

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

The Rose That grew From Concrete

by Tupac Amaru Shakur

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The Rose That grew From Concrete

Background Notes

The poems presented in this unique body of work were written by a man whose life and death are as controversial as his subject matter. These poems contain mature topics, including sex, drugs, violence, political views, and death. Therefore, the age and maturity level of the students should be considered when presenting this material.

The poems are loosely divided into four sections:

- survival and self discovery
- friendship and love
- drugs and violence
- social and political views

The sections are short and can be covered completely, or teachers may choose to just a sampling of the poems. If this method is chosen, it is recommended that teachers choose poems from each section to cover the author's range of subjects.

All references come from the 1999 Pocket Books edition of *The Rose That grew From Concrete*, by Tupac Amaru Shakur.

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Tupac Amaru Shakur: Biography

Tupac Amaru Shakur was born on June 16, 1971, and was named after an Inca Chief. As a child, his nickname was the “Black Prince.” He grew up in the Bronx, New York, where his mother, Afeni Shakur, was a member of the Black Panther Party. The Black Panther Party was an organization dedicated to education and civil rights. Tupac Shakur had a sister Sekyiwa, who was two years younger than he. He did not have contact with his father, and his sister’s father, Mutulu, was jailed for sixty years for armed robbery. The family fell on hard times and moved frequently. This created some insecurity in Tupac, as he never had an opportunity to make lasting friends. He found solace in writing poetry and love songs. He kept a diary, in which he noted that he would one day be famous.

At the age of fifteen, Shakur attended the Baltimore School for the Arts, where he studied acting and, surprisingly, ballet. It was there that he began to feel as if he fit in. He loved school and planned to become a musical artist.

In the late 1980s, he formed a group called Digital Underground. They released several records that met with success. In 1992, he broke away from Digital Underground and began a solo career. His solo debut, *2Pacalypse Now*, propelled him to stardom. He also began acting in films. Between rapping and acting, Tupac began a five year period of rapid success in the music business. After being shot on September 13, 1996, Tupac Shakur died. He was only twenty-five. He had often said he would die before he was thirty.

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Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. define all of the vocabulary words listed in the study guide.
2. identify the following literary terms, and point out examples of each in the text:
 - metaphor
 - simile
 - irony
 - allusion
 - imagery
 - juxtaposition
 - cliché
 - anaphora
 - parallelism
 - theme
 - tone
3. identify the following forms and elemental units of poetry, and point out examples of each:
 - foot
 - stanza
 - quatrain
 - couplet
 - tercet
 - free verse.
4. identify the following figures of sound and point out examples of each: half rhyme and end rhyme.
5. understand and explain the relationship of a poem's form to its content.
6. determine the value of poetry as a form of protest.
7. understand the value of poetry as a form of self-expression.
8. infer details not explicitly stated in the text.
9. identify a poem's rhyme scheme, and denote it in capital letters.

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Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Choose your favorite poem from the book, and discuss why it appeals to you. Use specific examples to support your opinion.
2. Compare and contrast the theme of love in the author's work. Does the author's viewpoint change or stay consistent? Explain.
3. Discuss the author's use of free verse and his changing of style in mid-poem. Does it distract the reader, or is it appropriate for his topics and style? Explain.
4. What topics are the author's most powerful poems about?
5. Analyze the author's use of anaphora in his work. Is it effective?
6. Which poem had the least impact on you and why?
7. Can you see a duality in the author's work? Compare poems in the book that show two distinctly separate aspects of the author's personality.
8. What conclusions can you draw about the author's treatment of the women in his life from his love poems?
9. Discuss the author's feelings about God. What is your perception of his relationship with God?
10. How does the author treat the subject of racism in his poetry? What style best describes his poems about racism?

The Rose That Grew From Concrete

“The Rose That Grew from Concrete Autobiographical” (Pg. 3)

1. Break down this poem by line. How can it be seen as a metaphor for the author’s life?

2. What line of the poem contains an internal rhyme?

3. The author uses an interesting pattern of measurement in this poem. Can you identify it?

“Only 4 the Righteous” (Pg. 19)

Vocabulary

cultivate – to develop or improve
cutting – similar definition to *scratch*
Down With – in agreement with
recreation – something done for relaxation or fun
retire – to give up one’s work
righteous – morally right
rubber – a condom
scratch – scratching records to produce sound
strictly – enforcing
“Word” – the truth (what Tupac Shakur believes in)

1. The dialect in this poem is distinctly different from the other poems in the book. What dialect is the author using?

2. Who is the author addressing in this poem?

3. What kind of writing techniques are being used?

“Black Woman 4 Marquita” (Pg. 45)

Vocabulary

attracted – captivated
possessing – having, owning

1. Why does Tupac think it will take strength to make his relationship with Marquita last?

2. What kind of strength does Marquita have?

3. What will he depend on her strength to do?

“Why Must U Be Unfaithful 4 Women” (Pg. 79)

Vocabulary

existence – the state of being
mortal – that which must eventually die; human
vain – having no real value; worthless
vows – solemn promises

1. Whose point of view is represented in this poem?

2. Although the subject matter is serious, the author has written it in an amusing way. What type of poem is this?

3. How might this poem be perceived if it had only been written to reflect a man’s point of view?

“For Mrs. Hawkins In Memory of Yusef Hawkins” (Pg. 107)

Vocabulary

offend – to insult

Panther – a member of the Black Panthers

plagued – tormented

racist – someone who racially discriminates

strong-willed – stubborn, resilient

1. What is the author trying to reassure Mrs. Hawkins of?

2. What main idea is the author upset about?

3. Is Tupac condemning all of white America?

“The Promise” (Pg. 139)

Vocabulary

Art – a specific skill
confiscate – to take from someone
corruption – an evil
governed – ruled
hypocrisy – dishonesty, deception
masters – people who excel at something
reason – the ability to think and draw conclusions

1. Based on the content of the poem and the poems in this section, who has made a promise, and what is it?

2. What human trait destroys liberty and justice?

3. What is the “Art” that the author believes the American government has mastered?

4. Why might trickery not succeed with those with “Honest Hearts”?
