



# Speak Your Peace

**THIS ACTIVITY INVITES** participants to learn about global situations where conflict exists and peace is needed.

TIME REQUIRED: 120-180 MINUTES | INTENDED FOR GRADES 6-8



## MATERIALS NEEDED

- » Pens or pencils, one for each participant
- » Writing paper, two to three sheets for each participant
- » Recording device (optional)
- » Microphone (optional)
- » Computer with Internet access
- » Visit [worldvision.org/lp/acsi-teacher-resources](http://worldvision.org/lp/acsi-teacher-resources) for a video you can show to support this lesson. (optional)

## Preparation Needed

- » You will be showing participants a few videos that can be found on YouTube. Locate these videos ahead of time and choose the ones you'd like to show. (Search with both the video title and creator's name for best results.) Options for consideration include:
  - » *A Single Rose* by 12-year-old Mustafa Ahmed
  - » *Speak With Conviction* by Taylor Mali
  - » *What I Will* by Suheir Hammad

# 1

## Activity Steps

**INTRODUCE THE CONCEPT** of “spoken word” using the following key points:

- » Spoken word involves one or more people performing a poem, using voice, gesture, rhythm, and pacing to enhance its meaning.
- » In the late 1980s, Marc Kelly Smith, a Chicago poet and construction worker, introduced spoken-word “poetry slams” as a platform for social commentary. Spoken-word poetry can be about any topic, but lends itself well to social justice issues such as peace and conflict.
- » It’s not mandatory to follow established grammar rules as long as the message is clear. There are no formal rules or structure to spoken-word poetry; informal language and free verse can be used for deliberate effect.
- » Spoken-word poetry can be a tool for advocacy, allowing people whose voices traditionally go unheard to be heard in a forum where words are the main currency.

# 2

**SHOW TWO OR THREE** of the spoken-word videos you have chosen from the list above.

# 3

**ASSIGN PARTICIPANTS THE FOLLOWING TASK:**

- » Create a one- or two-minute spoken-word poem about ending conflict and promoting peace (or some other social justice issue). If you aren’t already aware of some of the current global conflict situations, take this opportunity to educate yourself about them.
- » You will be performing your spoken-word piece for the entire group (or a broader audience) to enjoy.
- » Here are a few helpful hints:
  - *When you start writing, don’t edit.* Write fast or slow, but don’t prejudge your ideas. Write from your own honest observations, experiences, and thoughts. The point is to get something down on paper to edit and polish later. You don’t even have to write your thoughts in order; random lines or verses can be organized more coherently at the editing stage.
  - *Rewrite.* Few people write a masterpiece in one sitting, so edit and re-edit your work. Play with the flow and beat of the lines, use lots of concrete images (nouns and adjectives) and active verbs, and choose precise words or phrases to make your meaning clear. Try to make the poem about one specific thing.
  - *Read your poem out loud.* After all, it is *spoken* word! Figure out how the words feel in your mouth and sound in your ears. Commit them to memory. You’ll be performing at some point, so be critical of the poem’s strong and weak elements. Record your voice and listen to it in order to make changes or improvements.

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- Once you are satisfied your poem is the best it can be, share it with someone whose opinion you trust. Ask for honest feedback on improving both the poem and your performance. Be receptive to suggestions, but remember it is your decision whether or not to make any changes.

**LET THE PARTICIPANTS KNOW** that they may work individually or in pairs, and that they will have this session and the next to work on the assignment. Then give them a few sheets of paper and a pen or pencil to begin working.

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**WHEN YOU BEGIN THE NEXT SESSION**, share the following points before inviting participants to continue working on their assignment:

» Welcome back. Let's review a few things to keep in mind as you continue to work on your piece:

- *Voice*. This is your most important and powerful performance tool. It's all you need to carry the poem off well. Work on pitch (high or low sound tone), intonation (the melody established by varying patterns of pitch), and pace (the speed of speech, which sets mood and tone). In pure spoken-word performance, costumes, props, and instruments are not allowed. While this may seem intimidating (or even boring), think of performers you admire whose voices mesmerize the audience.
- *Body language, gesture, and facial expression*. Use your body to convey the nuances of your poem. Enhance the words with facial expression, hand gestures, and movement, exuding confidence through your placement on stage and use of voice and/or microphone.
- *Memorization*. Reading from a paper is allowed, but seriously consider memorizing if possible. Memorization allows you to make eye contact with the audience, pay closer attention to your delivery, and appear more confident on stage.
- *Audience awareness*. Be aware of your audience and speak to them. You are confiding your thoughts and asking them to relate.
- *Technical elements*. This includes keeping to time limits, microphone use, and use of stage (blocking).

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**AT THE CONCLUSION** of the second session, remind the participants that they will be performing their spoken-word piece at the next gathering. Ask them to arrive prepared and ready for their presentation.

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**AT THE THIRD AND FINAL SESSION**, invite each participant (or pairing) to perform their poem for the entire group. If time allows, invite discussion about the topic after each performance.

