

# Coy Mistress Rap Battle

For this lesson plan to be successful you must believe that a rap battle is really just a different way of structuring a debate.

## **Process:**

1. Give students a copy of the Andrew Marvell poem, "To His Coy Mistress" (appendix A) and have them annotate in the margins. (see appendix C for sample student annotation)
2. Students then answer the questions in coaching groups before moving to a whole class seminar discussing the poem
3. Give students a copy of the Annie Finch response poem, "Coy Mistress" (appendix B) and have them annotate in the margins.
4. Students then answer the questions in coaching groups before moving to a whole class seminar discussing the poem.
5. Divide students into groups to restructure the poems into a point/counterpoint format.  
In my class the students divided into two groups:
  - Group One used the original poems and played with the arrangement
  - Group Two created "updated" versions of each poem and then arranged them into a battle format (appendix D)
6. I had my students film and edit their battles so that we could have a more polished final result. You may choose to save time and have students perform their battles in class in order to gain more public speaking experience.

## **Tips for students from WikiHow:**

- When in a rap battle, you want to make sure that your verse includes three major things:
  - Similes - Making comparisons with your opponent to something that insults them. Try to link it with something going on in the world at the moment that everyone has heard of.
  - Disses - You want to diss your opponent on broad topics (how they dress, speak, spit, look, walk, talk, and act) as well as personality (their past, their lifestyle, and other personal weaknesses).
  - Humor - Make the crowd and judges and even your opponent laugh. Sometimes that will win the battle for you.
- Battle raps are made up of two parts: a set up and a punch line. The set up is a line that is an opener or rhyme line that your punch-line (where the insult is) will follow. A Punch-Line is basically a line that incorporates a Metaphor, Diss, and/or anything else to enhance the flow directed at your opponent.

*To his Coy Mistress*

by Andrew Marvell

Had we but world enough, and time,  
This coyness, lady, were no crime.  
We would sit down and think which way  
To walk, and pass our long love's day;  
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side  
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide  
Of Humber would complain. I would  
Love you ten years before the Flood;  
And you should, if you please, refuse  
Till the conversion of the Jews.  
My vegetable love should grow  
Vaster than empires, and more slow.  
An hundred years should go to praise  
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;  
Two hundred to adore each breast,  
But thirty thousand to the rest;  
An age at least to every part,  
And the last age should show your heart.  
For, lady, you deserve this state,  
Nor would I love at lower rate.

But at my back I always hear  
Time's winged chariot hurrying near;  
And yonder all before us lie  
Deserts of vast eternity.  
Thy beauty shall no more be found,  
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound  
My echoing song; then worms shall try  
That long preserv'd virginity,  
And your quaint honour turn to dust,  
And into ashes all my lust.  
The grave's a fine and private place,  
But none I think do there embrace.

Now therefore, while the youthful hue  
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,  
And while thy willing soul transpires  
At every pore with instant fires,  
Now let us sport us while we may;  
And now, like am'rous birds of prey,  
Rather at once our time devour,  
Than languish in his slow-chapp'd power.  
Let us roll all our strength, and all  
Our sweetness, up into one ball;  
And tear our pleasures with rough strife  
Thorough the iron gates of life.  
Thus, though we cannot make our sun  
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

### **Questions for Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress"**

1. What is the argument being made in this poem? To whom is the speaker making this argument?
2. Trace the movement of the argument: What points are being made in each stanza?
3. What does the speaker mean by the lines: "the grave's a fine and private place, / but none, I think, do there embrace"? How do these lines contrast with lines 41-42?
4. Examine the language of third stanza: In line 37, what does the speaker mean by "let us sport us while we may" and how does he go on to describe this "sporting"?

## **Coy Mistress**

by Annie Finch

Sir, I am not a bird of prey:  
a Lady does not seize the day.  
I trust that brief Time will unfold  
our youth, before he makes us old.  
How could we two write lines of rhyme  
were we not fond of numbered Time  
and grateful to the vast and sweet  
trials his days will make us meet:  
The Grave's not just the body's curse;  
no skeleton can pen a verse!  
So while this numbered World we see,  
let's sweeten Time with poetry,  
and Time, in turn, may sweeten Love  
and give us time our love to prove.  
You've praised my eyes, forehead, breast:  
you've all our lives to praise the rest.

### **Questions for Annie Finch's "Coy Mistress"**

1. What is the argument being made in this poem? To whom is the speaker making this argument?
2. Trace the movement of the argument: What points are being made?
3. How effective is this as a response to Marvell's poem?

**To his Coy Mistress**  
by Andrew Marvell

sure  
not coyrest  
ears, but is  
repeated word

use of  
abundant in  
poem

aabbcc rhyme scheme

Syntax - each preceding stanza gets a little smaller

Had we but world enough, and time,  
This coyness, lady, were no crime.  
We would sit down and think which way  
To walk, and pass our long love's day;  
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side  
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide  
Of Humber would complain. I would  
Love you ten years before the Flood;  
And you should, if you please, refuse  
Till the conversion of the Jews.  
My vegetable love should grow  
Vaster than empires, and more slow.  
An hundred years should go to praise  
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;  
Two hundred to adore each breast,  
But thirty thousand to the rest;  
An age at least to every part,  
And the last age should show your heart.  
For, lady, you deserve this state,  
Nor would I love at lower rate.

metaphor comparing love  
vegetables and empires

Syntax very complex, extended, run-on sentences, but  
it is poetry and not traditional prose

But at my back I always hear  
Time's winged chariot hurrying near;  
And yonder all before us lie  
Deserts of vast eternity.  
Thy beauty shall no more be found,  
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound  
My echoing song; then worms shall try  
That long preserv'd virginity,  
And your quaint honour turn to dust,  
And into ashes all my lust.  
The grave's a fine and private place,  
But none I think do there embrace.

metaphor comparing time to a chariot, also time  
is personified as it is capitalized and shows  
possession

creates  
image of  
huge desert  
not cause  
sadness and  
it'll last until  
the end of  
the world

Details - author says his lust will be satisfied, while  
what seems like a woman of Royalty will  
lose her honor, makes me think woman is  
important person and the author is just  
a common man

Now therefore, while the youthful hue  
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,  
And while thy willing soul transpires  
At every pore with instant fires,  
Now let us sport us while we may;  
And now, like am'rous birds of prey,  
Rather at once our time devour,  
Than languish in his slow-chapp'd power.

simile  
comparing  
youthful hue  
to "morning dew"



rewrite of Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress"

Rewrite,

'Scuze me, buddy,  
check your privilege, see:  
Time ticks onward  
and so do we.  
You're slammin' on an element  
that we can't live without;  
I'm not about to live a life  
you're fillin' up with doubt.  
If you waste that tick-tick-tick  
you'll lose this body too:  
I ain't that kind of kinky  
and I ain't no paltry foo'.  
You're some kind of moron  
if you think you ain't harrassin'.  
If you can't prove your worth,  
I ain't got time for all yo' sassin'!  
I know you like this body,  
but babe, it ain't for sale.  
I've heard all that you've got to say  
and my answer is: FAIL.