

# #REVOLUTION OF VALUES HAIKU LESSON PLAN



## #REVOLUTIONOFVALUES: A SPEECH FULL OF POEMS

### TIME REQUIREMENT:

Can be done in one period with preparation, or include a take-home assignment and a second period of sharing poems.

### INTRODUCTION

On April 4, 2017, the people-powered U.S. Department of Arts and Culture and many partners are sponsoring [#RevolutionOfValues](#), a one-day National Action. April 4, 1967, marked a critical turning-point in the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. On that date—one year to the day before he was assassinated—he delivered a talk entitled “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence.” The occasion was a meeting of Clergy and Laity Concerned about Vietnam, held at Riverside Church in New York City.

Fifty years later, to walk in his footsteps, to give voice once again to his powerful words, and to kick off a year of efforts by many organizations around the U.S. to remind people of Dr. King’s real message and unfinished work, the USDAC and partners are sponsoring [#RevolutionOfValues](#).

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this lesson, students will have opportunities to:

- Select elements of the Riverside Speech they find moving or especially relevant
- Write poems using those excerpts
- Sequence the poems into a long collaborative poem (optional)

### TEACHERS’ GUIDE

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### MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

To teach this lesson you will need:

- To share with students the [full text of the Riverside Speech](#) or any of the excerpted versions linked in the USDAC’s [#RevolutionOfValues Toolkit](#).
- To introduce students to haiku as a poetic form.
- To decide whether to treat this as an individual assignment, or create a long linked poem (i.e., a renga) comprising all the haiku students have written.
- To decide how the poems will be shared: in writing, as a reading in front of the classroom or at an event for families, at a school assembly, etc.?

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## ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

- (1) Introduce students to [#RevolutionOfValues](#) and engage them in a brief discussion of what that means. What did Dr. King mean by “the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism”? How do we shift from a “thing-oriented” society to a “person-oriented” society? What is the silence that needs to be broken today?
- (2) Share with students the [full text or excerpts from the Riverside Speech](#), either as preparation for the lesson or to be read aloud in class.
- (3) Explain and demonstrate the haiku form, using the basic formula of a three-line poem containing five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, and five in the third. Here’s a classic example:  

First autumn morning  
the mirror I stare into  
shows my father’s face.  
  
- *Murakami Kijo*
- (4) *(Optional)* Tell students that after each of them has written an individual haiku using lines and phrases from Dr. King’s speech, you will assemble them into one long renga (a chain of haiku) to be shared in writing and/or performed.
- (5) Now it’s time to get your students searching for their own striking lines and phrases.
- (6) Explain that each student should cite the paragraph from which lines have been taken.
- (7) Whether you choose to assign the poems as homework or use class time to complete them, if you are sequencing the haiku into a renga, you can perform this task yourself or enlist one or more students to help.
- (8) Distribute copies of the completed haiku/renga with students’ names attached to their poems.
- (9) If you choose, perform the haiku/renga.
- (10) Tell us about your performance! Send texts, images, or other documentation to [hello@usdac.us](mailto:hello@usdac.us).

Here are a couple of examples of haiku from the Riverside Speech:

the truth of these words  
a new spirit is rising  
beyond the darkness so close

break the betrayal  
of my own silences and  
speak from my own heart