



**9-12 ELA**  
**Woody Guthrie Poetry: SLAM Method**

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**Revision Date of Lesson Plan:** July 22, 2013

**Overall Goal for the Lesson:**

Students will analyze poetry, focusing on the Story, Language, Arrangement, and Meaning.

**Description of Setting, Grade Level, and Students:**

This activity can be used for students in grades 9-12, any class size. The activity is for varying performance levels, remedial, average, or advanced. This lesson may be completed in the classroom or at Guthrie Green. Guthrie Green is in an urban setting with access to water, shade, restrooms, and electricity. It is parallel to the Woody Guthrie Center.

**Student Objectives for the Lesson:**

Students will be able analyze the Story, Language, Arrangement, and Meaning in the songs of Woody Guthrie.

**Length of Lesson:**

This activity should take 4 class periods (one for each letter in SLAM)

**Schedule of Lessons:**

1. Teacher will practice the SLAM Method with students in order of the letters:
  - a. Teachers and students will analyze the “Story” of
  - b. Teachers and students will analyze the “Language” of
  - c. Teachers and students will analyze the “Arrangement” of
  - d. Teachers and students will analyze the “Meaning” of
2. Students may demonstrate their understanding of the SLAM method using SLAM Practice 1 and 2.
3. Extension: Students may listen to clips of the songs and analyze the impact of singing vs. reading vs. speaking the lyrics.
4. Extension: Students may write an informative piece using the SLAM method and SLAM Aid.

**Common Core Standards Addressed:**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

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.11-12.3 Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

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. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

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.11-12.7 Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.10 By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

**Assessment:**

Assessment will be based on student participation and the SLAM Sheets.

**Accommodations:**

Students may work in groups. Materials may be modified according to need.

**Materials Needed:**

S(tory) Sheet

L(anguage) Sheet

A(rrangement) Sheet

M(eaning) Sheet

SLAM Practice 1

SLAM Practice 2

SLAM Aid

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## S(tory)

### Example 1

Billy The Kid  
by Woody Guthrie

I'll sing you a true song of Billy the Kid  
I'll sing of the desperate deeds that he did  
Way out in New Mexico, long long ago  
When a man's only chance was his own  
When Billy, the kid was a very young lad  
In the old Silver City, he went to the bad  
Way out in the West with a gun in his hand  
At the age of twelve years, he first killed his man

Fair Mexican maidens play guitars and sing  
A song about Billy, the boy bandit king  
How ere his young manhood had reached its sad end  
He'd a notch on his pistol for twenty-one men

'Twas on the same night when poor Billy died  
He said to his friends, "I am not satisfied  
There are twenty-one men I have put bullets through  
And sheriff Pat Garrett must make twenty-two"

Now this is how Billy, the kid met his fate  
The bright moon was shining, the hour was late  
Shot down by Pat Garrett who once was his friend  
The young outlaw's life had now come to its end

There's many a man with a face fine and fair  
Who starts out in life with a chance to be square  
But just like poor Billy, he wanders astray  
And loses his life in the very same way

What is the setting?

Who are the characters?

What happens?

Example 2:

Philadelphia Lawyer  
By: Woody Guthrie

Way out in Reno, Nevada,  
Where romance blooms and fades,  
A great Philadelphia lawyer  
Was in love with a Hollywood maid.

"Come, love, and we'll go ramblin'  
Down where the lights are so bright.  
I'll win you a divorce from your husband,  
And we can get married tonight."

Wild Bill was a gun-totin' cowboy,  
Ten notches were carved in his gun.  
And all the boys around Reno  
Left Wild Bill's maiden alone.

One night when Bill was returning  
From ridin' the range in the cold,  
He dreamed of his Hollywood sweetheart,  
Her love was as lasting as gold.

As he drew near her window,  
Two shadows he saw on the shade;  
'Twas the great Philadelphia lawyer  
Makin' love to Bill's Hollywood maid.

The night was as still as the desert,  
The moon hangin' high overhead.  
Bill listened awhile through the window,  
He could hear ev'ry word that he said:

"Your hands are so pretty and lovely,  
Your form's so rare and divine.  
Come go with me to the city  
And leave this wild cowboy behind."

Now tonight back in old Pennsylvania,  
Among those beautiful pines,  
There's one less Philadelphia lawyer  
In old Philadelphia tonight.

What is the setting?

Who are the characters?

What happens?

### **S(tory): Your Turn!**

Think about your life. What are your happiest memories? Your saddest? What experiences have shaped you the most? Use three experiences to complete this side.

Story 1:

Where did it happen?

Who was involved?

What happened?

Story 2:

Where did it happen?

Who was involved?

What happened?

Story 3:

Where did it happen?

Who was involved?

What happened?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## L(anguage)

### Example 1: Simile/Metaphor

He and She  
by Woody Guthrie

He's like the wind from the mountain  
She's like the high sky above  
He's like an eagle there flying  
She's like the sweet turtle dove.

He's like a storm o'er the oceans  
She's like this springtime air  
And he and she appear to be  
Contented and a well married pair.

He's like the lions in the forest  
She's like the deer in the shade  
He's like a sun shining brightly  
She's like a cool summer's glade.

He's like a wild tornado  
She's like a day that's fair  
And he and she are in love I can see  
Contented and a well married pair.

What comparisons are made?

Explain 5 of them:

Why were these comparisons used?

## **L(anguage): Your Turn!**

Create a list of words/comparisons that you enjoy, find moving, or feel are powerful. You'll be able to use this list when creating your own poems in the future. You must have at least 10.

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

8)

9)

10)

11)

12)

13)

14)

15)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## **A(rrangement)**

### Example 1

Every 100 Years  
By: Woody Guthrie

Every 100 years  
Every 100 years  
I will wash my face & hands  
Every 100 years.

Lots of leaves grow fast  
Lots of trees grow slow!  
How big will I grow in a 100 years?  
I'd sure like to know!

If I take my shovel  
And I dig, and I dig, & dig –  
How big a hole I'd knock in.

Underline three examples of arrangement that caught your attention. Why did they do so?

### Example 2:

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8  
by: Woody Guthrie

Choo-choo, choo-choo, chooka-chooka, choo-choo,  
Choo-choo, choo-choo, chooka-chooka, choo-choo,  
Choo-choo, choo-choo, chooka-chooka, choo-choo,  
Chooka-choo-choo, chooka-chooka, choo.

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight,  
A, B, C, D, E, F, G.  
Hoodoo, voodoo, seven, twenty-one, two,  
Haystack, hoe-stack, hey do the hoe-ta,

High boga, low joker, ninety-nine, a zero,  
Sidewalk, streetcar, dance a goofy dance.

Choo-choo, choo-choo, chooka-chooka, choo-choo,  
Choo-choo, choo-choo, chooka-chooka, choo-choo,  
Choo-choo, choo-choo, chooka-chooka, choo-choo,  
Choo-choo, choo-choo, chooka-chooka, choo.

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight,  
A, B, C, D, E, F, G.

Blackbird, blue jay, one, two, three, four,  
Trash-stack, jump back, E, F, G.

Big man, little man, fat man, skinny man,  
Grasshopper, green snake, hold my hand.

Choo-choo, choo-choo, chooka-chooka, choo-choo,  
Choo-choo, choo-choo, chooka-chooka, choo-choo,  
Choo-choo, choo-choo, chooka-chooka, choo-choo,  
Choo-choo, choo-choo, chooka-chooka, choo.

Mama cat, tom cat, diapers on the clothesline,  
2, 4, 6, 8, run and hide.

Crazy man, lazy girl, pony on a tin can,  
I'll be yours and you'll be mine.

Choo-choo, choo-choo, chooka-chooka, choo-choo,  
Choo-choo, choo-choo, chooka-chooka, choo-choo,  
Choo-choo, choo-choo, chooka-chooka, choo-choo,  
Choo-choo, choo-choo, chooka-chooka, choo.

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight,  
A, B, C, D, E, F, G.

And one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight,  
A, B, C, D, E, F, G.

Underline three examples of arrangement that caught your attention. Why did they do so?

## **A(r)agement): Your Turn!**

Consider the following sentences:

**Blank space is my canvas. It is freedom. It is a void that only I can fill. As I place words upon the blankness, I create meaning.**

Underline a few words or phrases that stand out to you in those sentences. Then, re-write the sentences in the space below, but change their arrangement so that the words or phrases you underlined are emphasized.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Hr: \_\_\_\_\_

## **M(eaning)**

### Example 1

Hard Travelin'  
By Woody Guthrie

I've been havin' some hard travelin', I thought you knowed  
I've been havin' some hard travelin', way down the road  
I've been havin' some hard travelin', hard ramblin', hard gamblin'  
I've been havin' some hard travelin', lord

I've been ridin' them fast rattlers, I thought you knowed  
I've been ridin' them flat wheelers, way down the road  
I've been ridin' them blind passengers, dead-enders, kickin' up cinders  
I've been havin' some hard travelin', lord

I've been hittin' some hard-rock minin', I thought you knowed  
I've been leanin' on a pressure drill, way down the road  
Hammer flyin', air-hole suckin', six foot of mud and I shore been a muckin'  
And I've been hittin' some hard travelin', lord

I've been hittin' some hard harvestin', I thought you knowed  
North Dakota to Kansas City, way down the road  
Cuttin' that wheat, stackin' that hay, and I'm tryin' make about a dollar a day  
And I've been havin' some hard travelin', lord

I've been working that Pittsburgh steel, I thought you knowed  
I've been a dumpin' that red-hot slag, way down the road  
I've been a blasting, I've been a firin', I've been a pourin' red-hot iron  
I've been hittin' some hard travelin', lord

I've been layin' in a hard-rock jail, I thought you knowed  
I've been a laying out 90 days, way down the road  
Damned old judge, he said to me, "It's 90 days for vagrancy."  
And I've been hittin' some hard travelin', lord

I've been walking that Lincoln highway, I thought you knowed,

I've been hittin' that 66, way down the road  
Heavy load and a worried mind, lookin' for a woman that's hard to find,  
I've been hittin' some hard travelin', lord

**What is the meaning of this poem? Why do you think so? Make sure to reference story, language, and arrangement.**

Example 2

Hobo's Lullaby  
by Woody Guthrie

Go to sleep you weary hobo  
Let the towns drift slowly by  
Can't you hear the steel rails hummin'?  
That's the hobo's lullaby

I know your clothes are torn and ragged  
And your hair is turning gray  
Lift your head and smile at trouble  
You'll find peace and rest someday

Now don't you worry 'bout tomorrow  
Let tomorrow come and go  
Tonight you're in a nice warm boxcar  
Safe from all that wind and snow

I know the police cause you trouble  
They cause trouble everywhere  
But when you die and go to Heaven  
You'll find no policemen there

So go to sleep you weary hobo  
Let the towns drift slowly by  
Listen to the steel rails hummin'  
That's a hobo's lullaby

**What is the meaning of this poem? Why do you think so? Make sure to reference story, language, and arrangement.**

## How to SLAM a Poem

### Story:

- What is the setting?
- Who are the characters?
- What is the plot?

### Language:

- How does the poet's use of language call attention to particular parts of the story?
- How does the poet's use of language affect how I interpret the story?

### Arrangement:

- How does the way the poet organized the poem change how I read it?
- What effect does the arrangement have on how I interpret the language and the story?

### Meaning:

- Why would the poet want to tell the story they did?
- Why would the author use language and arrangement to emphasize things the way they did?
- What value is the poet trying to express?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Hr: \_\_\_\_\_

**Today's SLAM Target: "This Land is Your Land" by Woody Guthrie**  
(Hint: This is America's "unofficial" anthem)

Story (setting, characters, plot):

Language (effect of poetic devices – alliteration, repetition, etc.):

Arrangement (use of line breaks, stanza organization):

Meaning (value or concept expressed):

This Land is Your Land  
by Woody Guthrie

This land is your land This land is my land  
From California to the New York island;  
From the red wood forest to the Gulf Stream waters  
This land was made for you and Me.

As I was walking that ribbon of highway,  
I saw above me that endless skyway:  
I saw below me that golden valley:  
This land was made for you and me.

I've roamed and rambled and I followed my footsteps  
To the sparkling sands of her diamond deserts;  
And all around me a voice was sounding:  
This land was made for you and me.

When the sun came shining, and I was strolling,  
And the wheat fields waving and the dust clouds rolling,  
As the fog was lifting a voice was chanting:  
This land was made for you and me.

As I went walking I saw a sign there  
And on the sign it said "No Trespassing."  
But on the other side it didn't say nothing,  
That side was made for you and me.

In the shadow of the steeple I saw my people,  
By the relief office I seen my people;  
As they stood there hungry, I stood there asking  
Is this land made for you and me?

Nobody living can ever stop me,  
As I go walking that freedom highway;  
Nobody living can ever make me turn back  
This land was made for you and me.

## How to SLAM a Poem

### Story:

- What is the setting?
- Who are the characters?
- What is the plot?

### Language:

- How does the poet's use of language call attention to particular parts of the story?
- How does the poet's use of language affect how I interpret the story?

### Arrangement:

- How does the way the poet organized the poem change how I read it?
- What effect does the arrangement have on how I interpret the language and the story?

### Meaning:

- Why would the poet want to tell the story they did?
- Why would the author use language and arrangement to emphasize things the way they did?
- What value is the poet trying to express?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Hr: \_\_\_\_\_

**Today's SLAM Target: "1913 Massacre" by Woody Guthrie**

Story:

Does the poem have a setting? If so, what is it? Either way, how do you know?

Who are the major character(s) of the poem? How do you know?

What is the plot of the poem? How do you know?

Language:

What is one poetic device you found in the poem? What effect does it have on the poem? Why do you think Guthrie used it?

What is another poetic device you found in the poem? What effect does it have on the poem? Why do you think Guthrie used it?

Arrangement:

Which line breaks caught your attention? Why? Why would Guthrie have done that?

What did you notice about the poem's stanzas? How does that affect the way you read the poem?

Meaning:

Consider what you discovered about Story, Language, and Arrangement. Do you notice any common ideas? Is there anything that Guthrie seemed to really want to bring to your attention?

Thinking about those common ideas, what meaning do you think Woody Guthrie was trying to communicate in this poem?

1913 Massacre  
by Woody Guthrie

Take a trip with me in 1913  
To Calumet, Michigan, in the copper country  
I'll take you to a place called Italian Hall  
And the miners are having their big Christmas Ball

I'll take you in a door and up a high stairs  
Singing and dancing is heard everywhere  
I'll let you shake hands with the people you see  
And watch the kids dance round that big Christmas tree

There's talking and laughing and songs in the air  
And the spirit of Christmas is there everywhere  
Before you know it, you're friends with us all  
And you're dancing around and around in the hall

You ask about work and you ask about pay  
They'll tell you that they make less than a dollar a day  
Working the copper claims, risking their lives  
So it's fun to spend Christmas with children and wives

Hey, little girl sits down by the Christmas tree lights  
To play the piano, so you gotta keep quiet  
To hear all this fun you would not realize  
That the copper boss thug men are milling outside

The copper boss thugs stuck their heads in the door  
One of them yelled and he screamed, "There's a fire"  
A lady, she hollered, "There's no such a thing  
Keep on with your party, there's no such a thing"

A few people rushed and it's only a few  
"It's just the thugs and the scabs fooling you"  
A man grabbed his daughter and he carried her down  
But the thugs held the door and he could not get out

And then others followed, a hundred or more  
But most everybody remained on the floor  
The gun thugs they laughed at their murderous joke

And the children were smothered on the stairs by the door

Such a terrible sight I never did see

We carried our children back up to their tree

The scabs outside still laughed at their spree

And the children that died there were seventy three

The piano played a slow funeral tune

And the town was lit up by a cold Christmas moon

The parents they cried and the miners they moaned

"See what your greed for money has done"

## Partner Check-In

Partner's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Compare your answers on Story. What did you agree on? What did you disagree on?

Compare your answers on Language. Which poetic devices did your partner find?

Compare your answers on Arrangement. What meaning did your partner find in the line breaks and stanza organization? How was this the same as or different than yours?

Compare your answers on Meaning. Do you agree with your partner's interpretation of the poem? Why or why not? What evidence from the poem do you have to support your opinion?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Hr: \_\_\_\_\_

## How to SLAM a Vignette

### Story:

- What is the setting?
- Who are the characters?
- What is the plot?

### Language:

- How does the author's use of language call attention to particular parts of the story?
- How does the author's use of language affect how I interpret the story?

### Arrangement:

- How does the way the author organized the vignette change how I read it?
- What effect does the arrangement have on how I interpret the language and the story?

### Meaning:

- Why would the author want to tell the story they did?
- Why would the author use language and arrangement to emphasize things the way they did?
- What value is the author trying to express?

## Story Paragraph Organizer

Topic Sentence
_____ is mostly about _____
_____.



Detail (Setting)	Detail (Character)	Detail (Plot)



Conclude and Transition to Next Topic

## Language Paragraph Organizer

Topic Sentence

Most of the figurative language in \_\_\_\_\_ is used to \_\_\_\_\_.



Example	Example	Example
To What Effect?	To What Effect?	To What Effect?



Conclude and Transition to Next Topic

\_\_\_\_\_

**Arrangement Paragraph Organizer**

Topic Sentence

Most of the arrangement choices in \_\_\_\_\_ are used to \_\_\_\_\_.



Sentences	Paragraphs	Overall Length
To What Effect?	To What Effect?	To What Effect?



Conclude and Transition to Next Topic

**Story Paragraph Organizer**

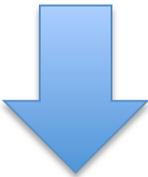
Topic Sentence

The meaning of \_\_\_\_\_ is most likely \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.



Detail (Story)	Detail (Language)	Detail (Arrangement)
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Concluding Sentence

