

Spoken Poetry

The poem you are about to hear is a form of spoken poetry. Spoken poetry is a broad term for poetry intended for performance. Although it can also be published on a page, the genre has its roots in oral traditions and performance. Spoken word can encompass or contain elements of rap, hip-hop, storytelling, theatre, and jazz, rock, blues, and folk music. Characterized by rhyme, repetition, improvisation, and word play, spoken word poems frequently refer to issues of social justice, politics, race, and community.

Listen to the following poem and then annotate:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0I11xCfnzXs>

Hair – Elizabeth Acevedo

My mother tells me to fix my hair.

And by "fix," she means straighten. She means whiten.

But how do you fix this ship-wrecked history of hair?

The true meaning of stranded, when trusses held tight like African cousins in ship bellies, did they imagine that their great-grand-children would look like us, and would hate them how we do? Trying to find ways to erase them out of our skin, iron them out of our hair, this wild tangle of hair that strangles air.

You call them wild curls. I call them breathing. Ancestors spiralling.

Can't you see them in this wet hair that waves like hello?

They say Dominicans do the best hair.

I mean they wash, set, flatten the spring in any lock – but what they mean is we're the best at swallowing amnesia, in a cup of morisoñando, die dreaming because we'd rather do that than live in this reality, caught between orange juice and milk, between reflections of the sun and whiteness.

What they mean is, "Why would you date a black man?" What they mean is, "a prieto cocolo" What they mean is, "Why would two oppressed people come together? It's two times the trouble."

What they really mean is, "Have you thought of your daughter's hair?"

And I don't tell them that we love like sugar cane, brown skin, pale flesh, meshed in pure sweetness. The children of children of fields. Our bodies curve into one another like an echo, and I let my curtain of curls blanket us from the world, how our children will be beautiful. Of dust skin, and diamond eyes. Hair, a reclamation.

How I will break pride down their back so from the moment they leave the womb they will be born in love with themselves.

My mother tells me to fix my hair, and so many words remain unspoken.

Because all I can reply is, "You can't fix what was never broken."

annoyed
sarcasm

repetition

ancestor, history should be treasured

trapped
saezura
enjambment
stranded.

simile
close relationship
betray history
of this slaves-
sorrow-tired
reality

sick and tired
of reality
white people

describing the
black as
oppressed

2 black
people
come
together
and cause
'trouble'

should

perfection
from the
beginning

be no
insecurities

crazy

natural
normal

forget abt the
hateful

2 tones of
skin colours

sweet
next generation

blutty
dark skin is beauty

the moment
they born there

change for others

high
ranked

should

Choose three words that she draws attention to, why do you think she does this? Say three things about that word.

Fix

- frustrated
- wrong with history
- beyond broken

breathing

- beautiful / calming
- secure in there looks
- natural / free

hair

- history
- memories
- love / affection

What tone does the writer use?
upset
frustrated