

## **“How You Love” like Major Jackson by Allyson Horton**

It has been said that *the best form of flattery is imitation*. This exercise will concentrate on imitating the style in which Major Jackson approached his love poem entitled, “How You Love.” Today we will motivate them to try their hand at writing an imitation poem in the same creative fashion. This will be a fun way for us, as a writing group to not only prepare for Jackson’s class visit, but also a way for us as writers to explore the idea of writing a poem which is designed be both entertaining and informative. Have your group consider writing about a particular subject matter or experience they feel would be important to express in the form of a poem or story. If they choose to focus on the subject of love—encourage them to create their own version of “How You Love.”

Once each student settles on a topic, determine what purpose the student would like his or her poem to serve. Mentors, this is an opportunity for you to share your interpretation of Jackson’s poem with the group. What does Jackson’s poem seem to say about love? What picture does the poem seem to paint? Is the poem written to instruct or warn us of something related to love? Ask further questions like: What pictures or message do you want your poem to express? Do you want your poem to be informative? Amusing? Teach a lesson of some sort? Refer to the poem as needed during this discussion.

This “How You” poem can be approached from various angles. For example, the poem “How You Succeed” might be written to *instruct* an individual on ways to achieve success at Shortridge. Or the poem might lean more toward ways a person could end up being unsuccessful in school (ex. skipping class, following the wrong crowd, etc.). Notice how the purpose of the latter poem is clearly to *warn* instead of to instruct. As a group, explore the range of possible approaches one could take toward writing this type of poem. Then have the students write a 10 line poem on that topic. Imitating Jackson, students will start their poem with the word “Like...” just as his poem begins. Encourage students to write more than one poem. Group poems are encouraged as well (ex. have everyone contribute a line in group rotation).

**This exercise challenges students to concentrate on using simile.**

**Below are a few titles you and your group may want to use as a launching pad for this exercise** (once the poem is finished, have the students go over it several times in preparation for performance):

How You Succeed (a poem addressing things that lead to your definition of success)  
How You Hate (a poem addressing the practice of haterism)  
How You Swag (“swag” has to do with one’s personality, individual style, & confidence)  
How You Elevate A Mind (consider the power of poetry)  
How You Poet (a poem that expresses how you write, or how you represent poetry)  
How You Dance  
How You Ball (think more in terms of playing sports and less in terms of getting money)  
How You Tell A Story (some of our fiction writers might choose this one)  
How You Flow (a poem written in the style of rap or some other musical art form)  
How You Blue Devil (a poem that focuses on what it takes to represent your school spirit)  
How You Respect Planet Earth  
How You Respect Women  
How You Respect the Homeless  
How You Respect the Elderly  
How You Eat \_\_\_\_\_ (insert your favorite grub food here)

Ex. “How You Succeed”

Like being in the running for the number one position.

Like eliminating haters left and right, like joining

Exclusive Ink! cause my poetic swag game is tight. (just seven more lines to go)

**Performance point:** Remember, this activity is intended to emphasize how you do a particular thing. Encourage students to put their own personal swag on it!