

Lesson Plan

Rants: Not Just for Complaining!

by **Erika Luckert**

In [Erika Luckert's](#) lesson plan, students explore “ranting” as a practice for relieving emotional angst and building an argument.

Grade: 7th

Genre(s): Poetry and prose

Common Core State Standards (Refer to the [ELA Standards > Writing > Grade 7](#)):

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.A: Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2.B: Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

LESSON

Warm-up Activity (5 minutes):

- Make a list of things that annoy you, things you hate, and things you cannot stand. Make your list as long as possible!

Main Activity

Mentor Text 1 (10 minutes):

- Today, we are going to be talking about rants. Does anybody know what a rant is?
- Most of us have voices that change depending on how we feel about something. When we are angry or annoyed, you might hear a different side of our voice. For some it is sarcastic; for some it is loud; for some it is very, very quiet. Today we are going to explore the ranting side of our voices!
- The first rant we are going to listen to is an excerpt from Eminem’s recent freestyle. This is something that he improvised on the spot, and his rant is a bit like the list that you created at the beginning of class—he mentions many things that he cannot stand.

- Listen to [Eminem excerpt](#). What did you notice? What stood out to you about his voice?
Note: The freestyle contains explicit lyrics. Depending on your student audience, you may want to select an excerpt without profanity.

Mentor Text 2 (10 minutes):

- Now let us look at a rant that, instead of listing many different things, focuses in on everything that is annoying about *one* thing.
- Read [“An Open Letter to Hummingbirds.”](#) What did you notice?
- Draw students’ attention to the fact that the piece is direct address: while Eminem was speaking *about* Trump, here the poet Tony Cross is speaking *directly to* the hummingbirds (even though they cannot necessarily reply). How does that affect you as a reader?

Writing (10 minutes):

- Pick one item from your list of things that annoy you
- At the top of your page, write
“An Open Letter to _____”
- Now, write a rant addressed directly to that thing that annoys you!

Closing (5 minutes):

- Some students read their rants aloud.

Materials:

- Eminem video and text of excerpt
- “An Open Letter to Hummingbirds” by Tony Cross

Multi-modal Approaches to Learning: Bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, musical, verbal-linguistic, visual-spatial

Suggestions For Educators: *For before, during or after the program*

- Connect rants to argumentative writing: how can a rant become an argument with claims and support?
- Where else do we read rants? Do you see rants on social media? How is this a different form of writing/voice?
- Identify direct address in other texts.

Eminem Freestyle (excerpt)

It's like we take a step forwards, then
backwards
But this is his form of distraction
Plus, he gets an enormous reaction
When he attacks the NFL so we focus on
that
Instead of talking Puerto Rico or gun reform
for Nevada
All these horrible tragedies and he's bored
and would rather
Cause a Twitter storm with the Packers
Then says he wants to lower our taxes
Then who's gonna pay for his extravagant
trips
Back and forth with his fam to his golf
resorts and his mansions?
Same s**t that he tormented Hillary for and
he slandered
Then does it more
From his endorsement of Bannon
Support for the Klansmen
Tiki torches in hand for the soldier that's
black
And comes home from Iraq
And is still told to go back to Africa
Fork and a dagger in this racist 94-year-old
grandpa
Who keeps ignoring our past historical,
deplorable factors
Now if you're a black athlete, you're a
spoiled little brat for
Tryina use your platform or your stature
To try to give those a voice who don't have
one
He says, "You're spittin' in the face of vets
who fought for us, you bastards!"
Unless you're a POW who's tortured and
battered
'Cause to him you're zeros
'Cause he don't like his war heroes captured

“An Open Letter to Hummingbirds”

Dear Hummingbirds,

Hey, would you take it easy already? What's the freakin' rush, hummingbirds? I don't get it—why must you flap your wings so damn fast? You need to chill out.

Here I am, sitting in my garden, quietly reading a book and sipping on a fruit cocktail, and all of a sudden you're buzzing into my field of vision, scaring the living bejesus out of me, because at first I think you're some kind of humongous, genetically altered uberinsect that's bringing doom straight to my front door. I'm falling off my lawn chair, grappling for a fly swatter, yet knowing that a fly swatter won't save me, and then I realize you're a hummingbird.

First of all—grow up a little! You're too small to be a bird. Maybe if you didn't expend all your energy flapping around like a lunatic, you might actually put on a few ounces and at least get to a respectable, sparrow-type weight. Secondly, as far as I can tell, the buzzing around is not doing you any good, my friends. At your size, there's no reason you can't just perch *on top of that* flower and suck out the nectar from above. No reason to hover in front of the thing, for Pete's sake. Do you see me floating above my fruit cocktail, taking a sip, then bolting over to the neighbor's yard looking for more, like a strung-out coke fiend? I don't think so. You see me sitting here in my lawn chair drinking fruit cocktail through a straw—it's called e-v-o-l-u-t-i-o-n. Get with the program.

I read somewhere that your wings beat 53 times per second, and that your average life span is three to four years. Seems like you're burning the candle at both ends there, hummingbirds. Let's say you cut your number of wing beats in half to a mere 26 beats per second—you could double your life span! Now would that be so bad? Would that really hurt anyone?

Think how much happier you would be if you weren't so stressed out all the time. Think how much more food you could eat if you weren't so busy flitting hither and thither *for no good reason* all the time. My advice to you, hummingbirds: Stop and smell the flowers once in a while. Life is too short.

Very truly yours,
Tony Cross