

Truth

A stunning poem urges readers to courageously embrace whatever the day brings

About the Story

Lexile: n/a

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective:

to analyze a poem in the golden shovel form and then write an original poem using that form

Key Skills: analyzing and writing poetry

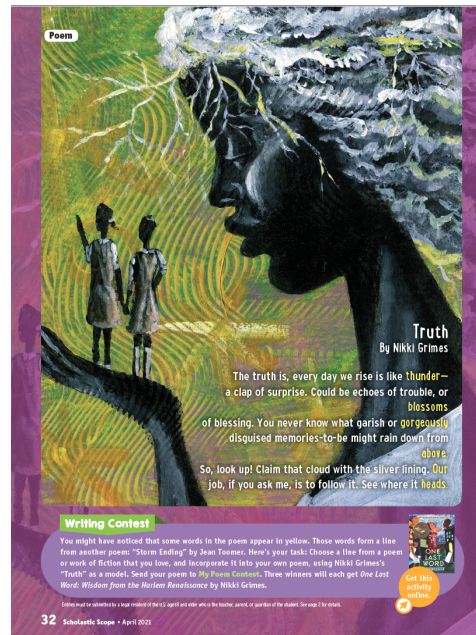
Essential Questions:

- How should we deal with life's challenges?
- How can we get the most out of life?
- How is poetry different from other types of writing?

Standards:

The article and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: R.10, W.3, SL.2

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of support materials at scope.scholastic.com.

Video:

- Poet read-aloud

Audio:

- Poet read-aloud

Connected readings from

Scope:

- Fiction: "Dear Future"

Skill Building Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Analyzing Poetry
- Illustration Activity
- Poetry Writing Planner
- Choice Board
- Contest Entry Form

*Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1. Preparing to Read

10 minutes

Explain the Golden Shovel Method (7 minutes)

- Tell students that there is a form of poetry called the golden shovel in which part of one poem is borrowed and used as the starting point for a whole new poem. Here's how the golden shovel works: You take one line from a poem (or you can take a few lines or a short poem in its entirety) and write it out down the right side of a page, one word per line. (The line that is borrowed is referred to as the "striking line.") For example:

twinkle
twinkle
little
star

Those words then become the last words in the lines of a new poem. For example:

In Maggie's brown eyes I notice a **twinkle**
as she begins to bark. There is no **twinkle**
in my eyes. This barking is more than a **little**
jarring. But still I throw the squeaky sheep; in this show, Maggie is the **star**.

Introduce "Truth" (3 minutes)

- Let students know that the poem they are about to read, "Truth," comes from a book called *One Last Word* (2017), which pairs poems from the Harlem Renaissance with poems that Nikki Grimes wrote using the golden shovel method.
- Before students read the poem, you may wish to provide them with the following definitions:
 - garish** [GAIR-ish]: overly or disturbingly bright, flashy, or vivid
 - silver lining**: The expression "every cloud has a silver lining" means that every bad situation has something good in it—that there is a positive aspect to even the most difficult or unpleasant situation.

2. Reading and Discussing the Poem

30 minutes

- Give students a few minutes to read “Truth” silently to themselves.
- Play the **poet read-aloud video** (located in your Resources tab and at the bottom of the story page in Student View). After students watch Grimes perform “Truth,” invite them to share anything they noticed or that stood out to them. Ask: *How was the way Grimes read her poem similar to or different from the way you heard the poem in your head when you read it yourself?*
- Share with students Jean Toomer’s poem “Storm Ending,” which is the source of the striking line for “Truth.” Read the poem aloud to students or have a volunteer read it aloud.

Storm Ending

By Jean Toomer

Thunder blossoms gorgeously above our heads,
Great, hollow, bell-like flowers,
Rumbling in the wind,
Stretching clappers to strike our ears . . .
Full-lipped flowers
Bitten by the sun
Bleeding rain
Dripping rain like golden honey—
And the sweet earth flying from the thunder.

- Make sure all students are clear on how Grimes incorporated the first line of “Storm Ending” into her poem. Point out that Grimes changed the punctuation and capitalization of the words from her striking line to suit her needs.
- Students may point out that technically, Grimes places the words “blossoms” and “above” on their own lines rather than at the ends of the lines that precede them. And indeed she does! That is the beauty of writing poetry: As the poet, you can do what you like. (You might ask students why they think Grimes made that choice.)
- As a class or in small groups, analyze “Truth” by responding to the following questions, which also appear in the **Analyzing Poetry** activity. *Tip: If you’re remote, you can have each group respond in a shared doc or discuss the questions in their own chat room.*

Poetry-Analysis Questions

(15 minutes)

These questions also appear in the Analyzing Poetry activity in printable or interactive form.

1. **The poet develops a simile throughout this poem. What two things is she comparing? She is comparing thunder to the events, situations, and experiences that each day brings.**
2. **According to the poem, in what way is every day like thunder? According to the poem, every day is a surprise—we can't predict what it will bring—in the same way that a clap of thunder is a surprise.**
3. **In line 5, the poet refers to “memories-to-be.” Explain what she means. A memory-to-be is an experience that has not yet happened, but that you will remember after it does. In other words, it is an experience that will become a memory. You can infer that the poet is talking about experiences of some significance—experiences that will stick in your memory because they are particularly joyful, difficult, meaningful, unexpected, scary, rewarding, etc.**
4. **What do you think the poet means when she refers to memories-to-be being “garish or gorgeously disguised”? Perhaps she is saying that we can't know right away how a certain situation or experience will turn out—how it will ultimately affect us and how we will ultimately remember it. An experience might be “disguised” as something disturbing or as something delightful, but it will prove, looking back, to be something else entirely.**
5. **What do you think the poet means when she instructs readers to “Claim that cloud with the silver lining”? Explain how that line relates to what comes next: “Our job, if you ask me, is to follow it. See where it heads.” Perhaps the poet is instructing readers to stay open to, and even embrace, whatever comes their way—even if it seems like something negative—because there is something good to be found in every situation or experience. When the poet writes “Our job, if you ask me, is to follow it. See where it heads,” she is continuing her thought about the cloud with the silver lining, saying that rather than avoid difficult experiences, we should stick with them and see where they take us and what they have to offer.**

3. Studying and Discussing the Illustration

20 minutes

- Give students time to complete the **Illustration Activity**, in which they analyze the illustration that accompanies the poem and meet the artist who created it. Once students have answered the five questions, come together as a class to discuss students' responses.

4. Skill Building and Writing

20 minutes

- Have students complete the **Poetry Planner**, which will help students prepare to respond to the writing prompt on page 32 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page.
- Alternatively, have students choose a culminating task from the **Choice Board**, a menu of differentiated activities.

Recommended pairing from *Scope* that explores similar themes:

Fiction: [“Dear Future”](#) (April 2021)