The Four P’s of Performance

1. Project
Have students use voice from the diaphragm to make their voices louder and richer. Practice “throwing the voice” across a classroom or theater.

2. Plant
Feet should be shoulder width apart and firmly planted on the ground, facing forward.

3. Purpose
Every movement or gesture should be done with purpose before returning to planted stance.

4. Personalize
Allow your personality to be present. Many people adopt a mechanic drone. Practice reading out loud to discover your true voice.
Group Poem Performance

Step 1: Pick a Poem
Pick a poem that suits you and your students. Relatively short poems are ideal for the first poems to ensure success with a group poem. Choose a poem that lends itself to action and emotion. Begin by using “The Truth” by Ted Joans, as a poet’s pledge. It is as follows:

"The Truth" by Ted Joans
If you should see a man
walking down a crowded street
talking out loud to himself
don’t run in the opposite direction
but, run towards him
for he is a poet
you have nothing to fear
from the poet
but the truth.

Step 2: Memorize Lines
Teach the poem, line by line, through call and response and gestures until the class has the whole poem memorized. Consider the emotion/mood with the line to create a corresponding gesture. When it is the students’ first time memorizing a group poem, the gestures and emotion may be pre-determined by the teacher (see below) so that the four P’s of performance are being applied and modeled for the students.

Emotion: Conviction

“The Truth” by Ted Joans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lines</th>
<th>Gestures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you should see a man</td>
<td>Salute by placing your right hand over eye.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walking down a crowded street</td>
<td>Simulate walking by pumping arms (4 times).</td>
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<tr>
<td>talking out loud to himself</td>
<td>Raise your hands to the sky (4 times).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don’t run in the opposite direction</td>
<td>Have students pivot to the left (pump arms).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>but, run towards him</td>
<td>Have students pivot to the right (pump arms).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for he</td>
<td>Let arms down in front fanned out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is a poet</td>
<td>Put your right hand over your heart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you have nothing to fear</td>
<td>Let arms cross down in front.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from the poet</td>
<td>Place your right hand over your heart again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>but the truth.</td>
<td>Put your right hand in the air.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 3: Rehearse and Practice
Make sure to practice the poem regularly, if not daily. To begin, practice one line, and then build the poem, adding one line at a time. Then do multiple repetitions of the whole poem. Group memorization increases class morale and reinforces the class acting as one unit.
Step 4: Pick a New Poem and Begin Again
Below are some additional poetry selections for Group Poem Performances. Now the students are ready to help with the gestures for the lines.

“Nerds Rule” by Glenis Redmond
I’m a word nerd.
I’m a book geek.
I’m a reading freak.
One day the universe will be mine,
understanding MC2 like Einstein.
Do you want to be large and in charge?
Then get yourself a library card.

“Winter Trees” by William Carlos Williams
All the complicated details
of the attiring and
the disattiring are completed!
A liquid moon
moves gently among
the long branches.
Thus having prepared their buds
against a sure winter
the wise trees
stand sleeping in the cold.

“Dew” by Kay Ryan
As neatly as peas
in their green canoe,
as discretely as beads
strung in a row,
sit drops of dew
along a blade of grass.
But unattached and
subject to their weight,
they slip if they accumulate.
Down the green tongue
out of the morning sun
into the general damp,
they’re gone.

“The Bridge” by Kaissar Afif
Poetry is a river
And solitude a bridge.
Through writing
We cross it,
Through reading
We return.
“Daybreak in Alabama” by Langston Hughes
When I get to be a composer
I’m gonna write me some music about
Daybreak in Alabama
And I’m gonna put the purtiest songs in it
Rising out of the ground like a swamp mist
And falling out of heaven like soft dew.
I’m gonna put some tall tall trees in it
And the scent of pine needles
And the smell of red clay after rain
And long red necks
And poppy colored faces
And big brown arms
And the field daisy eyes
Of black and white black white black people
And I’m gonna put white hands
And black hands and brown and yellow hands
And red clay earth hands in it
Touching everybody with kind fingers
And touching each other natural as dew
In that dawn of music when I
Get to be a composer
And write about daybreak
In Alabama.

“Hope” by Emily Dickinson
Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune--without the words,
And never stops at all,
And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chilliest land,
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.

“Expectation” by Fouzi El-Asmar
The well shall not
dry up
The river shall not
stop running
so long as we are clouds
and our hopes are drops of rain.
Haikus to Perform

Over the wintry
forest, winds howl in rage
with no leaves to blow.
~ Natsume Soseki

from the long hallways
voices of the people rise
in the morning haze
~ Oshima Ryota

An old silent pond...
A frog jumps into the pond,
splash! Silence again.
~ Matsuo Basho

The crow has flown away:
swaying in the evening sun,
a leafless tree.
~ Natsume Soseki

“Four Haiku” by Matsuo Basho
Spring:
A hill without a name
Veiled in morning mist.

The beginning of autumn:
Sea and emerald paddy
Both the same green.

The winds of autumn
Blow: yet still green
The chestnut husks.

A flash of lightning:
Into the gloom
Goes the heron’s cry.