

Now What?

Bronx Masquerade

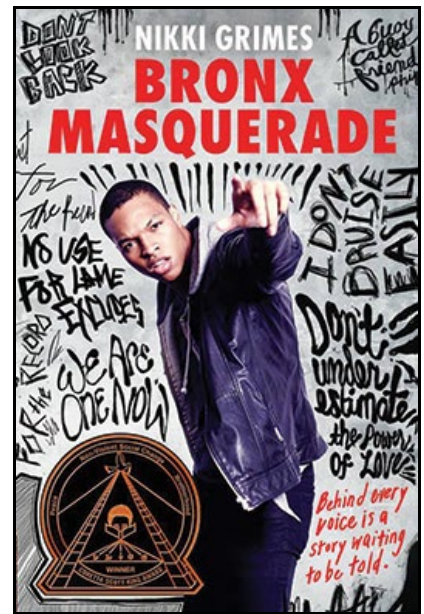
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Dial Books for Young Readers, 2002

You've got your students excited about Open Mike Fridays, and about writing poetry. That's great!

So the next question is, now what? How do you keep that interest going? How do you build on it?

The first thing to keep in mind is that the true purpose of any writing program is to develop better writers, not published writers. Obviously, no matter how talented your students may be, they haven't begun to hone their skills enough to be ready for the world of professional book publishing. Student publishing has its place, though, and I'll address that later. But, first things first. Here are some writing project ideas for your students once they've caught the poetry bug!



- Have students write a chapbook of poems about their culture. When the chapbooks are completed, have students swap them with one another.
- Assign a new novel. Have students rewrite their favorite chapter in a suite of poems.
- Assign a newspaper article, or let students pick one of their own. Then, have them rewrite the story in a suite of poems, using as much of the tone and the language in the article as possible.
- Have students write a year-in-the-life autobiography in verse. (This could be a semester-long project.)
- Open Mike: Have students write poems for an end-of-year Open Mike Night to which they can invite friends and family.

Okay, Now About Publishing

There are bound to be students in your class who want to see their poetry in print. If that's the case, you want to offer them realistic, achievable publishing goals. (Publishing a collection with a major publisher probably is unlikely to happen, so don't raise false expectations.) Here are a few ideas on ways to get your student poets into print.

- Lit Mag: Start a literary magazine club after school. Set it up as a student-run, teacher-supervised group. Open it to the entire school. It could be a quarterly or an annual. Have it open to all genres, mixing poetry with short stories, articles, essays, maybe even

political cartoons. The work to be published should be selected by the student staff. If you want to include "ads," students will not only get experience editing a magazine, they'll learn something about marketing as well. You can take this idea as far you'd like, or have time and money to pursue. Thanks to all the new technology, you can easily keep product costs to a minimum.

- Reflections: Look for writing competitions such as Reflections, which is geared to teens.
- Internet: Steer students to an online poetry magazine. In fact, have students research which zines are out there. They'll probably find them faster than you will! Once they're found, you may encourage those students who are interested to submit their work.

That's it! Now, you're on your own.

Just remember, the goal is to get students to practice writing, to develop a love and respect for language. Publishing is another animal altogether!