



# THE TOAST POEM

Honoring Etheridge Knight

By: Lisa Laker, Franklin Central English Teacher

**Grade level:** Grades 11 & 12

\*Indiana Literature theme literature course called “Hoosier Hysteria”

## Supplementary materials needed:

- [“The Black Arts Movement”](#) article from The Poetry Foundation *OR* [Video of Black Arts Movement](#) featuring Mari Evans
- [“Etheridge Knight”](#) article from the Poetry Foundation
- [“The Idea of Ancestry”](#) by Etheridge Knight & [Video of Poet Reading It](#)
- [“The Sun Came”](#) poem by Etheridge Knight
- [“For Malcolm, A Year After”](#) poem by Etheridge Knight
- [“The Bones of My Father”](#) poem by Etheridge Knight
- [“He Sees Through Stone”](#) poem by Etheridge Knight

**Indiana DOE English and Language Arts standards:** 11-12.RL.3.2; 11-12.W.3.3; 11-12.SL.1

## Goals of lesson plan:

- Students will learn about the Black Arts Movement and Indiana poet Etheridge Knight; students will learn about the area of Indianapolis Etheridge Knight lived in via the [“Mapping Inequality”](#) resource.
- Students will analyze curated Etheridge Knight poems that serve as mentor texts;
- Students will write their one “toast” poem, written in a “PG-style” of Etheridge Knight;
- Students will pay tribute and honor the Black Arts Movement poets of Indianapolis by visiting outside the longtime residence of Etheridge Knight at Barton Towers (555 Massachusetts Ave.) and perform their own “toasts” to honor the poet; then students will walk 1 block to the Mari Evans mural (448 Mass. Avenue) in Indianapolis, and create a chalk poetic message in her honor (as part of a larger field trip day to the Kurt Vonnegut Museum, Kurt Vonnegut mural, etc.).

## Background information/Lesson Tasks:

- Day 1: 50 minute lesson
  - Step 1 (10 minutes), Recall via an Entrance ticket: Students read the short article on the “Black Arts Movement” and watch the video. Students respond with a 3-2-1 (3 things they remember; 2 things that were thought provoking; and 1 question they still have).

- Step 2 (10 minutes), Define & Classify by Teaching the “Toast:” A toast poem is a longer, narrative poem written in rhymed couplets. For the purpose of this lesson, it should include family or friends and remain “PG” in theme/tone.
- Step 4 (10 minutes), Investigate thru Poetry Gallery Walk: Students walk around the room silently, read the five poems listed above that are taped to the walls, and notice the “toast” qualities to them.
- Step 5 (20 minutes), Apply/Create: Students write their own 20-30 lined, rhyming couplet toast that centers around ancestry, family, or friends that have contributed to their lives.
- Step 6: Synthesize/Exit Ticket: write a quick couplet and “toast” our class, your teacher, or your classmates!
- Day 2 (all day):
  - Step 7, Students research the area Etheridge Knight lived that we will be visiting via the resource [“Mapping Inequality.”](#)
  - Step 8, Extend through a Field Trip: Students will extend and celebrate their learning of Indiana authors Mari Evans, Etheridge Knight, and Kurt Vonnegut by visiting literary haunts, reading excerpts from their works, presenting their own “toast” poem creations, and leaving chalk messages on a planned field trip. Students have a discussion on what they discovered in their research on the “Mapping Inequality” site after visiting Etheridge Knight’s apartment building.