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.