

Words With History

Use recitation to connect language with its time and purpose.

9.P.CP.2.e “Build background knowledge by reciting all or part of significant poems and speeches as appropriate by grade level. (I/C)”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that build background knowledge about a text, then circle each rehearsal choice that helps a reader recite accurately and meaningfully.

Voices at the Library

- ① At the city library, ninth graders planned a short program called “Voices and Belonging.” They did not treat recitation as a memorization contest. Before choosing lines, each group learned who spoke, when the words were written or delivered, and what conflict shaped them. One group selected a passage from Frederick Douglass’s 1852 speech, “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” Douglass spoke in Rochester, New York, while slavery was legal in the United States. His argument asks listeners to notice the gap between national ideals and the lives of enslaved people. That knowledge changed how they heard its urgent questions.
- ② Another group prepared lines from Langston Hughes’s 1926 poem “I, Too.” The poem’s speaker answers exclusion with a confident claim that he belongs in the nation’s future. Students connected the poem to the Harlem Renaissance, a period when Black artists created influential work in literature, music, and art. Placing Hughes after Douglass helped the audience hear both a long history of discrimination and a later voice insisting on dignity. The groups chose brief sections with complete ideas, rather than isolated dramatic phrases. They introduced each selection by naming its author, title, and historical setting.
- ③ During rehearsal, the readers practiced accuracy as well as expression. They checked punctuation and unfamiliar words against reliable printed copies, because changing a word can change a writer’s meaning. A reader used a steady pace for Douglass’s argument and paused after a question, allowing its challenge to register. For Hughes’s poem, another reader stressed “I, too” without turning the line into a shout. The program ended with students explaining that recitation gave them more than memorable language. Speaking the words aloud helped them connect voices, dates, conflicts, and ideas that a silent reading might leave separate.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What three kinds of background knowledge did each group learn before choosing lines to recite?

2 What gap does Douglass's argument ask listeners to notice?

3 Why did the program place Hughes's poem after Douglass's speech?

4 What two checks did readers use to make sure their recitation was accurate?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Choose a significant poem or speech from class or the library. Write exactly four sentences that name its author, title, and date; explain one historical context detail; explain why a 2 to 4 line excerpt is meaningful; and describe two delivery choices. Then copy the 2 to 4 lines you would recite accurately.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline details that build background knowledge about a text, then circle each rehearsal choice that helps a reader recite accurately and meaningfully. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What three kinds of background knowledge did each group learn before choosing lines to recite?	They learned who spoke, when the text was written or delivered, and what conflict shaped it.
2	What gap does Douglass's argument ask listeners to notice?	The gap between national ideals and the lives of enslaved people.
3	Why did the program place Hughes's poem after Douglass's speech?	The order helped listeners hear a long history of discrimination and a later voice insisting on dignity.
4	What two checks did readers use to make sure their recitation was accurate?	They checked punctuation and unfamiliar words against reliable printed copies.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Walt Whitman's poem "O Captain! My Captain!" was published in 1865. Whitman wrote it after President Abraham Lincoln's assassination, and the captain represents Lincoln. I chose these three lines because the ship's completed journey helps express the nation's relief after the Civil War. I will use a solemn, measured pace and pause after each line. "O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done; The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won; The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,"

Accept equivalent descriptions of the background knowledge, historical contrast, text order, and accuracy checks. For Part 3, accept any accurate four-sentence plan and accurately copied 2 to 4 line excerpt that includes all requested elements.