Lesson Plan

Title: Father is the World on Fire?

Overview: Poetry lesson that can serve as the introduction to the events of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre (TRM). Students will complete a KWL chart about the events.

Author: Poetry by Brianna Guice

Grade level: 5th – 8th

Time duration: 30-40 minutes

Subject: English Language Arts, Social Studies

Objective: To introduce students to the events of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre

Standards: ELA Standard 3 Critical Reading and Writing, Social Studies Acquire, Apply and Evaluate Evidence

Materials: Know, Want to Know & Learned Chart (KWL Chart), Student copies of the poem and poem comprehension worksheet for each student, chart paper for each group (optional)

Activities and procedures:

- As in introduction to the 1921 TRM, present a KWL chart to the students. Here is a link to a fillable and printable KWL chart http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/printouts/KWL%20Chart.pdf

- Invite students to share what they already know about Black Wall Street (BWS) and the 1921 TRM

- Facilitate a reading of the poem – ‘Father is the World on Fire’ by either small group or whole group reading of it

- Facilitate a discussion of the poem in small groups by dividing the students into groups of 3-4 students and providing each group member with copies of the poem and questions. Have each group to record their answers on chart paper or in a google doc if working online and be ready to share out. Or, facilitate a large group discussion by going over the questions as a class.

Wrapping Up the Lesson:

- Any new information that is shared about the 1921 BWS and TRM during the discussion(s) should be added to the ‘K’ column of KWL chart

- Next invite students to discuss what they still want to learn about the BMassacre

- Complete the L column of the chart as students continue learning about the Massacre

Extending the Lesson:

- At the end of the unit, invite students to write poetry about 1921 BWS and/or TRM or current BWS if they are familiar with the area or invite students to write about their feelings about the event in poetic form
A poetic reflection of the events of the 
1921 Tulsa Race Massacre

Father is the World on Fire?
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They killed my brother.
Frankie was defending that boy
And they killed him for it.
They said Dick hurt that white girl.
And that he deserves to die.
They kept him in the courthouse and they intended on lynching him.
I was scared and trembled at the thought of what was to come.
Father said he would cover me
Stop this atrocity
But the mobs of white men came anyway.
The troops of black men joined.
They marched down to the courthouse where he was kept.
My brother was one of them.
He was a proud and righteous man, my big brother.
Always did what was right.
He wasn't gonna let them hurt that boy.
"The protection of my fellow brothers is what is important," he told me.
So there he went to defend his brother,
only to be killed in front of that courthouse.
They took my brother away.
Such infallible pain,
but no time to wallow
no time to weep
because the smoke began to rise and the fire began to flame.
I asked father, "is the world on fire?"
"Are we in a war?"
"No my child," he spoke,
"be still for I will cover you"
I closed my eyes and placed my head between my knees like so.
How I wished and hoped that this would end,
for my people deserved much more.
White men where shooting on site, without even so much of a blink.
The violence was paralyzing.
I heard the screams, they tore through my soul and ripped to my core.
300 souls forced to transcend into the heavens,
to go be with the most high,
to meet the creator in spirit form.
So beautiful, yet such sorrow, sadness.
I silently wept, my eyes bloodshot red
when I realized the deafening silence.
The quiet pierced like a crisp winter morning air.
I stood tall on my feet and opened my door as I climbed from the basement floor.
Walking out, the sun beaming into my eyes,
I see bodies on bodies covering the streets of my once beautiful Tulsa home.
The smell of death filled my nose as I wandered, looking for my brother.
I found him
dead.
All of this over the assumption that that boy had raped that girl.
I dropped back down to my knees.
I asked, “father please why did this happen to me?”
“I prayed to you, I asked you to protect us, you said you would cover me just to be
still my child.”
I did what you asked, I was still but this still happened why?
My father spoke to me one last time and said, “I covered you from the evil that
was outside of your space, but I cannot stop the evil souls that walk, for they
have free will and choose sin as their path.”
Tears streaming down my face, I close my eyes meditating on The Most High.
Inhale peace, inhale comfort, inhale what was,
exhale trauma and a negative surge of hate.
I dried my eyes, looked around and prayed one last prayer.
“Father protect my ancestors, help them to guide me on my journey home.”
Student Worksheet - Father is the World on Fire? Poem by Brianna Guice

Name _________________________________________________

1. Who is narrating this poem?

2. List and describe the other people/people groups mentioned in the poem and their relationship to the narrator.

3. Exploring Motivations – list each character that you have identified in the previous question and explain the motivation behind the action(s) that they took in the poem.

4. According to the narrator, what happened after the events at the courthouse?

5. Who is Father? What does he provide the narrator with?

6. List any words that you do not know the meaning of.
1. **Who is narrating this poem?** – An African American resident of the Greenwood community during the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. The narrator’s name is never provided.

2. **List and describe the other people/people groups mentioned in the poem.**
   
   Frankie – the narrator’s brother
   
   Dick – An African American boy or young man that is accused of raping a white girl.
   
   White girl – (see above)
   
   White men – a group that is believed to be planning to lynch Dick because he is accused of raping the white girl
   
   Black men – a group that is planning to protect Dick from being lynched or hurt by the white men.
   
   Father – someone the narrator talks to throughout the poem.

3. **Exploring Motivations – list each character that you have identified in the previous question and explain the motivation behind the action(s) that they took in the poem.**

   Frankie – he believed in doing what was right and in protecting others.
   
   Dick – no motivation for what he is accused of is provided.
   
   White girl – (see above)
   
   White men – If students understand the cultural climate of the times – they will know that the white men were motivated by dislike/hate of the blacks. Students may also be able to infer this from the things that occurred in the poem.
   
   Black men – Seemed to be motivated by the desire to not let Dick be hurt by the white men.
   
   Father – He protected the narrator because she prayed (asked)

4. **According to the narrator, what happened after the events at the courthouse?**

   White men shot and killed 300 blacks and set the area where the narrator was on fire.

5. **Who is Father? What does he provide the narrator with?**

   Father is the narrator’s reference to God. He seems to provide protection to the narrator; answers to her questions; peace and guidance.

6. **List any words that you do not know the meaning of.**

   Answers will vary.