

# Sing Out Fair Trade



**Goal:** To use your own voice express what you have learned regarding Fair Trade.

**Activity Length:** 50 minutes to read and write poetry.

**Materials:** Copy of Elizabeth Alexander’s poem, “Praise Song for the Day,” paper, and pencils.

## **Directions:**

1. Read the following poem, written by Elizabeth Alexander and delivered at President Barak Obama’s inaugural address.
2. As you read, circle any words that relate to sound, voice, or words throughout the poem. What is the purpose of this imagery throughout the poem? What does this imagery suggest about the power of words?
3. In the second to last stanza, Alexander argues, “In today’s sharp sparkle, this winter air, / any thing can be made, any sentence begun.” Now, it is your turn to create the words that will touch future generations. Now, it is your turn to have your voice heard and your concerns expressed. Be inspired by what you have learned about Fair Trade, and write your own poem. Be a voice for the 21<sup>st</sup> century!
4. As a class, read and edit each other’s work.
5. Hold a Poetry Slam as a fundraiser at your school. Create invitations, posters, and flyers. Invite parents, teachers, and friends to listen to the Fair Trade poetry of your class. You may even want to serve Fair Trade products to your guests!

## **Some Things to Consider:**

### **Explore Different Types of Poetry:**

- Write a traditional, rhyming poem such as a sonnet.
- Write a free verse poem, with lines varying in both length and sound.
- Write a three-lined poem, with the first line having 5 syllables, the second line having 7 syllables, and the last line having 5 syllables, called a haiku.

### **Explore Different Points of View:**

- Write the poem from the perspective of a farmer trying to support his/her family.
- Write the poem from the perspective of a child who cannot attend school because s/he must work in the fields to help support her/his family.
- Write the poem from the perspective of a farmer who has recently joined a Fair Trade community.
- Write the poem from the perspective of someone who uses Fair Trade products.

- Write the poem from the perspective of the land being used to yield different crops.



## **Praise Song for the Day**

Elizabeth Alexander

Each day we go about our business,  
walking past each other, catching each other's  
eyes or not, about to speak or speaking.

All about us is noise. All about us is  
noise and bramble, thorn and din, each  
one of our ancestors on our tongues.

Someone is stitching up a hem, darning  
a hole in a uniform, patching a tire,  
repairing the things in need of repair.

Someone is trying to make music somewhere,  
with a pair of wooden spoons on an oil drum,  
with cello, boom box, harmonica, voice.

A woman and her son wait for the bus.  
A farmer considers the changing sky.  
A teacher says, *Take out your pencils. Begin.*

We encounter each other in words, words  
spiny or smooth, whispered or declaimed,  
words to consider, reconsider.

We cross dirt roads and highways that mark  
the will of some one and then others who said  
I need to see what's on the other side.

I know there's something better down the road.  
We need to find a place where we are safe.  
We walk into that which we cannot yet see.

Say it plain: that many have died for this day.  
Sing the names of the dead who brought us here,  
who laid the train tracks, raised the bridges,

picked the cotton and the lettuce, built  
brick by brick the glittering edifices  
they would then keep clean and work inside of.



Praise song for struggle, praise song for the day.  
Praise song for every hand-lettered sign,  
the figuring-it-out at kitchen tables.

Some live by *Love thy neighbor as thy self*,  
others by *first do no harm* or *take no more*  
*than you need*. What if the mightiest word is love?

Love beyond marital, filial, national,  
love that casts a widening pool of light,  
love with no need to pre-empt grievance.

In today's sharp sparkle, this winter air,  
any thing can be made, any sentence begun.  
On the brink, on the brim, on the cusp,

praise song for walking forward in that light.

Poem posted at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/20/us/politics/20text-poem.html>