

ELA: Grade 7, Lesson 18, "Calling Dreams"

**Lesson Focus:** The lesson focuses on reading and analyzing a poem, "Calling Dreams," written during the Harlem Renaissance.

**Practice Focus:** Students will take notes on the poem's gist, structure, and figurative language.

**Objective:** Students will understand the meaning of the poem, "Calling Dreams," and analyze how the structure and language help to convey the theme.

**Academic Vocabulary:** contraband, countermand, impede, connotation, stride, rhyming couplets

**TN Standards:** 7.RL.KID.1, 7.RL.KID.2, 7.RL.CS.4, 7.RL.CS.5, 7.L.VAU.4, 7.W.TTP.2, 7.W.PDW.4

**Teacher Materials:**

- The Teacher Packet for ELA, Grade 7, Lesson 18

**Student Materials:**

- Paper, pencil, surface to write on
- The Student Packet for ELA, Grade 7, Lesson 18 which can be found on [www.tn.gov/education](http://www.tn.gov/education)

Teacher Do	Students Do
<p><b>Opening</b> (1 min)</p> <p><b>Hello! Welcome to Tennessee's At Home Learning Series for literacy! Today's lesson is for all our 7th graders out there, though everyone is welcome to tune in. This lesson is the third in this week's series.</b></p> <p><b>My name is ____ and I'm a ____ grade teacher in Tennessee schools. I'm so excited to be your teacher for this lesson! Welcome to my virtual classroom!</b></p> <p><b>If you didn't see our previous lessons, you can find them at <a href="http://www.tn.gov/education">www.tn.gov/education</a>. You can still tune in to today's lesson if you haven't seen any of our others. But it might be more fun if you first go back and watch our other lessons, since today we'll be talking about things we learned previously.</b></p> <p><b>Today we will be learning about a poem from the Harlem Renaissance titled "Calling Dreams." It was written by Georgia Douglas Johnson. Before we get started, to participate fully in our lesson today, you will need:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper, pencil, surface to write on</li> <li>• The Student Packet for ELA, Grade 7, Lesson 18 which can be found on <a href="http://www.tn.gov/education">www.tn.gov/education</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Ok, let's begin!</b></p>	<p>Students gather materials for the lesson and prepare to engage with the lesson's content.</p>
<p><b>Intro</b> (2 min)</p> <p><b>We have been studying the Harlem Renaissance period, a time in the 1920s and 1930s in the United states where there was a growth of intellectual, literary, and artistic work from African Americans. Last time we read and analyzed a poem</b></p>	<p>Students recall that we read "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," by Langston Hughes and they identified the theme and studied the poem's structure and language.</p>

<p>by Langston Hughes called “The Negro Speaks of Rivers.” We learned that in that poem, Hughes communicated the theme that black people are connected to a long, rich, and painful history and draw strength and wisdom from it. He used structural techniques such as repetition of lines, phrases, and words and figurative language, like the metaphor of rivers, to convey this theme.</p> <p>Today we are going to continue our study of the Harlem Renaissance. Our goal is to analyze the structure and figurative language of a poem to identify a theme and understand how it is developed. We will read Georgia Douglas Johnson’s poem, “Calling Dreams.” Johnson was a poet, playwright, and newspaper columnist. While living in Washington D.C., Johnson frequently hosted meetings with other writers of the Harlem Renaissance.</p> <p>We will begin with me showing you what that looks like, and then there will be time for you to practice on your own with my support. Finally, I will assign you independent work you can complete after the video ends.</p>	<p>Students prepare to follow the gradual-release trajectory, understanding that they will be doing more listening at first and more “doing” toward the end of the lesson.</p>
<p><b>Teacher Model/Read-Aloud</b> (14 min)</p> <p>To get ready, I’m going to make a note-catcher so I can keep track of my thoughts, and I’d like you to make this note-catcher on your paper, too, to jot down your thoughts about the poem. Make sure you draw it to fill the page, like this: [Show Slide 1.]</p> <p>As usual, I’m going to read the entire poem the first time without stopping. So, close your eyes. This time, I want you to just listen and notice what you see in your mind and how you feel. Ready? [Pause.] Here is the poem. [Show Slide 2.]</p> <p><b>Calling Dreams by Georgia Douglas Johnson</b></p> <p>The right to make my dreams come true I ask, nay, I demand of life, Nor shall fate's deadly contraband Impede my steps, nor countermand.</p> <p>Too long my heart against the ground Has beat the dusty years around, And now, at length, I rise, I wake! And stride into the morning break!</p> <p>Ok. Open your eyes. What did you notice and feel? [Pause.] Yes, it has some rhyming lines in it. The speaker wants something that she’s been waiting a long time to have. I felt</p>	<p>Students create a note-catcher to record their thoughts and quotes from the text.</p> <p>Students follow along, comprehending the text. They use teacher think-alouds and tips (e.g., definitions of words) to support their comprehension, and they think or write as directed in response to prompts and questions.</p>

impatient and hopeful. Now that you are looking at the poem, what do you notice? [Pause.] There are two stanzas, each four lines long. Yes, and the rhyming words appear in pairs of lines – contraband and countermand, ground and around, wake and break. We call these pairs couplets. A lot of times the couplets work to convey an idea. So, to analyze this poem, we will first read it couplet by couplet to get the gist, or general idea.

[Show Slide 3.]

The right to make my dreams come true  
I ask, nay, I demand of life,

Hmm. The first thing I notice is this couplet does not rhyme like the rest of the poem. This might mean the poet, Johnson, wanted this part to stand out. The speaker says she wants to make her dreams come true. I'll write that in the first box under gist. [Show Slide 4.] Please write this down on your paper.

[Show Slide 5.]

Nor shall fate's deadly contraband  
Impede my steps, nor countermand.

The word contraband, means something that is prohibited or forbidden. I wonder what "impede" means. I know the speaker wants to pursue her dreams, and that fate is using something deadly and forbidden to... [Pause.] Oh, I know. Fate might try to stop her, so "impede" means to prevent. So, the speaker is saying fate won't stop her from making her dream come true. Countermand is another unfamiliar word. Let me think. Well, I think I have seen the prefix before, like in counterclockwise when you go the opposite direction from how a clock moves forward. So maybe this is another way she is saying fate won't be able to stop her by giving an opposite direction. Wow. That was a lot in just 2 lines! Let me take a moment for all of us to jot our notes in our note-catcher. [Show Slide 6.] [Pause.]

Let's go to the second stanza and read the first couplet.

[Show Slide 7.]

Too long my heart against the ground  
Has beat the dusty years around,

What's the gist of this couplet? What is the speaker saying? [Pause.] I think she's saying she has been down a long time not able to go after her dreams. I'll jot that down under

<p><b>“gist” while you do the same on your note-catcher. [Show Slide 8.] [Pause.]</b></p> <p><b>Now, let’s read the last couplet. [Show Slide 9.]</b>  <b>And now, at length, I rise, I wake!</b>  <b>And stride into the morning break!</b></p> <p><b>Do you know the word “stride?” [Pause.] I think we can figure this out if you don’t already know. Well, what’s happening here? The first part of the couplet she’s waking up, right? From being down, not asleep. The second part says “stride into the morning break!” She’s doing something into the day that has started, like daybreak. If she just woke up and the day is starting, what do you think “stride” means? [Pause.] Exactly, she’s getting out, she’s walking. So, let’s write down what’s happening here. [Show Slide 10.] [Pause.]</b></p> <p><b>Let’s look at our notes so far. [Pause.] What’s happening in the poem? The speaker wants her dream to come and isn’t going to let fate stop her. She was down before, but now she’s ready to start the new day and make her dreams come true. Hmm, I only wrote one thing about the structure, just the first couplet. The rest of the poem rhymes in couplets that capture an idea. That’s structure, too, but I haven’t written that yet. I better do that now. You, too! [Show Slide 11.] [Pause.]</b></p> <p><b>Is there anything else I notice about the poem here? [Pause.] Hmm, I just noticed the first stanza is about her demanding her right to follow her dreams, but the second stanza is where she claims her power to actually follow her dreams. It’s like she is succeeding. No, actually, a better word is triumph because she had to overcome challenges. I’m going to add that, too. I’ll give you a moment to jot that down as well. [Show Slide 12.] [Pause.]</b></p>	
<p><b><u>Guided Practice</u> (11 min)</b>  <b>Now, we are going to reread the poem, but this time we will look more closely for figurative language in the poem and how it is developing a theme in the text. First, what emerging themes have you identified in the text so far? [Pause.] Yes, those are good ideas: the importance of following dreams; how determination can help people overcome obstacles. Take a moment and jot these thoughts under “Theme” in your graphic organizer. [Show Slide 13.] [Pause.]</b></p> <p><b>We are going to continue developing an understanding of the meaning of the poem and are ready to look more closely to</b></p>	<p>Students will complete note catchers as the next part of the lesson continues.</p> <p>Students follow along and think and act as instructed, gradually gaining confidence and competence.</p>

see how the figurative language adds to the meaning of the text and helps develop a theme. Let's read the poem again.

[Show Slide 14.]

The right to make my dreams come true  
I ask, nay, I demand of life,  
Nor shall fate's deadly contraband  
Impede my steps, nor countermand.

Focus on the words "contraband" and "countermand" and their definitions. We have already discussed that contraband is something that is forbidden and countermand is to go against. Those are more like dictionary-type definitions, but as readers we also pay attention to the connotation of words. The connotation is a secondary meaning or implication of a word or expression, in addition to its primary meaning. It also represents the feeling created by a word. Poets use connotation to "flavor" their poems, to add extra meaning to the ideas they are developing.

For example, consider the difference between telling a twenty year-old that they are acting "grown-up," versus acting "old." Which one has a positive connotation? Which one has a negative connotation? [Pause.] Telling someone in their twenties they are "grown-up" seems nicer than saying they are "old." The words kind of mean the same thing, but we get different feelings from them. A twenty year old probably would not appreciate being called old, since to them old, is more like 70-80 years old. But "grown-up" makes them feel like they are more mature than they were as kids.

What connotation do "contraband" and "countermand" convey? Is it positive or negative, safe or dangerous? How does this connotation affect the idea of 'fate' the speaker is describing?" [Pause.] You are doing some good thinking there! The words have a connotation of darkness or danger, and this makes fate seem like a dark or harsh force. Let's jot this thought in your note-catcher under language.

[Show Slide 15.] [Pause.]

[Show Slide 16.] [Pause.]

Too long my heart against the ground  
Has beat the dusty years around,  
And now, at length, I rise, I wake!  
And stride into the morning break!

<p>Let's look closely at a few phrases: "heart against the ground" and "beat the dusty years around."</p> <p>"What are these phrases telling us about the condition of the speaker? Is it a negative or positive position? What words help to show us that meaning?" Jot what you think in the language box. Remember to write the phrases, too. [Pause.]</p> <p>What do you think this figurative language means? [Pause.] Yes, they do put the speaker in a negative position. The words "against the ground" show that she is being held down and maybe oppressed, perhaps, and "dusty years" have a connotation of being unpleasant or old. Did your notes look something like this? [Show Slide 17.]</p> <p>Take a moment to wrap up your thoughts about this part. Now let's look at "I wake" and "stride into the morning break." How do you interpret this figurative language? Jot your thoughts in the organizer under "language." [Pause.] You are getting pretty good at understanding figurative language. Yes, these phrases suggest she is starting fresh and new, like greeting the new day. The morning often feel more positive because you have the whole day. And the word, "stride," shows she has purpose as she walks into the morning break. Your notes likely look similar to mine. [Show Slide 18.]</p> <p>Take a moment to wrap up your notes for this section. Pause]</p>	
<p><b>Independent Work</b> (3 min)</p> <p>We are just about out of time for today. Thank you so much for taking a deep dive into the poem. I have one more thing I'd like to ask you to do today.</p> <p>[Show Slide 19.] For independent practice after the episode, write a paragraph explaining how Georgia Douglas Johnson uses structure and language to develop a theme in "Calling Dreams." Students please copy down the independent practice so you have the assignment when the video ends.</p> <p>You have your note-catcher that has your thoughtful ideas and quotes you can use to support your interpretation of the theme. Remember that a theme is the message the author wants to convey to you, the reader. There lots of ways to write a theme you have found in this poem. Just be sure to include evidence from the poem, which you have in your notes. Then share your writing with a family member or a friend!</p>	<p>Students write a paragraph that identifies a theme of the poem and uses evidence and notes from their note-catcher to support their idea.</p>

## PBS Lesson Series

<b>Closing</b> (1 min)	
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I enjoyed working on the poem “Calling Dreams” with you today! Thank you for inviting me into your home. I look forward to seeing you in our next lesson in Tennessee’s At Home Learning Series! Bye!	
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<https://openupresources.org/ela-curriculum/>