

Rain Songs

Grade Level: 3rd

Time Frame: 45-60 minutes

Objective: Students will hear the poem “Rain” by Kazim Ali and reflect on their own experiences with rain. Students will use rain as inspiration to write chants celebrating rain.

Prior Knowledge and Skills: None

Required Materials: “Rain” by Kazim Ali

Sequence of Activities:

Rain Game Warm-up (10 min)

Begin the class with this simple game:

Ask students to stand in a circle. Start rubbing your hands together to make a light “wshhhh” sound. Explain that we are going to make a rainstorm together. As you walk around the inside of the circle, each student should copy you as you pass in front of them (and they should continue copying you after you pass). When you pass again, change to snapping fingers. Students should only change to snapping fingers as you pass them. On your third pass, change to loud clapping hands (and again they copy you as you pass them). On the fourth pass, get wild! Change to clapping hands and stomping feet (and again they copy as you pass them). The effect is a gradual sonic change from rubbing hands to stomping feet, a drizzle to a thunderstorm.

Don’t end there! Help the storm wind down by reversing the sounds as you pass four more times (from stomping to clapping to snapping to hand rubbing to absolute silence).

Ask students to sit quietly in a circle.

Read “Rain” (10 min)

Read “Rain” by Kazim Ali. Ask students to close their eyes and imagine each part of the poem. They can use silent hand motions whenever they hear the word “rain.” For example, they can wiggle their fingers like rain trickling down a window.

After the reading, ask students if they have their own experiences with rain. Have they ever been caught outside in the rain? Have they watched it from their bedroom window? Where were they and what was it like? Encourage use of the five senses (i.e. what did it smell like?). You can also ask them if rain makes them feel any particular way, or if rain puts them in a particular mood.

Write rain songs (20 min)

Explain that today we are going to write chants about the rain. (Note, some students might respond better to the prompt if they are asked to write a “song” instead of a chant. You can still stress the use of repeating phrases/words, like a chorus).

On a big piece of white paper write the main parts of a song/chant.

1. It will have **rhythm** and **repetition**.
2. It can use **sound words** (like *bloop, bloop, bloop*, or *whush, whush*).
3. It might also call for a specific **action** (like “put your hands in the air, put your nose in the air, open your eyes, open your mouth, spin in circles in the rain”).

Read and discuss the following student work as examples of chants:

Let Me Do Things I Never Done Before (Anaya, 6th grade)

Let me say stuff I want
Let me live
Let me see trees
Let me love people
Let me have doughnuts
Let me wish anything
Let me see the truth
Let me be happy
Let me, Let me
Let me

No Rhythm (Alex, 6th grade)

You ain't got no rhythm
No beat
You aint got no rhythm
No heart
You aint got no rhythm
No voice
You ain't got no rhythm
No Lambo
You ain't got no rhythm
No girl
You ain't got no rhythm
No mansion
You ain't got no rhythm
No money
You ain't got no rhythm

**Rain
(Alex, 3rd grade)**

White rain
Bloop, bloop, bloop
Dark rain
Bloop, bloop, bloop
Heavy rain

Bloop, bloop, bloop
Hot rain
Bloop, bloop, bloop
Ice rain
Bloop, bloop, bloop
No rain
Bloop, bloop, bloop
Thunder rain
Boom/boom/boom
Scary rain
Boom/boom/boom
Soft rain
Nice, nice, nice
Wind rain
Too cold, too cold, too cold

Sharing (10 min)

Invite students to read their chants out loud. Remind them to read with rhythm, which is done by vocally stressing repeated phrases. It will sound like a pulse in the words. You can also ask them to think of a heartbeat when reading with rhythm. The teacher should read one of the above student poems as an example.

Literary Model:

Rain

BY KAZIM ALI

With thick strokes of ink the sky fills with rain.
Pretending to run for cover but secretly praying for more rain.

Over the echo of the water, I hear a voice saying my name.
No one in the city moves under the quick sightless rain.

The pages of my notebook soak, then curl. I've written:
"Yogis opened their mouths for hours to drink the rain."

The sky is a bowl of dark water, rinsing your face.
The window trembles; liquid glass could shatter into rain.

I am a dark bowl, waiting to be filled.
If I open my mouth now, I could drown in the rain.

I hurry home as though someone is there waiting for me.
The night collapses into your skin. I am the rain.