

# Poetry & Sex Trafficking Lesson Plan

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**SUBJECT AREA(S)**

Poetry / Literature

**TIME**

50 – 60 minutes

**AUDIENCE**

Middle + High School Students

**OBJECTIVES**

- Critically think about the poem(s) and its story.
- Reflect on the author's ability to tell a story.
- Make conclusions about the story and the characters and their characteristics.
- Reflect on the emotions expressed by the author.

**PURPOSE**

- To explore the topic of sex trafficking through the voices of sex trafficking survivors.
- To the experiences and emotional reactions of sex trafficking victims.

**COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS***Anchor Standards for Reading*

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

*Anchor Standards for Writing*

3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

*Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening*

4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

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## **PART ONE: INTRODUCTION TO SEX TRAFFICKING**

As an introduction, ask the students to define domestic sex trafficking. Include the activities of each role: sex trafficker (pimp), sex buyer (john), and sex trafficking victim. Write their answers on the board under the three roles.

### **1. Explain the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (2000) to the class.**

**TVPA:** “The TVPA of 2000 is the cornerstone of Federal human trafficking legislation, and established several methods of prosecuting traffickers, preventing human trafficking, and protecting victims and survivors of trafficking. The act establishes human trafficking and related offenses as federal crimes, and attaches severe penalties to them. It also mandates restitution be paid to victims of human trafficking. It further works to prevent trafficking by establishing the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, which is required to publish a Trafficking In Persons (TIP) report each year. The TIP report describes and ranks the efforts of countries to combat human trafficking. The act also established the Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking, which assists in the implementation of the TVPA. The TVPA protects victims and survivors of human trafficking by establishing the T visa, which allows victims of human trafficking, and their families to become temporary U.S. residents and eligible to become permanent residents after three years.” (Source: <https://polarisproject.org/current-federal-laws>)

**TVPA Definition of Sex Trafficking:** a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, OR in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age.

- **NO ONE UNDER THE AGE OF 18** can sell their body, they are automatically a sex trafficking victim.
- Adults must prove that they were forced to exchange sex for something of value (money, drugs, place to stay, transportation, food, protection, etc.) through means of **FORCE, FRAUD, or COERCION**.
- **FORCE:** can include kidnapping, drugging, physical assault, assault with a weapon, sexual assault.
- **FRAUD:** can include tricking the victim into believe that the trafficker loves her/him; telling the victim s/he is going to be a model or a star, offering to provide basic needs without explaining the true intention or what is required in return.
- **COERCION:** (a) threats of serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; (b) any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform an act would result in serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; or (c) the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process (*Source: TVPA*).

### **2. Discuss the roles of the sex trafficker (pimp), sex buyer (john), and sex trafficking victim.**

Ask students if they are able to discuss what each role entails. Write their answers on the board under the three roles.

**Suggested language:**

**Sex trafficker or pimp:** This is the person that recruits victims, through love, force, or event by providing for their basic needs, like food or a place to stay. The sex trafficker or pimp links the sex trafficking victim to sex buyers. This person controls the behavior of the victim and collects the money made from exchanging sex by the victim. Sex traffickers can be extremely violent and will resist the victim's attempt to leave by any means. A sex trafficker can be any gender and can be a mother, friend, boyfriend, or anyone.

**Sex buyers:** These are most often men who shop for prostituted persons on the street, in strip clubs, in massage parlors, through escort services, and online.

**Sex trafficking victims:** Victims can be male, female, transgender and of any race and sexual orientation, and of any age – including under the age of 18. They are often lured or romanced into sex trafficking by an older person through promises of money, success/fame, a future together, or through threats of exposure (to parents/friends/school/church).

**3. Review the warning signs of a sex trafficking situation.**

- S/he's dating an older guy (he might give you the creeps)
- S/he's super secretive about him
- He buys her/him lots of expensive presents
- He made her/him get a weird tattoo
- S/he has lots of unexplained cash
- S/he shops for clothes and stuff you know s/he cannot afford
- S/he has a second cell phone
- You find hotel room keys in her purse
- S/he has cuts and bruises
- S/he has a fake ID
- S/he has been really depressed, nervous, tense or afraid
- S/he misses a lot of school or dropped out of school
- Grades have dropped out of the blue
- S/he runs away a lot and avoids her/his family and friends
- You never know when s/he's telling the truth
- S/he started drinking or doing drugs
- You feel like s/he is brainwashed

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**PART TWO: POEMS**

**STREET CORNER** *by Jessie Gray*

I stand on the street corner,  
Cold and alone.  
Waiting and watching,  
Knowing what's going to happen soon.  
A man pulls up to me,  
Showing me a 50-dollar bill.  
I get in his car,  
Feeling my heart sink low.  
While I am doing the deed,  
I'm crying inside.  
"Help me Lord, I need to get away!",  
But, all I hear is silence.  
We finish the deed,  
I get the money.  
The man dumps me at the street corner,  
And I wait for another car.  
Taking more of my innocence,  
Taking more of my life.

My pimp picks me up hours later,  
Driving me to hell once again.  
Not pleased at the money I got,  
He hits me,  
He pulls my hair,  
Ordering me to earn more or else.  
As I lay in my room,  
Tears fall on my pillow.  
Wishing I could get away,  
Wishing I could be free,  
And not have to face the street corner tomorrow.



**THE TRINITY OF TRAFFICKING** *by Alex Little***VICTIM**

I stand alone.  
I stand unheard, unnoticed.  
I am on my own.  
And the world cannot see.  
Confined to space and time am I  
And I cannot try  
Cannot try to escape the damning high  
The high they get from hurting me.  
The hue of my skin was no matter to them  
Nor was my age  
Nor was my rage  
The rage from liberty taken from me.  
I cry at night  
I cry in spite  
Cry out for them to set me free.  
But alas no one hears  
My cries fall silent on society's deaf ears  
But you, can you hear me?  
The victim which you cannot see.

**CAPTOR**

I sit on a throne.  
I sit haughty, mighty.  
And I, I own  
A thing that serves only me.  
The thing is mine  
Chained by my commands  
Wounded by my hands  
But silent as can be.  
I have no crime  
No crime assigned  
To me in some registry  
I, they don't find  
I bide my time.  
I run scott free.  
And do I care  
do I dare  
Dare feel guilt in me?  
I don't dare.  
I don't care.  
It's just a thing to me.

**OBSERVER**

I run confused  
I run back and forth  
Between what can and cannot be  
Slaves you say  
Slaves today  
Today in our country?  
It cannot be.  
But you say it is and now I see  
I see that cruelty still lurks round me,  
Round the world  
We cannot let it be.

**THE TRINITY**

We are together  
We are coexisting constantly  
We the three, a broken trinity

**A VICTIM OR SURVIVOR** *by twashington17*

She's broken she's shattered but her classmates don't see her pain.

No one one knows the horrors she has faced.

Broken, abused, and discarded like trash... Yet she smiles with so much life.

16 and she's been through so much.

An all american girl exposed to a world of lies and deceite

Human Trafficking the news cries but they dont say its so close to home

Your neighbor your child they could be next

Being sold at night and smiling through the rest

Save me save me is all she ever cried

but shes saved and now she cant function

16 in high school living the life of a 22 year old prostitute

you know her name but you dont know her shame

**POWERPOETRY.ORG/POEMS/VICTIM-OR-SURVIVOR**

**ENSLAVED** by *mnorma2100*

Location

Daddy left me – I didn't know what a man's love was supposed to look like.

His words were warmth to my cold heart

They picked me up and carried me away from loneliness.

"Trust me."

"I will never leave you."

"I will never hurt you."

Snap! I was caught in his snare.  
He gutted my innocence  
I was meat on the market for anyone with an appetite.

"Obey me."

"You can never leave me."

"I will kill you."

I'm kept with the herd – naked. hungry. hurting.  
I go to the slaughter every night  
Butchered over and over and over.

"You are nothing."

"You are dirty."

"You can never leave."

I don't know what high school is.  
I don't know what friendship is.  
I don't know what true love is.  
I do know what sex is.  
I do know what drugs are.  
I do know what pain is.  
That's all I know.

I can't cry out for help.  
Will you be my voice?

**POWERPOETRY.ORG/POEMS/ENSLAVED-2**

**Free** by *Brooke Myers*

i've been sold.  
traded for.  
sold again.  
and traded for.  
here in this  
scary  
dark  
grey room  
im tied to a musty  
dirty bed.  
he'll come in soon.  
to torture me.  
take the little bit of innocence i have left.  
i'll scream and cry.  
then i'll go silent  
listening to him twisting my insides around.  
listening to my bones shatter into little fragments of grain.  
trying to hear the heart beat of my broken heart.  
just one beat.  
thats all i need to keep me alive.  
it hurts.  
i thought i was in love with him.  
but he just broke me.  
sold me.  
and used me.  
thats all i'll ever be.  
trash.  
used.  
a display that they'll break over and over again  
one day..  
i'll break for good.  
be too shattered they wont be able to use me.

then i'll take short breaths.  
whisper my goodbyes.  
say goodbye to all my nightmares.  
i'll say good bye with a smile on my face  
i wont have to live like this anymore.  
im waiting for that day.  
where i can rest  
not having to go out on the streets  
waiting for men to pick me up and torture me.  
i'll be able to breathe  
be free.  
i'll be able to see the real me.  
i'll be happy.

**[Hellopoetry.com/words/29230/trafficking/poems](https://www.hellopoetry.com/words/29230/trafficking/poems)**

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## **PART 3: DISCUSSION/GROUP ACTIVITIES**

### **Activity One:**

Distribute the poem(s) – which includes Street Corner by Jessie Grey, The Trinity of Trafficking by Alex Little, A Victim or Survivor by TWashington17, Enslaved by Mnorma2100, and Free by Brooke Myers.

1. Have the class (or divided into groups) answer the following questions:
2. How were the roles within sex trafficking described by the author in the poem?
3. What were the characters?
4. What were the characteristics of the characters?
5. Can you identify the emotions of the author?
6. What is the meaning of the poem?
7. What voice is the poem written in?
8. How does this poem fit into what you think about domestic sex trafficking?
9. How have your definitions of the roles in sex trafficking changed after reading this poem?

If divided into groups, have one person from each group stand and read the poem and summarize their answers to questions one through eight.

### **Activity Two:**

To explore the power of the sex trafficking victims, distribute the five poem(s) – Street Corner by Jessie Grey, The Trinity of Trafficking by Alex Little, A Victim or Survivor by TWashington17, Enslaved by Mnorma2100, and Free by Brooke Myers.

Have a student read one of the poems to the class and have the class discuss the following questions:

1. What were the sex trafficking victim's choices as described in the poem?
2. Why didn't they just leave the situation?
3. What were some of the 'push factors,' things that make the victim vulnerable to the sex trafficker?
4. What are some words to describe the author's feelings about being trapped in the sex trafficking situation?
5. Why doesn't society see the victim as she is described in this poem?

### **Activity Three:**

After the class discussion about the roles within sex trafficking, put the students into three groups: sex traffickers (pimps), sex buyers and sex trafficking victims. Have each student write a short poem from the viewpoint of the group they were assigned. Have them get into groups of three with one from each group and read their poem out loud in their small group. The three poems then become a trilogy and can be read out loud to the class in sequence.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Submit the poems written by the students in this lesson to the school newspaper.