

Intended for Grades: 6-8 **Estimated Time:** 30-45 min. **Date:** January 28, 2025

Lesson Title: POWER OF THE WORD

Lesson Purpose ~ Students will:

- Understand Hawaiian thinking about the power of words
- Consider how this 'Ōlelo No'eau (historical saying) can help people think & speak *pono* thoughts

Materials & Preparation:

- Chart Paper and pens
- *The Power of Words-Olelo No'eau-Blanche Pope Students video (5:52 min)* Find it at: <https://vimeo.com/17873811>

Background Information:

In ancient Hawai'i, the people had no written records other than petroglyphs. To keep track of vital knowledge (like births, deaths, important places and events) the information had to be memorized and passed on, usually in the form of a chant. The word itself was a force, so careful consideration was needed when crafting an *oli* (chant) about someone or something. These chants were memorized with great care, as accuracy was critical.

Hawaiians believe there is great *mana*, or spiritual power, in words. A thought put into words was virtually a thought put into action. It was believed that words could kill or words could heal. Pule, or prayers were used by some people to literally heal or cause great harm to others.

Words also were used for their sounds and multiple meanings. *Kaona* is defined as "hidden meaning, as in Hawaiian poetry; concealed reference, as to a person, thing or place; words with double meaning" (Pukui and Elbert, 1986 p. 130). *Kaona* is an important part of Hawaiian poetry, hula, chant, and song.

The video *The Power of the Word* (5:52 min.) was created by 6th grade students from Blanche Pope Elementary School (Waimanalo, O'ahu), who did lessons throughout the year about the impact of speech. Students did a scientific study how words impact plants (and people). They also worked with a local rap artist to create a rap about the strength of their voices.

This 'Ōlelo (saying) can be linked to the Emoto Peace Project and work done by Dr. Masaru Emoto from Japan. This scientist is able to capture pictures of water crystals when influenced by either positive or negative words. These photos of the crystals are powerful, especially when considering the fact that the human body is made up of over 60% water. This story is clearly shared in Dr. Emoto's free downloadable book, found on his website (link listed below in resources).

Steps:

1. Introduce the purpose of this lesson; to deepen understanding about the power of words and the choice we have in what we say to others and to ourselves.
2. Write on a board a few positive and negative words. (I.e.: love, hate, beautiful, ugly, etc.) Ask students which words they feel have the most power, and why.

3. Share the 'Ōlelo No'eau (sign below) and discuss some background information about Hawaiian thinking and the power of speech. Invite students to share anything they know about this topic and have heard from their *kupuna* (grandparents) or others about the power of words.

4. Introduce the *Power of the Word* video and who created it (see Background Information). Share that the video is in three sections, and each student is going to remember information about one of the three sections to discuss with others.

5. Ask students to count off 1-2-3; tell students they are going to be asked to answer two questions after seeing the video (write on board):

1. What message stood out? (*Main idea(s) the creators wanted you to get*)
2. How does this message relate to yourself and others?

6. Assign students sections to share about afterwards; encourage note-taking:
 #1's will pay close attention to the first section about the science experiment.
 #2's will pay close attention when students were learning a rap.
 #3's will focus on the final section after the rap.

Invite students to take notes if that helps them remember while watching the video one, or even two times. (Video is under 6 min.)

7. Debrief by having students share about the section they were assigned to discuss. Triads can be formed so students taking notes on the three parts can talk story. Create a summary together of what the creators wanted people to learn, experience, or feel.

8. You can continue this lesson by selecting one of the following activities:

a. Divide students into two groups and provide them with chart paper and pens.

Group 1 makes two lists: *What is pono?* & *What are not pono words?*

Group 2 makes two lists: *What is not pono?* & *What are pono words?*

Facilitate a discussion about these lists, including similarities and differences. Discuss how these words feel and the impact they have on ourselves and others

b. Explore the Emoto Project website; read the children's book and other resources to learn how words impact water www.emotopeaceproject.net (Free download for children's book; upload ahead of time)

c. Think about ways this Ōlelo No'eau could be shared with more students as well as with others. Consider who might benefit and what might be of interest for students to do. Ideas might include:

* Create a video or radio public service announcement. Students can brainstorm interesting ways to help people understand this Ōlelo No'eau, and then create a video or radio public service announcement

* Create small posters with this 'Ōlelo and images to hang on community bulletin boards and around the school.

* Have students write raps, songs, slam poetry, or short stories about the power of words; plan a time to share these creations at a family event at school or to younger students.

* Invite *kupuna* (elders) or Hawaiian cultural practitioners to become guest speakers. Ask them to share stories about the power of words as well as values that they find important to live by.

Reflection Questions:

- * Why is it important to understand the power of words?
- * What is one thing you can do to try your best to be *pono* (impeccable) with what you say to others and to yourself?

Resources:

<https://coffeetimes.com/blogs/history-culture/words-of-power> (*Words of Power - Hawaiian chants and Language*)
<http://mauinow.com/2010/12/09/hawaiian-traditional-medicine/>
<http://www.highexistence.com/water-experiment/>

***I Ka 'Ōlelo
No Ke Ola,
I Ka 'Ōlelo
No Ka Make.***

Translation:
*In Speech Is Life,
In Speech Is Death.*

Words can be positive, kind,
helpful.... or they can destroy.

(You have the choice.)