



SPEAK YOUR TRUTH

Celebrating Poet Mari Evans

By: Lisa Laker, Franklin Central English Teacher

Grade level: Grades 11 & 12

*Indiana Literature theme literature course called “Hoosier Hysteria”

Supplementary materials needed:

- [“Mari Evans Receives Lifetime Achievement Award”](#) video
- [“Mari Evans”](#) from The Poetry Foundation
- [“I am a Black Woman”](#) by Mari Evans
- [“Celebration”](#) by Mari Evans
- [“Speak the Truth to People”](#) by Mari Evans & [Video](#) of Poet Reading
- [“The Rebel”](#) by Mari Evans

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:

- a) Students learned in a previous lesson plan (the day before) about the Black Arts Movement and Indiana poet Etheridge Knight; this lesson will focus on Indiana poet, Mari Evans. Students will learn about the area of Indianapolis Mari Evans’s mural is located in via the [“Mapping Inequality ” resource](#).
- b) Students will analyze curated Mari Evans poems that serve as mentor texts and perform a reader’s theater of her poetry selections.
- c) Students will write their own extended metaphor poem that ends with a theme of empowerment.
- d) Students will “speak their truth” and share original lines on a mural or silhouette display of Mari Evans to be displayed in the school or classroom.
- e) Students will visit the Mari Evans mural in downtown Indianapolis and leave chalk messages or lines of poetry inspired by her.

Background information/Lesson Tasks:

- Day 1: (50 minute lesson): Learning About Mari Evans & Reader’s Theater
 - Step 1 (10 minutes), Recall via an Entrance ticket: Students listen to audio performance of Mari Evans’s poem, [“Speak the Truth to People.”](#) Students will then write based on the prompts: a) is

honesty always the best policy?; b) what message is the poet sending?; and c) what “truth” do you or your generation need to speak?

- Step 2 (5 minutes), Define & classify extended metaphor in poetry and elements of a reader’s theater or choral reading. This is scaffolding from previous lessons on these concepts.
 - Step 4 (15 minutes), Make Observations & apply concepts thru a Reader’s Theater activity: Students collaborate in four groups, receive a copy of one of the four Mari Evans poems listed above, and practice for a reader’s theater performance.
 - Step 5 (20 minutes): Perform in student groups the Mari Evan-assigned poem for a Reader’s Theater presentation.
- Day 2 (50 minute lesson): “Speak Your Truth” Day Original Writing & Student Mural
 - Step 6 (25 minutes), Apply/Create: Students write their own 20-25 lined extended metaphor poem where they “speak their truth.”
 - Step 7 (25 minutes), Compare and create: Students share lines from their original poems inspired by Mari Evans via a mural or silhouette wall (designed and cut out in advance by a talented art student on butcher paper) that is mirrored after the large mural of Mari Evans in Indianapolis. This is to look colorful and will display the words “Speak Your Truth” on it. It will be a visual showcase and reminder of Mari Evan’s contributions to Indianapolis and how she is influencing the next generation of Hoosiers.
 - Day 3 (all day): Field Trip to Indiana Literary Haunts
 - Step 8: Students research the area Etheridge Knight lived that we will be visiting via the resource [“Mapping Inequality.”](#)
 - Step 9, 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. *(This will be tied in after a one-day lesson on Etheridge Knight and the “toast” poem). Students will discuss what they discovered in their “Mapping Inequality” research after visiting the location of the Mari Evans mural.