



## CORNERSTONE 2016 RESOURCE

### Owning Our Narratives: Writing & Performance, *Specialty Track 3*

<b>AUTHOR:</b>	Caroline Rothstein
<b>SUMMARY:</b>	In session three of “Owning Our Narratives: Writing & Performance,” participants will learn the art of performance, learn performance techniques, and begin performing one’s own poetry and work. Additionally, this session will explore the notion of “Pesach,” and what it means to be at liberty to speak, and reconnect story ownership back to the first session of this specialty track. - <i>Submitted by Caroline Rothstein</i>
<b>TOPICS:</b>	Camp-wide/Large Group Programs, Communication Skills, Community Building, Global Jewish Community, Group Dynamics, Holidays and Celebrations, Identity, Inclusion- Special Needs, Jewish Culture, Jewish History, Jewish Text, Jewish Values, Leadership Development, Life Cycle Events, Outdoor Adventure, Performance, Prayer- Alternative, Shabbat, Social Justice, Storytelling, Team Building, Teen Programs, Theater, Young Children, Writing
<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVE:</b>	The goal of “Owning Our Narratives: Writing & Performance,” is to provide participants with the confidence, skillset, and ability to perform their own poetry in front of an audience, as well as learn how to teach their campers to do the same. An additional goal is to ensure participants feel equipped and prepared to bring spoken word poetry programming back to camps.
<b>AUDIENCE:</b>	This can be used for any size group, any age, and any camp role! Adjust the content accordingly!
<b>LENGTH:</b>	60-75 Minutes
<b>APPENDIXES:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- VIDEO LINKS FOR SESSION THREE - OWNING OUR NARRATIVES</li> <li>- Passover Text for Caroline to Read</li> <li>- Ways To Use Spoken Word Poetry at Camp! (HANDOUT)</li> </ul>
<b>MATERIALS:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ways To Use Spoken Word Poetry at Camp! (HANDOUT)</li> <li>• Performance space – microphone is not needed or necessary, but some delineation between what is the performance / stage space, and what is the audience space is helpful in teaching campers how to perform being on their natural voice</li> <li>• Text / material for campers to perform – ideal their own poetry!</li> </ul>

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	- Victoria Hanna links (in VIDEO LINKS) if wanted!
<b>SETTING:</b>	<p>This is the most mobile of my three sessions. I want there to be a stage set up where two things can happen: 1) a screen projector can play two videos (as mentioned in the step by step and materials requested), and 2) a microphone and mic stand set up so that there is a performance space. This should all be set up on a stage. The screen projector does not have to be in the same space where the microphone is set up. It's most important that the microphone is set up on the stage space, and then that the screen projector can be viewed by the participants watching comfortably. There is no need for chairs in this session. Participants can sit in a circle on the floor, and also, if this is at the theatre, as per discussed in January, there is naturally space for this to occur. 😊 Thank you! Let me know if you need any visual or verbal clarity on this!</p>

### Session Description:

- Welcome everyone back.
- Begin session.
- Caroline shares today's goal and agenda (3 minutes)
  - Goal: to explore the art of performance, learn performance techniques, and begin performing one's own poetry and work.
  - Agenda:
    - Opening exercise.
    - Discussion Pesach – what it means to speak.
    - Watch videos on performance and sound.
    - Discussion / debrief.
    - Performance workshop.
    - Performance sharing.
    - Bringing it back to camp.
    - Closing.
  - Reminder on ground rules – confidentiality / asking questions / “I” statements
- Ask each participant to answer: What are you grateful for today, and if you could perform anywhere in the world, where would it be? (5 minutes)
- Transition into discussion on Pesach (7 minutes):
  - Note the meaning of “Pesach” – “the mouth speaks” – writes on Post-Its for participants to visually see
    - Pesach is formed by Peh + Samech + Chet
    - Kabbilists say “pesach” can be read as two words: peh (mouth) + sach (speak) = the mouth speaks

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- Read excerpt from Rabbi Max Weiman's post on Aish.com:
        - “Conceptually, the ‘mouth speaking’ is what happens during the Seder when we retell the going out of Egypt. Haggadah means ‘speech.’ Kabbalah teaches that each month of the calendar has a strong link to a different human quality. This month, Nisan, is connected to the quality of speech. What is speech? It is bringing ideas into reality. From potential to actuality. Nisan is the month in which the world came into reality. It’s also the month when the Jewish people went from a nation in potential to actuality.”
- Notes: That’s what’s happening with poetry – bringing thoughts into reality – and then performing it takes it to the next level – making it of the body, not just from the body.
- Read excerpt from Rabbi HaLevi’s post on JewishBoston.com:
  - “Pesach is about facing life’s darkest moments and not allowing them to define us, imprison us, or enslave us. Pesach is about finding our mouth, our voice and learning how to truly speak.”
- Pesach is the festival of freedom, and the festival of speech – not only liberty, but the liberty of speech, as well.
- Ask participants to consider:
  - On Pesach we tell our own stories – can you compare that to the first session when we told other people’s stories?
  - Now consider – what’s the difference between telling your own story / telling someone else’s story?
  - What did we expose in the second session?
- Transition into watching Victoria Hanna videos (10 minutes)
  - Play Victoria Hanna’s “I sleep and my heart is awake” – watch the full video
  - Play Victoria Hanna’s “Hebrew Vowels Demonstration” – watch clips of the video (1:00 – 3:33; 7:38 – 9:28)
- Transition into discussion (8 minutes):
  - Ask participants:
    - What did you notice?
    - What did you take away?
- Transition into performance training activity (12 minutes):
  - Ask all participants to stand / move to their feet if they are able.
  - Describe the Kristin Linklater techniques – being on one’s “natural voice.”
  - Guide participants through vocal warm-ups and physical voice warm-ups:
    - Back / body roll.
    - Moving hips / being on floor.
    - Massaging face / jaw-opener.
    - Stretching the tongue.
    - Stretching the face.
  - Guide participants through vocal warm-ups:

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- “To sit in solemn silence.”
    - “You know you need unique New York.”
    - Sirens / “moving” the voice like the arc of a football.
- Transition into performance / sharing (25 minutes)
  - Each participant is invited to the microphone to share / perform an excerpt of their poem from session two.
  - Set ground rules to clap for everyone.
  - Make note that if this were an editing space, or a space where there was building for final performance and feedback time – a good rubric is: “I like, I notice, I wonder.”
- Transition into final discussion / debrief on taking these tools back to camp (15 minutes):
  - Ask participants: off the bat, how could you see using anything from the past three sessions at camp?
  - Provide participants with recommended ways to bring writing and performance skills, workshops, activities, and programs back to camp
  - Hand out “Ways To Use Spoken Word Poetry At Camp” hand out – walk everyone through it
  - Writing prompts:
    - Write a thank you note / love letter to something that scares you.
    - Write a thank you note / love letter to someone with whom you don’t normally hang out.
    - Imagine a world without violence or discrimination. Consider Tikkun Olam. Think about the cause / issue about which you most care: write about / describe this new, peaceful world.
    - It takes three legs to hold up a stool. What are the three tenants of your Jewish identity and faith? What a poem about your “Jewish identity” stool. The three things that hold you together and strong.
  - Performance activities:
    - Poetry slam (bunk, age-group, or camp-wide; staff-wide)
    - Open mic night
    - Writing workshop
    - Journaling / freewrites
    - Can use to commemorate an event
    - Can use to celebrate a festival / holiday
    - Can incorporate into Shabbat programming (without microphone wherever appropriate!)
  - Suggestions on how to be mindful of the difference between being vulnerable and oversharing / crossing a boundary when bringing these activities back to camp:
    - What are some of the things to deal with so as to have appropriate “ah ha” moments?



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- What happens when a camper reveals something in their writing/performance?
- How do you know when to share something with a camper, versus another staff member?
- Caroline shares example of her camp sister attending her poetry shows.
- When is it appropriate to speak/share, versus be mindful / not?
- Transition into closing exercise (5 minutes):
  - Ask each participant to share a brief sentence about their experience in this specialty track: both what they're taking away with them personally, and one thing they're taking with them professionally / back to camp.
  - Thank participants for being part of this track!

### **Additional Notes for Bringing it Back to Camp:**

The possibilities are endless in bringing spoken word poetry and performance activities back to camp. It's up to you as a counselor and staff member to decide how best to use this artform to serve your camp's desires and needs. There are ways to use spoken word poetry activities, workshops, and programming for any sized group of any age. The trick and key is catering the subject matter / content, to the context / framework at hand!

This specific session can be used as is to teach different sized and aged groups at camps how to bring their own poetry – or other play or performance texts – to life, as well as be a stepping-stone in building entire community-wide poetry performance events. The skills used in this specific session can also be useful in theater training for any camp performance or public speaking activities – i.e. a camper preparing to lead the camp in prayer during Shabbat, a camper preparing to make a speech for a special camp event, etc.

### **APPENDIXES:**

**- VIDEO LINKS FOR SESSION THREE - OWNING OUR NARRATIVES**

**- PASSOVER TEXT FOR CAROLINE TO READ**

**- WAYS TO USE SPOKEN WORD POETRY AT CAMP! (HANDOUT)**