

## DC Black Lives Matter Week in Action

### Lesson Title: #Last Words By Kim Spotts

#### Objective

Students will learn how words can be used as a way to reflect and inform others of issues of society. Students will analyze poetry and images and then compose a written response to both.

Set the tone for the unit and to allow students to reflect on police brutality.

\*\*\*\*This could also be used as a focus or kick off DC Black Lives Matter Week of Action.

#### Common Core Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2

Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3

Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

#### Materials

1. Printed out images from “#Last Words” with background information

<https://goodmenproject.com/featured-content/lastwords-tribute-victims-police-brutality-jvinc/>

Adjust pictures to take away names and # Last Words( see image-Appendix)

2. Journal or paper for students

3. Copy of the Willie Perdomo poem “ 41 Bullets off Broadway”

#### Lesson

##### Part 1

##### Prompt:

*I am going to show you a series of images. On your paper, you are putting down information that you notice-details, emotional reactions, and any questions. You are trying to determine, "What do these images have in common? Why are they important?"*

The teacher will have printed out the various images with the #last words. The names and explanations will be removed. Reveal each one at a time, asking students to journal noticing and questions. (Poster or project)What do these have in common? (Intentionally do not reveal the ones

that reference shooting or guns) Students will begin to see a pattern. At this point, begin to reveal the ones that help the students make the connections.

*What do these have in common?:*

Last words of black men due to police brutality

\*\*Allow students time to process, ask questions.

## Part 2

Pass out the missing portions with matching background information. Read each one shared with missing information/background information.

- *What can we do about this?*
- *What is your reaction?*

*Note:*

Students need time to process that these #lastwords, were someone's last words. When I first taught the lesson, my students needed to talk through each one and also began to think-what would have been my last words? Allow the students to dictate and guide the conversation, they will let you know what they need to process

## Part 3

Students will read through and analyze, Willie Perdomo's poem, "41 Bullets off Broadway"

*Teacher: Some people chose poetry as a method of expression and awareness. We will be analyzing a poem.*

### Procedure

1. Read through poem independently, underlining important information for you-taking Notes in the margins.
2. *Discuss initial reactions?*
  - What are your thoughts?
  - What did you notice?
  - How does this differ from #last words?
3. Now listen to the author read his poem  
<https://genius.com/Willie-perdomo-41-bullets-off-broadway-annotated>
  - Was it different to hear the author? Why or Why not?
  - How does this relate to # Last Words?

*Note:*

Again, sensitivity to the needs of your students is crucial. Allow the students to share and process as needed.

**Activity:**

Students will now compose their own response to how these authors used real life experiences to educate and humanize police brutality. These responses can come in the form of a letter to the local police department, a poem, or a personal experience.

**Extensions:**

- Have a poetry reading, invite members of the school community and local community
- Publish responses and share with local government agencies
- Share with local Newspapers
- Start a Blog

\* Please visit [D.C. Area Educators for Social Justice](#) to access more resources for teaching Black Lives Matter Week of Action in Schools.\*

Handout

*41 Bullets off Broadway*

By

Willie Perdomo

A special team  
shot a dream last night  
Off-Broadway  
Off-Broadway

Streams of blood  
flood the Bronx tonight  
Off Broadway  
Off Broadway

Is this what Africa  
means to me?  
Oh hell no  
Oh hell no

It's not like you were looking  
at a plastic bouquet of white roses  
while pissing in your mother's bathroom  
and hope that today was not the day  
that you bumped into four cops  
who happened to wake up  
with a bad case  
of contagious shooting

From the Bronx to El Barrio  
there were enough shots to go around  
we heard you fall face first  
into your lobby of equal opportunity  
forty-one bullets  
not giving you enough time  
to hit the floor  
with dignity  
forty-one bullets  
like silver-colored push pins  
holding up a bloody  
back to Africa announcement  
on the sheet rock  
where your body is mapped out

Before your mother kissed you goodbye  
and blessed your dream to go make it in America  
she forgot to look at the evening news  
she forgot to tell you  
that mosquitoes kill in this country  
and kids get shot in schools and churches  
and are mourned for a whole year  
while you go away quietly

Before you could show your I.D. and say,  
"Officer —"  
four glock clips went ahchoo  
and smoked you into spirit  
and by the time a special street unit  
decided what was enough  
another dream submitted an application  
for deferral  
it was la vida de la sorpresa  
sorpresa de la vida  
and you probably thought  
I was gonna say loca  
but be you prince  
be you pauper  
your color  
makes you a usual suspect  
around here

By the time you hit the floor  
protest poets came to your rescue  
legal eagles were ready to fly into dream teams  
your mother was on t.v. looking suspicious  
at the defense  
she knew that justice will keep one eye open  
for the right price  
By the time you hit the floor  
they said they forgot everything they learned  
at the academy  
and the mayor told them  
go and beat up a million black kids  
who try to celebrate themselves  
while your spirit seeped through the tiles  
in the lobby of your equal opportunity

through El Barrio  
through the Bronx  
there were enough shots  
to go around