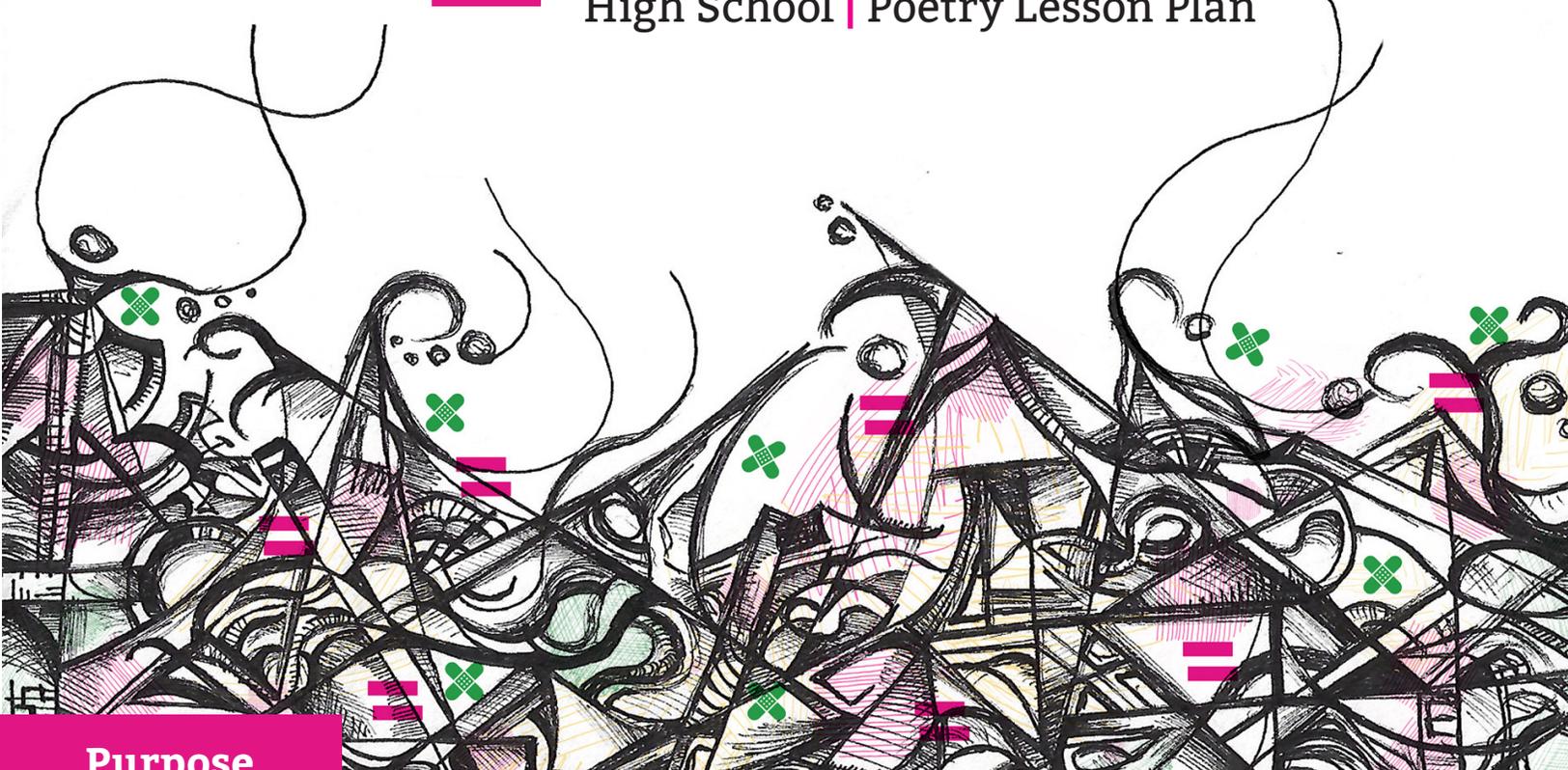


Pointed

High School | Poetry Lesson Plan



Purpose

In this lesson, students will read and analyse the poem "Pointed" by Edmonton-based poet and scientist, Nermeen Youssef. Students will extend their learning through creating their own piece exploring inequities they see or face in health care services locally and globally.

Support Materials

- Poem: [Pointed](#)
- Podcast: [CKUA](#)

The lesson is based on the poem, 'Pointed' by Nermeen Youssef, created for the Together Notebook.

The original story can be found at:
together.acgc.ca





More about

Nermeen Youssef

Nermeen Youssef is a multilingual Egyptian-Canadian writer and scientist. She holds a PhD in Pharmacology from the University of Alberta and currently develops health policy for the province. She is grateful to her strikingly contrasting home cities – Cairo and Edmonton, for giving her the eyes and ears of an expatriate and to science for teaching her about the freedom of boundless imagination.

Photo Credit: Writers' Guild of Alberta. writersguild.ca/2016-borderlines-writers-circle/

Resource

Youssef, Nermeen. *Pointed*. Found in *Together: Alberta's Notebook for the Global Goals*. Alberta Council for Global Cooperation, 2017.

Found at:

together.acgc.ca/pointed

Outcomes

Alberta Program of Studies - Grade 12 English Language Arts Outcomes

2.2 Respond to Texts

Experience various texts: choose a variety of oral, print and other media texts for shared and independent listening, reading and viewing experiences, using texts from a variety of cultural traditions and genres, such as nonfiction, chapter books, illustrated storybooks, drum dances, fables, CDROM programs and plays

2.3 Understand Forms, Elements and Techniques

Understand forms and genres: identify distinguishing features of a variety of oral, print and other media texts; discuss ways that visual images convey meaning in print and other media texts

Understand techniques and elements: include events, setting and characters when summarizing or retelling oral, print or other media texts; describe the main characters in terms of who they are, their actions in the story and their relations with other characters

2.4 Create Original Text

Generate Ideas: Experiment with ways of generating and organizing ideas prior to creating oral, print and other media texts

Structure Texts: Add sufficient detail to oral, print and other media texts to tell about setting and character, and to sustain plot

Alberta Education - Student Competencies

Communication: Expressing ideas or concepts using appropriate language, conventions, or protocols

Critical Thinking: Reflecting upon and evaluating reasoning behind thoughts, beliefs or actions

Global and Cultural Citizenship: Demonstrate responsible citizenship through actions which contribute to healthy and sustainable communities

Sample Activities



Pre-Reading Activities

1. **Journal Writing.** Look at a needle. What feelings does it evoke? How is a needle used? Spend 5-10 minutes journal writing. Share your experiences with others. Compare your experiences. How many different uses has the class come up with?

Reading the Poem

2. **Read the Poem 'Pointed' by Nermeen Youssef.** Students may also listen to the poem on the podcast by CKUA Radio Show *Adamant Eve*. Poem begins at timestamp 19:22. <https://soundcloud.com/cjsrfm/adamant-eve-displacement>

Post-Reading Activities

3 **Analyse the poem by answering the following questions:**

1. *Each verse of the poem explores a different use for a needle. What uses for the needle were similar to what you came up with? How are the uses similar, and how are they different?*
2. *Describe the mood of the poem. Compare the feelings evoked in the poem with your own feelings about needles.*
3. *What is the theme of the poem? What images or words does the author use explore this theme?*



Sample Activities



Discussion and Critical Thinking on Global Issues

Listen to the Podcast discussion with Nermeen Youssef on CJSR-FM Adamant Eve - (Dis)placement Timestamp 13:00-24:00. <https://soundcloud.com/cjsrfm/adamant-eve-displacement>

1. *Youssef is an immigrant to Alberta, has a PhD in pharmacology, and is also a poet. How does this inform her work as a poet? Give examples from the poem where her background informs her voice.*
2. *The host refers to Youssef as a 'Renaissance woman'. What does this mean? How does this false dichotomy inform the poem Pointed?*
3. *Listening to the interview, Youssef speaks of her desire to explore inequality in health care through the poem. What inequalities does she refer to? How do you see these inequalities changing in our current society? What other inequalities in healthcare exist, locally and globally, and why?*
4. *In what way does Youssef explore the concept of (in)equality within her poem?*

Create Your Own Poetry

Option 1: The needle in Youssef's poem evokes images of a variety of situations with different associated feelings. Mimic this structure in your own poem by exploring other objects used in health care that can evoke different feelings in people depending on their situation.

Sample objects to explore: *pill/medication, visit to the doctor, siren, blade*

Option 2: Use the following quote to inspire your poem:

"Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane." Martin Luther King

Sample issues to explore: *Access to health services for Indigenous peoples; homeless populations, persons with disabilities, refugees; addiction treatment; public versus private health care; access to safe abortions; womens' health globally.*

Share Your Own Poetry

Share your poetry with your class. Present your poetry, particularly focusing on voice (Volume, pace, rhythm, intonation, and pronunciation) and physical presence (gestures, movement, eye contact) to help deliver your message.



Take Action as a Global Citizen!

1. **Promote Equity in Health Care!** Hold a poetry night in your school to share your poetry and raise awareness about equity in health care.
2. **Celebrate World Health Day:** Celebrate World Health Day, observed annually on the April 7th.

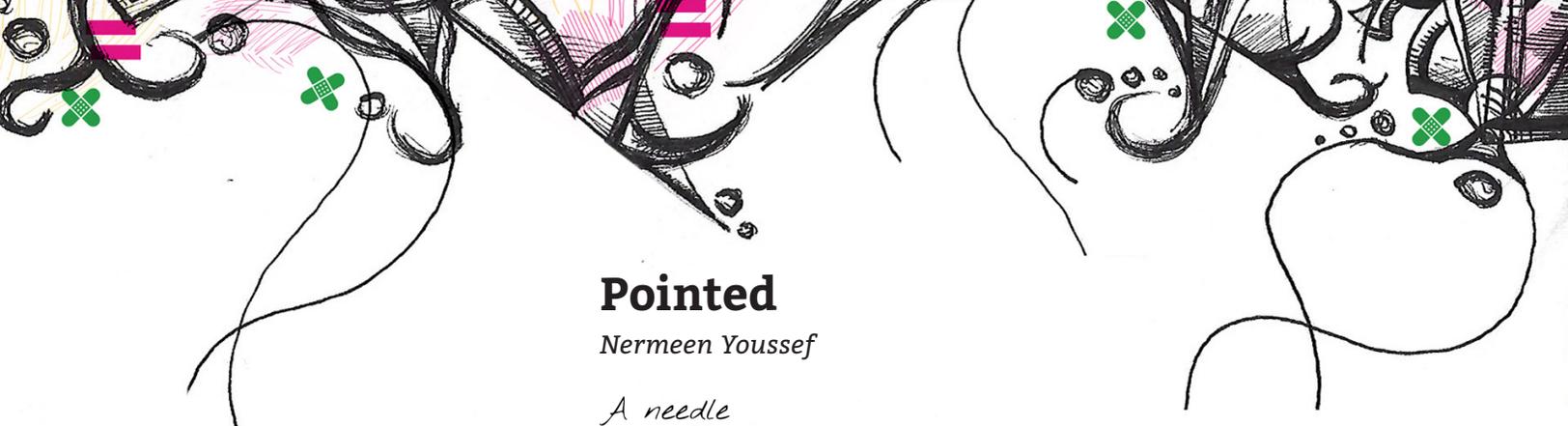
Additional Resources

Nermeen Youssef's poem "Snow Leopard" has been published in 40 Below Volume 2: Alberta's Winter Anthology. 2015, which is a collection of over 70 pieces by 50 Edmonton and area writers, inspired by Edmonton winters.

Assessment for Student Learning

Consider ways of assessing students on their poetic analysis; the construction of their poem; performance of poem





Pointed

Nermeen Youssef

A needle

Cuddles my grandmother's finger
Names a first grader's blazer

In cross stit

A needle

Familiar with my trembles
Finally breaks shy skin

Immune

A needle

Hums from friend to friend
Acquaintance to stranger

Enslaves me

A needle

In a paramedic's hand
Extends to a drowning self

Afloat

A needle

Inking loved ones into a grateful
Counts my years

Clean

A needle

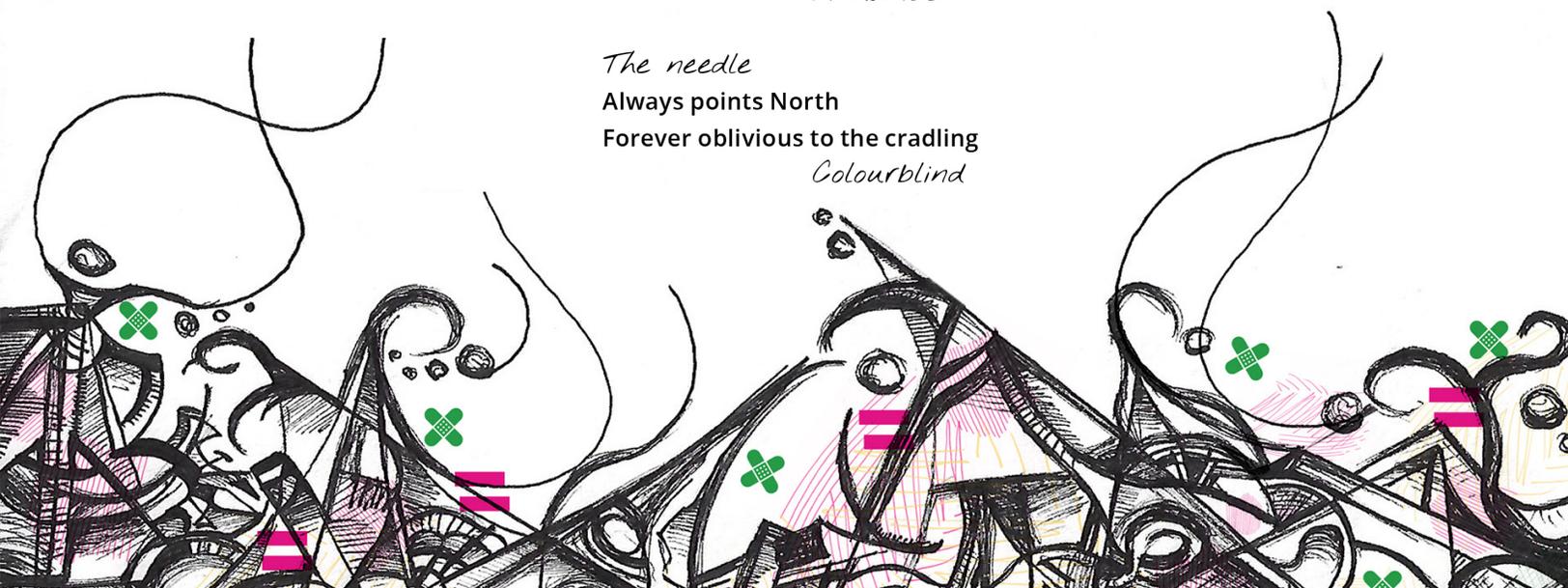
Pleasantly skates over vinyl
Calls our palms to embrace

In dance

The needle

Always points North
Forever oblivious to the cradling

Colourblind



Additional Poem

The following poem was a winner of the FALL 2018 POETRY MOVES ON TRANSIT program.

Betengaan

by Nermeen Youssef

I hope I don't look strange holding my bag of fresh eggplants.
Close and tight.
It only took one winter, one spring and seven new bus routes -
but I found them.
The ones where the smell of my mother's kitchen lives on -
greeting me from beyond the ocean.
I hope I don't look strange holding my bag of fresh eggplants,
smiling wide to myself holding it closer
In the city that I will soon call home
it's the closest to my mother's hug -
This prized bag of betengaan.

Source: Poetry Moves on Transit, Edmonton Poetry Festival.
Found Online at <http://edmontonpoetryfestival.com/poetry-route/>. Current as of January 15, 2019.

Contact Us

To read more stories, visit together.acgc.ca



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