

# It's A Journey

Saraiya Kanning

**Grade Level:** Elementary

**Time Frame:** 45 - 60 minutes

**Objective:** Students will draw inspiration from Nikki Giovanni's poem "A Journey" and write collaborative poems imagining themselves on a journey.

**Prior Knowledge and Skills:** Grade level reading and comprehension

**Required Materials:** Paper, pencil, and excerpt from "A Journey" poem by Nikki Giovanni (provided below)

## Literary Model:

Excerpts from "A Journey"  
Nikki Giovanni - 1943-

It's a journey . . . that I propose . . . I am not the guide . . . nor technical assistant . . . I will be your fellow passenger . . .

I am not afraid . . . of rough spots . . . or lonely times . . . I don't fear . . . the success of this endeavor . . . I am Ra . . . in a space . . . not to be discovered . . . but invented . . .

It's a journey . . . and I want . . . to go . . .

Full Poem: <https://poets.org/poem/journey>

## Sequence of Activities:

### 1. Welcome and Introduction (5 minutes)

Begin class with a conversation about journeys, adventures, and travels.

Questions for student sharing:

Who has been on an adventure or a journey? Where did you go?

What did you feel?

What did it feel like right before the journey?

What did it feel like when you got home?

The facilitator should prepare some pictures or a slideshow of places they'd like to travel and share with the students why they'd like to go there. Talk about food, wildlife,

landscapes, music, art, and more! Travel expands and stimulates our minds, and it introduces us to other people and other ways of doing things. The facilitator could also talk about a place they have already traveled and talk about what that journey was like.

Finally, ask students to name places they dream of one day visiting. These could be real life locations or fantastical/imaginative. Write their ideas in a long list on the board. Let each idea excite their imagination. Ask them questions about the places they name, why they chose it, what they dream of doing or seeing there (referring to the five senses can bring out a few concrete responses).

### *2. Literary Model and Discussion (10-15 minutes)*

Read the above excerpt from Nikki Giovanni's poem *A Journey*.

Ask students: How do you think the poet/speaker feels about the journey?

Possible responses: the speaker is not a guide, but instead a companion, the speaker is unafraid of being lonely, the speaker is excited or eager to go.

This should be a brief sharing. If they are particularly engaged or focused, you can extend the discussion by asking them if there are any words they don't know and proceed to discuss the meaning of those words using plenty of examples (putting those words in sentences).

### *3. Small Group Collaborative Writing (20-30 minutes)*

For this next activity, provide groups of 3-4 students with the below template as a handout. As a group, their job is to dream about traveling and to fill in the blanks of each phrase with words that describe their journey and their feelings about the journey. Emphasize that they should not fill in the blanks using Nikki Giovanni's own words. Instead, they should think of something completely different. This might be a challenge for some groups, so the facilitator should walk around and read their responses. Where needed, use questions to steer them down a different thought path from Giovanni's poem. In particular, students may want to fill the first blank with "We are not afraid." Remind them that in a later line we will write about not being afraid. In this first line, we should think of something unrelated to fear. It need not be an emotion. It could be something concrete (as you'll read in the examples below). If needed, share the below examples by reading them to the groups that need a little extra help.

The facilitator may also decide to help the class write one as a group first, as an example, before sending them off to work in smaller groups.

Template:

It's a journey...that we propose

We are not \_\_\_\_\_

We will be \_\_\_\_\_

We are not afraid of \_\_\_\_\_

We are \_\_\_\_\_

It's a journey...and we want \_\_\_\_\_

**STUDENT EXAMPLES:**

**Icemarie Higuero Alvarez and Jaime Gomez (2<sup>nd</sup> grade)**

*We Are Not Stopping*

It's a journey...that we propose  
We are not pandas  
We will be adventurers  
We are not afraid of pythons  
We are bluebirds looking down  
It's a journey...and we want  
to see a mountain cat  
and we want to go to the zoo

**Class Collaboration (2<sup>nd</sup> grade)**

*Traveling with Happiness*

It's a journey...that we propose  
We are not scared  
We are not doing wrong  
We will be children  
We will be superheroes, keeping everyone safe  
We are not afraid of zombies or ghosts  
We are brave  
We are monsters  
It's a journey...and we want...  
to play tag with the teacher and  
to fly

**Jordan Fierro Leon, Athena Nagore, Javier Ruelas Garcia (2<sup>nd</sup> grade)**

*Untitled*

It's a journey...that we propose  
We are not afraid of light.  
We will be heroes if we help a house if we don't have power.  
We are not afraid of whales or lions or sharks.  
We are not a dog or a cat.

**Ava Flowers and Lucia Espinoza (4<sup>th</sup> grade)**

*Volcano and Other Things*

It's a journey...that we propose  
We are weird like a banana.  
We will be powerful as a volcano.  
We are not afraid of volcanoes or butterflies.  
We are best friends for life.  
It's a journey...and we want

Food like ice cream.

**Ashly Rivera and Jaylanie Silva Gonzales (4<sup>th</sup> grade)**

*School and To Be Kind to Others*

It's a journey...that we propose

We are not liars because if we do lie we will get detention and we will get cooked like chicken.

We will be ready to learn about math, reading, science.

We are not afraid of lice and mean kids.

We are good people and we don't hurt back at people that hurt us even if you are mad.

It's a journey...and we want

friends, and we do not want

to be picked on at a place

like school.

#### *5. Sharing and Illustration (5 minutes)*

Invite students to read their group poems aloud or offer to read it out loud to the class for them if they prefer. If time allows, students can also illustrate their poems, using their imagination to depict their chosen place(s) of travel.

#### *6. Extension*

Let's meet Nikki Giovanni!

She's going to talk about heroes (start the clip from the beginning and end after she talks about heroes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Efhxc4iM4FY>

Let's hear another poem by Nikki Giovanni!

The Reason I like Chocolate

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nrWkTPn1N1w>

If time allows, you can leave space for open sharing, asking students to raise their hand or give a thumbs up if they'd like to share a thought about the poems they just heard, the words of Nikki Giovanni, or any other ideas that today's lesson has inspired in them.