Critique of an Author’s Style

**Step 1:** Listen to the slam poem and read the other poem/lyrics provided.

**Step 2:** Analyze the poems (you can use TP-CASTT), write down any ideas, interpretations and meanings you find. Also, be sure to look for figurative language.

**Step 3:** Write your critique by answering the questions on the following sheet – this can be done individually, in partners or in groups of three (max.)

I will be collecting these tomorrow at the beginning of class. I should be receiving your critique worksheet and your analysis sheets.

Critique of an Author’s Style Worksheet

Give examples to illustrate and strengthen your points.

1. What does it mean to critique an author’s style?
2. What do the poems have in common? (Why would I give you these two poems together?)
3. While critiquing the author’s style in the slam poem, what do you notice about the author’s language? What do you notice about the language of the lyrics/written poem? How do they use language? How are they different in language? – You may want to reference your figurative language sheet to help you out (provide examples)
4. Explain why each poem is or is not effective and how you came to that conclusion.
5. Pick one line that resonated with you from one of the poems. Why did it resonate with you?
6. What is the author’s tone in the poems? How do you think the authors feel towards their topics? Are their opinions towards the topic evident? Was one poem’s tone and opinions clearer?
7. What are the authors’ specific message in each poem? Is it impactful?
8. How do these poems relate to one of the two course themes: “Search for Self” or “The Social Experience”?

My Hometown by Bruce Springsteen (Lyrics/Poems)

I was eight years old and running with a dime in my hand  
Into the bus stop to pick up a paper for my old man  
I'd sit on his lap in that big old Buick and steer as we drove through town  
He'd tousle my hair and say son take a good look around   
This is your hometown  
This is your hometown  
This is your hometown  
This is your hometown

In '65 tension was running high at my high school  
There was a lot of fights between the black and white  
There was nothing you could do  
Two cars at a light on a Saturday night in the back seat there was a gun  
Words were passed in a shotgun blast  
Troubled times had come   
To my hometown  
My hometown  
My hometown  
My hometown

Now Main Street's whitewashed windows and vacant stores  
Seems like there ain't nobody wants to come down here no more  
They're closing down the textile mill across the railroad tracks  
Foreman says these jobs are going boys and they ain't coming back   
To your hometown  
Your hometown  
Your hometown  
Your hometown

Last night me and Kate we laid in bed  
Talking about getting out  
Packing up our bags maybe heading south  
I'm thirty-five we got a boy of our own now  
Last night I sat him up behind the wheel and said son take a good look around  
This is your hometown

**Elementary (Slam Poem)**

I was so young, that I don’t remember how old I was the first time I called someone *gay*. It must be elementary school. One day my dad was picking me up and right before pulling out of the parking lot, a girl waved at me, with the smile of a vine, despite being the orchard everyone picked on, she was still sweet, and loved to be alive. When he asked why I didn’t wave back I told him, *because she’s gay*. His stare was religious. Buddhism in his brow raised the question, *What does that mean?*

We all crack  
under peer pressure.

But once you see  
that their earthquakes  
are coming from your faults  
you realize how deep  
trembles are felt,  
beneath the surface,  
where things are left,  
and forgotten.

This was before poetry  
became my world.  
I noticed that words  
have gravity.

I’ve seen them crush people,  
from a first person perspective.  
Felt a phrase fall  
out my mouth like an atom bomb  
forgetting the effects  
radiate for years.  
Loved a language  
that hates people.  
Crackin’ jokes, shatterin’ mirrors just ‘cause I wasn’t confident in my own reflection.

I hated myself  
for the shape of my eyes  
so I became a bully,  
because we all wanna’ feel  
like America  
sometimes.  
We all want straight spines  
that stand for what we believe in  
but it’s funny  
how flags and people  
have the same knack  
for politely waving at the ones  
they’ve forgotten.

Early as elementary school  
my parents planted a seed,  
the lotus of Buddhism  
began to blossom in my brain.

We had a pond in the back yard,  
and the flat water taught me of equality,  
that life is the one thing we all share.

I was also taught how to pray.  
I been memorizing mantras  
and chanting sutras out loud  
before the pledge of allegiance  
ever touched my lips.

I was taught of cause and effect.  
How it is the ultimate truth that everything relies on.  
How a thought will turn to word  
as quickly as fuel becomes fire  
whether it’s for burning down a house  
or keeping a lover warm,  
the spark of an idea will always match  
the fuming language we decide to pour out of our mouths.

But I forgot that the voice does the work of the Buddha  
so why would I ever call someone gay before calling them beautiful?

Why would I not praise the person that drinks the same water as me?

Why could I lift my voice  
just to put someone else down?

Us humans  
have a habit of over-powering  
and taking what doesn’t belong to us  
but I pray  
that we are making our way towards the moment  
when our tongues are the only left for us to conquer  
and if there’s one thing I’ve learned about being a poet  
is that it’s not about what you have to say in your poem  
it’s about what you have to say when your poem  
is done.