addressed the United Nations' Climate Summit in 2014. Do you think the world has made any progress on climate change since 2014? Do you think we need to do more? Do you think the problem with rising sea levels still threatens the livelihood of the Marshallese?
4. Do you think poetry can be an effective way to advance and advocate for social change?

Vocabulary:[1]

- **Climate Activist:** a person works to spread awareness about climate change and to protect the environment from being damaged by human activities
- **Forced Migration**: when an individual or group permanently leaves their home to live elsewhere because of factors that are out of their control, like war, natural or environmental disasters, development projects, and more
- **Hiroshima-sized explosions**: about 70,000 killed in the initial explosion and tens of thousands more would die of radiation poisoning within the next year; about 135,000 casualties which totaled to more than half of its population; more than 60,000 of the estimated 90,000 buildings in Hiroshima were destroyed or severely damaged
- **Militarism**: the belief and attitude that having strong armed forces and that they should be used to win political or economic advantages
- **United Nations**: international organization founded (1945) at the end of World War II to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations on equal terms, and encourage international cooperation in solving intractable human problems.

[1]*Definitions adapted from Encyclopedia Britannica*

Activity 1: Structure of a poem and introduction of the poet

Explain to students: We will be studying two of Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner's poems to learn about climate change, its impact on the Marshallese people and their home, and her plea for a solution to that climate devastation. We will begin with an introduction to the basic structure of a poem.

1. Basic Structure of a Poem:

Prose Structure:	Poetry Structure:
Sentence	Line
Paragraph	Stanza

Point out to students that in poems, lines do not necessarily have to be complete sentences. Likewise, a stanza can range from only one line to multiple lines.

2. Provide Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner's background:
   - Kathy was born in the Marshall Islands. She moved to Hawai'i at the age of 7, and moved back to the Marshall Islands at the age of 25
   - She is a climate activist and addressed the United Nations' Climate Summit in 2014.
   - She writes about the nuclear testing conducted in the Marshall Islands, militarism, the rising sea level as a result of climate change, forced migration, and racism in America
   - From 1946 to 1958, the U.S. conducted 67 nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands, which equates to 1.6 Hiroshima-size explosions per day
     - In 1945 during World War II, the U.S. dropped two nuclear bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—later leading to the end of the war
   - More information can be found on page 5 of "AAPI Women Voices: Untold Stories Through Poetry." [url: asianamericanedu.org/aapi-women-voices-untold-stories-through-poetry.pdf]

Activity 2: Central Idea of a Poem

Explain to students: We will be reading a poem by Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner, but we're first going to watch a video of her speaking at a United Nations climate conference.

1. Play the video: *Fighting Climate Change with Poems: Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner* [run time 03:56] (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65nhhzhZ_x8)
   - Select a couple of students to share something they learned and found interesting from the video they watched.
   - This is a good opportunity to bring up the significance of the lesson: Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner says in the video that she's using poetry as a way to fight climate change. She's using poetry to tell the story of her homeland and to share the concerns of her people.

2. The "2 Degrees" poem can be found on page 6 at: AAPI Women Voices: Untold Stories Through Poetry." [url: asianamericanedu.org/aapi-women-voices-untold-stories-through-poetry.pdf]
   Display the poem on a screen for the entire class to see.
   a. Have students popcorn read the poem, and instruct students to do the following while reading:
      - Think about what the central idea of the poem is, and write down the lines or stanzas that support the central idea.
      - Ask students to pay close attention to the last stanza of the poem which is the conclusion of the poem and similar to the conclusion of an essay.

   b. What is the central idea and the message that Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner is conveying in the last stanza of her poem "2 Degrees"?
      - Kathy is trying to make the point that while discussions about climate change are important, it is also important and necessary to remember and think about how climate change impacts people, specifically those in the Marshall Islands.

Activity 3: Similes and Metaphors

Explain to students: In this lesson you will learn what similes and metaphors are, and how to identify, create and analyze them.

1. Use these examples to explain literal and figurative language:
   a. Literal language: "It was raining a lot, so I rode the bus."
      - In this example of literal language, the writer means to explain exactly what is written: that he/she chose to ride the bus because of the heavy rain.

   b. Figurative language: "It was raining cats and dogs, so I rode the bus."

- In this example of figurative language, there weren't actual cats and dogs falling from rain clouds, instead, the rain was so heavy and large in quantity that it was almost as if small animals were falling from the sky.

2. Similes and metaphors are figurative language:
Review the following examples and ask the students to explain what each means.

	Simile	**Metaphor**
	using "like" or "as"	**Not using "like" or "as"**
1	Life is **like** a journey.	Life is a journey.
2	You are **like** sunshine on a cloudy day.	You are my sunshine on a cloudy day.
3	You are **like** a hurricane: there's calm in your eye, but I'm getting blown away.	You are a hurricane.

	Simile
4	**Her mind is as sharp as a razor.**
5	**For I knew his eyes like an old, old song.**
6	**Her long, blue skirt was like a river, flowing behind her in the breeze.**
7	**His hands were as cold as ice after walking home during the snowstorm.**
8	**My good intent has fallen short like an air ball.**

	Metaphor
9	**His answer to the problem was just a band-aid, not a solution.**
10	**The path of resentment is easier to travel than the road to forgiveness.**
11	**The teacher planted the seeds of wisdom.**
12	**The wheels of justice turn slowly.**

3. Ask students to identify which is a simile or a metaphor. After giving students a few minutes to write down their answers, call on them to share their answers.

		Simile or Metaphor
13	**He is as tall as a tree.**	**Simile**
14	**My bookbag feels like a bag of rocks.**	**Simile**
15	**The snow is a white blanket.**	**Metaphor**
16	**She dances like she was trying to shake a spider off her leg.**	**Simile**
17	**He is the Michael Jordan of his basketball team.**	**Metaphor**

4. Analyzing similes & metaphors:
   a. Similes and metaphors (and other figurative language) are used to compare one thing to another, showing how the two things are similar or different.
   b. Looking back at the table #3, think about what is being compared to what in each example.
   c. Circle the two parts of the sentence that are being compared to one another.

13	**He** is as tall as a **tree**.
14	My **bookbag** feels like a **bag of rocks**.

15	The **snow** is a **white blanket**.
16	She **dances** like she was trying to **shake a spider off her leg**.
17	**He** is the **Michael Jordan** of his basketball team.

Activity 4: Figurative Language in Poetry: "Tell Them"

Explain to students: Now that we've had some practice identifying and using similes and metaphors, we're going to read another poem by Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner and study the figurative language in it.

1. Play the video *Marshall Islands Poet to the U.N. Climate Summit: "Tell Them We Are Nothing Without Our Islands"* [Run time 04:01] (www.youtube.com/watch?v=YUO_qijo0us).

2. Figurative language is one way that poets express themselves and create imagery. Students will identify, and analyze similes and metaphors using the poem "Tell Them."
   - Is the phrase listed a simile or a metaphor?
   - What is being compared (the subject)?
   - What is that subject/thing being compared to?
   - What did the author mean by making this comparison?

Phrases from the Poem:	**Simile or Metaphor**	**What is being compared?**	**To what?**	**What is the author trying to say with this comparison?**
black pearls glinting like an eye in a storm of tight spirals	simile	the black pearls	an eye	This is a description of the package of earrings that she is preparing for her friends.
a proud people toasted dark brown as the carved ribs of a tree stump				
our islands were dropped from a basket carried by a giant				
the hallow hulls of canoes as fast as the wind				

3. "Tell Them" can be found on page 7 of "AAPI Women Voices: Untold Stories Through Poetry." [url: asianamericanedu.org/aapi-women-voices-untold-stories-through-poetry.pdf]
   Display the poem on a screen for the entire class to see.
   a. Ask students to:
      - Write down the phrases that have similes and metaphors.
      - Identify them as similes or metaphors within each of the phrases.
      - Write down the significance of each comparison.

   b. Divide the class into small groups. Have the students discuss the following:
      - How Marshallese people celebrate their culture and their islands (home).
      - How climate change has impacted the Marshallese.
      - How the author uses similes and metaphors to convey her message.

Activity 5: Write your own poem

Explain to students: Each of you will now be writing your own poem, incorporating the concepts we've gone over so far.

1. Have students start to write their poems using the following steps:
   a. Have students write down the central idea of their poem—the message they want to convey.
   b. Have students write out their poems.
   c. Have students review their poems in order to think of similes and metaphors that can be included in what they have written.

2. Ask students to go back to their same assigned groups to discuss their poems and help one another with writing and clarifying their central ideas, similes, and metaphors.

3. Have students turn in their poems. Invite students to share their poems by reading them aloud in front of the class or by posting them on a board for students to view later.

Materials and Resources:

Jetnil-Kijiner, Kathy. *Fighting Climate Change with Poems: Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner.* United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, youtube.com, Dec. 3, 2015. Run time 3:56. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65nhhzhZ_x8 >.

Jetnil-Kijiner, Kathy. *Marshall Islands Poet to the U.N. Climate Summit: "Tell Them We Are Nothing Without Our Islands."* Democracy Now!, youtube.com, Dec. 2, 2015. Run time 4:01. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YUO_qijo0us >.

Roberto, Megan, and Pat Kwoh. AAPI Women Voices: Untold Stories Through Poetry. The Asian American Education Project. Web. < https://asianamericanedu.org/aapi-women-voices-untold-stories-through-poetry.pdf>.

Sutter, John D. *You're Making This Island Disappear.* CNN, Cable News Network. June 2015. http://www.cnn.com/interactive/2015/06/opinions/sutter-two-degrees-marshall-islands/.