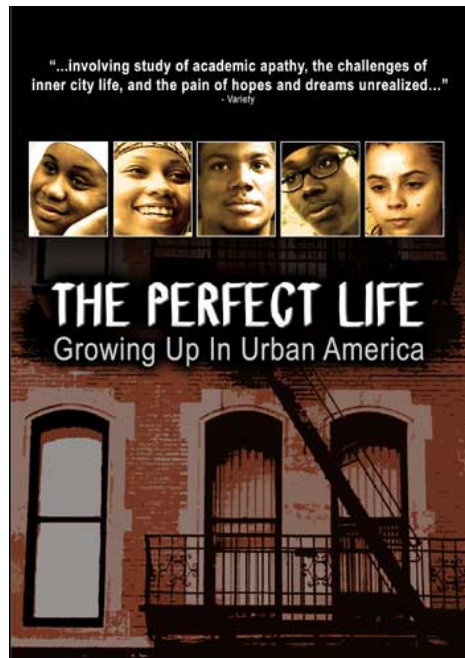




# THE PERFECT LIFE

Growing Up in Urban America

Lesson Plan/Guidebook



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# Lesson Plan

## Lesson#1: Using Poetry for Self Expression

**Materials Needed:** Paper, Pen/Pencil, *The Perfect Life* DVD

**Time to Complete:** 30-40 minutes for activity; 1-2 days for discussion

In the film, *The Perfect Life*, Lauren uses her poetry to express her feelings and thoughts about her daily life. In this activity, students will have the opportunity to use poetry to discuss obstacles and achievements in their own lives.

Step 1: Watch the sections of the film where Lauren performs her poetry. After the viewing, discuss with your students their thoughts on Lauren's poetry and how she used it to discuss her life. Ask if they think having a creative outlet is helpful in dealing with difficult situations.

Step 2: Have students write a personal poem. Format and length are open to each student. Students can even create a rap or spoken word version if they wish to perform it.

Step 3: Once completed, ask each student to refine the poem. Stress the importance of re-writing as a critical part of the writing process.

Step 4: Ask students to recite or perform their poem in front of the class. After this, discuss what they did or didn't like about the creative process.

### National Standards Correlations

#### **NL-ENG.K.12.4 – Communication Skills**

Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

#### **NL-ENG.K.12.5 – Communication Strategies**

Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

#### **NL-ENG.K.12.11 – Participating in Society**

Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

#### **NL-ENG.K.12.12 – Applying Language Skills**

Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

**Source – National Council of Teachers of English**

## **Lesson#2: Life Lessons – Essay**

**Materials Needed: Paper, Pen/Pencil, *The Perfect Life* DVD**

**Time to Complete: 30-40 minutes for discussion; 3-4 days for activity.**

Using the film *The Perfect Life* as a starting point, have your students write a 1 to 2 page essay discussing an obstacle in their life they have overcome.

Students must reference one of the students profiled in the film. Essay must offer supporting or contrasting examples from the film. Students should use examples from their own life.

1. Review the qualities of essay writing (a formal expression of your ideas) with students. Point out that an essay can persuade, inform, or express feelings to an audience.
  
2. Lead a discussion about the key elements in essay writing. Explain that an essay needs to have an introduction, body, and conclusion. An effective introduction provides a thesis statement that clearly expresses the main point of the essay. It also orients readers to content, perspective, and tone. The body of the essay should include all of the specific details and examples that will support the thesis statement. The conclusion should concisely summarize the main theme of the essay and reinforce your ideas.
  
3. Students will then write the essay. Give them 3-4 days to complete.
  
4. After completing the assignment, have students share with the class about what they learned. Ask the following:
  - What life lessons did they learn from the students portrayed in the film?
  - What would they have done differently if confronted with the same issues/obstacles?
  - Who has the ultimate responsibility in achieving success in one's life? The student? Their parents/guardians? Their teachers? Others in the community?

### **National Standards Correlations**

#### **NL-ENG.K.12.4 – Communication Skills**

Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

#### **NL-ENG.K.12.5 – Communication Strategies**

Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

**NL-ENG.K.12.11 – Participating in Society**

Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

**NL-ENG.K.12.12 – Applying Language Skills**

Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

**Source – National Council of Teachers of English**

# The Perfect Life - Discussion Guide

1. The film follows several kids and their journey into adulthood. Throughout the film, the kids are exposed to different kinds of educational programs whether it is public, private, non-profit and experimental. Some of the kids benefited while others did not. What role did “education” play in the lives of the kids portrayed? Did social factors play a larger role in the outcome? Are educational systems accountable for a child’s life outside the classroom?
2. Emotional issues play a key role in how the kids are able to manage their personal lives. Natkhia states that she needs “support” in order to help her deal with her anger management issues and inability to stay in school. What role should the education system play in providing emotional support for students like Natkhia? What other resources are available for students to access if parental or guardian support is not there? Discuss resources in your community that are available for students to access.
3. Urban environments bring additional pressures to at-risk youth. Many of the kids profiled in the film discussed that life for them was easier once they moved away from Harlem. What responsibility, if any, do city governments and urban planners have in providing opportunities and activities for students to help them achieve their goals? Do state governments share in this responsibility? What about on the national level?
4. Although many of the students in the film expressed the need for parental/guardian support, what role does individual determination play in overcoming obstacles to achieve goals? Can an individual truly succeed on their own? Where does one learn these life skills if no one or no group is there to teach them? Discuss the issue of individual determinism versus group support and the pros and cons of each.
5. Although he did not go to college, Troy did start work in construction and began taking carpentry classes. Learning trade skills that lead to profitable careers is a different path than the traditional college model. Should high schools, especially those in inner cities, promote such trades (carpentry, welding, etc.) to those students for which college may not be an immediate option? Discuss the pros and cons.
6. Discuss the impact the Children’s Storefront had on the kids in the film? How would you measure the success of such programs? Should traditional educational systems employ more of the methods that such outside programs use? Discuss the pros and cons.
7. At the end of the film, Lauren graduated from high school and began attending college, the only one of the five kids profiled to do so. Why did Lauren succeed? Discuss the advantages and disadvantages Lauren had in her journey. Would Lauren have succeeded even if she had not moved to Oklahoma? What parts of Lauren’s story can other students use in their own lives to help them succeed?
8. Ask students which one of the kids profiled in the film that they most relate to. Why? Ask them to discuss their own personal stories and any obstacles they have encountered. Have students create an action plan with specific steps to reach their own personal goals.