Discovering your voice through poetry – Introduction

1. What words come to your mind when you hear the word poetry?

History: Poetry has been around for thousands of years- some say before writing was invented- and was used commonly by the Greeks city-states and Roman and Muslim Empires.

Definition:

Poetry: writing that formulates a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience in language chosen and arranged to create a specific emotional response through meaning, sound, and rhythm

http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/poetry

2. Ask students to use their own song lyrics and the “Guiding questions” handout to explore more deeply into their song and answer the following questions:

What was it about the song that you found that you connected to? Was it something that happened in the song- content? Or was it the voice or tone of the author that resonated with you? Explain in the space below.
4. Read the following poems and choose one that resonates with you.

**Do not go gentle into that good night**

by **Dylan Thomas**

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.
Letter Home

by Natasha Trethewey

--New Orleans, November 1910

Four weeks have passed since I left, and still
I must write to you of no work. I've worn down
the soles and walked through the tightness
of my new shoes calling upon the merchants,
their offices bustling. All the while I kept thinking
my plain English and good writing would secure
for me some modest position Though I dress each day
in my best, hands covered with the lace gloves
you crocheted--no one needs a girl. How flat
the word sounds, and heavy. My purse thins.
I spend foolishly to make an appearance of quiet
industry, to mask the desperation that tightens
my throat. I sit watching--

though I pretend not to notice--the dark maids
ambling by with their white charges. Do I deceive
anyone? Were they to see my hands, brown
as your dear face, they'd know I'm not quite
what I pretend to be. I walk these streets
a white woman, or so I think, until I catch the eyes
of some stranger upon me, and I must lower mine,
a negress again. There are enough things here
to remind me who I am. Mules lumbering through
the crowded streets send me into reverie, their footfall
the sound of a pointer and chalk hitting the blackboard
at school, only louder. Then there are women, clicking
their tongues in conversation, carrying their loads
on their heads. Their husky voices, the wash pots
and irons of the laundresses call to me.

I thought not to do the work I once did, back bending
and domestic; my schooling a gift--even those half days
at picking time, listening to Miss J--. How
I'd come to know words, the recitations I practiced
to sound like her, lilting, my sentences curling up
or trailing off at the ends. I read my books until
I nearly broke their spines, and in the cotton field,
I repeated whole sections I'd learned by heart,
spelling each word in my head to make a picture
I could see, as well as a weight I could feel
in my mouth. So now, even as I write this
and think of you at home, Goodbye

is the waving map of your palm, is
a stone on my tongue.