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.

AVAILABLE SIGNIFICANT POEM EXCERPT FOR ACTUAL RECITATION

Source	Three exact lines to recite
Walt Whitman	O Captain! My Captain! (first published 1865), opening three lines; exact public-domain wording from Leaves of Grass, Project Gutenberg ebook 1322. Whitman wrote the poem in response to Lincoln's death; the captain represents Lincoln. This later collected transcription uses commas after lines 1 and 2. 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,

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 the supplied Whitman excerpt or an accessible significant poem or speech from class or the library. Write exactly four preparation sentences naming its author/title/date, one historical context detail, why your 2 to 4 lines matter, and two delivery choices. Copy the exact lines. Then actually recite those lines to a partner or teacher, using the printed text and support as needed. Introduce the author and context, and ask the listener to check the words and one planned pace/pause choice. Record the listener's actual feedback and one connection between the words and their historical context. This is not a memorization contest or a public-performance requirement.

ANSWER KEY # Words With History

GRADE 9 · 9.P.CP.2.e

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 first published in 1865. It responds to Abraham Lincoln's death at the end of the Civil War. The opening completed-voyage image celebrates arrival while the lost captain makes that success mournful. I will use a steady pace and pause at each line ending to keep the words clear.

Exact excerpt (later collected text):
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,

Illustrative completed recitation record: My listener followed the printed lines and reported that I kept their words and paused at each line ending. Speaking the completed-trip image helped me connect the poem with the end of the war; knowing that its captain represents Lincoln adds loss to that sense of relief. Students must record their own actual recitation and feedback.

Preserve all four accurate source-background/order/rehearsal answers. Check the exactly four preparation sentences, an accurately copied identified 2-to-4-line excerpt and actual supported recitation to a real listener. Observe or review the listener's words/expression check and the learner's historical-context connection. The Whitman transcription supplied here has commas after lines 1 and 2; retain its intentional three line breaks and wording. Accept appropriate accessible significant alternatives, printed-text support and varied grounded interpretations; a would-recite plan alone does not complete the task. No memorization, full poem or large audience quota.