

This week, we will write about and write slam poetry. We will also become “freedom writers.”

Nuyorican Poets Café

We will now each receive copies of spoken word poems performed at the Nuyorican Poets Café. In our notebooks or on separate sheets of paper, we will analyze at least \_\_\_\_\_ spoken word poems using the prompts and questions in the following poetry explication worksheet. You do not need to answer all the questions. Select a few from each category.

*Poetry Explication Worksheet*

Title of the poem: \_\_\_\_\_

Poet: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Summarize or paraphrase the poem. React personally: How does it make you feel? Does it remind you of a personal experience? a story you've heard? an issue? a situation?

2. Now analyze the poem using your annotations and the following:

Voice

Who is speaking?  
How would you characterize the speaker?  
To whom is he or she speaking?  
What is the speaker's tone?  
Why is he or she speaking?

Word Choice, Word Order

What type of diction is the poet employing?  
How does the poet's word choice affect the meaning of the poem? the tone?  
Does the poet employ figures of speech? (simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, understatement, metonymy, synecdoche)  
Does the word order impact the reading of or the meaning of the poem?

Imagery

Did you note any descriptive passages? For each image, name the sense that is being appealed to.  
What is the dominant impression being created?  
What is the relationship of the descriptive images to the speaker's state of mind?  
  
How do images create sense of time of day? season of year? atmosphere? mood?  
Do the images progress? (day to night, hot to cold, soft to loud, color to color, etc)

Sound

Does the poem contain an obvious meter or rhythm?  
What sounds are emphasized by the rhyme scheme?  
Are there sight rhymes, slant rhymes, alliteration, assonance, etc?

Structure

Is the poem in a closed or open form?  
Is the poem presented in a traditional form?  
Is there a pattern of end rhymes? a syllabic line count? a set metrical pattern?  
How are the stanzas arranged? the lines?

Theme

What seems to be the point of the poem?  
What ideas are being communicated by the speaker?

How are the ideas being reinforced by the elements of the poem?

Other factors to consider

Is the poem a lyric or a narrative or other?  
If it is a narrative, is there a setting? a conflict? a plot line? (elements of fiction)  
Does the poet employ the use of symbol? allegory? allusion? myth?

Become a slam poet in five steps

Watch the TED-ed video “Become a slam poet in five steps” ([youtube.com/watch?v=9f8VcV8v2LE](https://youtube.com/watch?v=9f8VcV8v2LE)). As you watch, record the 5 steps.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Once Upon a Slam—Storytelling

Every spoken word poem has a story that it tells. To write our own spoken word poems, we will have to come up with our stories to tell, and we will do so by completing the chart below. **But before we do, let's complete the warm-up activities on pages 4-8.**

Write down at least 3 ideas for each storytelling element.

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Character              |  |
| Time and place         |  |
| Action                 |  |
| Obstacles and conflict |  |
| Point of view          |  |
| Crisis                 |  |
| A bull's eye           |  |

Once you have completed the chart above, write your own spoken word poem in your notebook or on a separate sheet of paper.

Seeing is Believing—Concrete vs. Abstract Language

Use concrete language to bring to life the following generalized abstract phrases:

- Hunger affects the population of many minor countries.

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- Some creatures entered into her dreams.

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- Attaining one's goals brings happiness.

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Flaccid Phrasing

Which of these stanzas are in active voice and which are passive? Rewrite the passive stanzas to make them active:

It is time that takes home from us  
And turns the face of tomorrow dark.  
There are negative experiences that  
will not let my mind rest.

Blow North Wind! Fury the foul the tide  
And wrap the shore with froth and brine.

Many are the uncertain folk who wander  
Pondering the past, defeated by regret.  
Their voices huddle in their brains  
Blamed and shamed by themselves  
Reframing what they didn't do.

Rock to the Rhythm

Recurring imagery, parallel phrasing, repeated words and sounds, accented syllables, and themes reintroduced over and over create the rhythms that give poetry its musical quality. Read through a favorite poem by a great author and circle all such rhythmic patterns. You may use the poem below by Regie Cabico.

**“Check One”** by Regie Cabico

*The government asks me to “check one” if I want money.  
I just laugh in their face and say,  
“How can you ask me to be one race?”*

I stand proudly before you a fierce Filipino  
who knows how to belt hard-gospel songs  
played to African drums at a Catholic mass—  
and loving the music to suffering beats,  
and lashes from men’s eyes on the capitol streets—

South-east D.C., with its sleepy crime  
my mother nursed patients from seven to nine,  
patients gray from the railroad  
riding past civil rights

I walked their tracks when I entertained  
them at a chapel and made their canes pillars  
of percussion to my heavy gospel—  
my comedy out-loud, laughing about, our shared,  
stolen experiences of the South.

Would it be a surprise if I told you my blood  
was delivered from North off Portuguese vessels  
who gave me spiritual stones and the turn in my eyes—  
my father’s name when they conquered the Pacific Isles.

My hair is black and thick as “negrito,” growing abundant  
as “sampaguita”-flowers defying civilization  
like pilipino pygmies that dance in the mountain.

I could give you an epic about my ways of life or my look  
and you want me to fill it in “one box square.”  
From what integer or shape do you count existing identities,  
grant loans for the mind, or Crayola white census sheets—  
There’s no “one kind” to fill for anyone.

You tell me who I am, what gets the most money  
and I’ll sing you that song like a one-man caravan.  
I know arias from Naples, Tunis, and Accra—  
lullabies from welfare, food-stamps, and nature

and you want me to sing one song?

I have danced jigs with Jim Crow and shuffled my hips  
 to a sonic guitar of Clapton and Hendrix,  
 waltzed with dead lovers, skipped to bamboo sticks,  
 balleted kabuki and mimed cathacali  
 arrivedericed-a-rhumba ad tapped Tin Pan Alley—  
 and you want me to dance the Bhagavad Gita?  
 on a box too small for a thumbelina-thin diva?

I'll check "other," say *artist*  
 that's who I am: a poet, a writer, a lover of man.

### If You Must Rhyme...

Use the definition of each type of rhyme to create an example of it.

| Rhyme      | Definition   | Example |
|------------|--|---------|
| End        | Rhyming words that occur at the end of two or more poetic lines                      |         |
| Cross      | Rhymes a line-ending word with a word in the middle of a preceding or following line |         |
| Interlaced | Rhymes words in the middle of one line with words in the middle of another line      |         |
| Internal   | Rhyme the end of a line with a word in the middle of the line                        |         |
| Linked     | Rhymes the last sound of a line with the first sound of the next lines               |         |
| Slant      | Allow sounds that aren't quite identical to masquerade as rhymes                     |         |

|          |   |  |
|----------|---|--|
| Wrenched | Twists unmercifully the spelling, sense, and sounds of words to make them fit into a rhyme scheme |  |
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No Sermons, But If You Must Preach...

Use your prior knowledge or devices to find examples for the following terms:

| Term        | Definition  | Example  |
|-------------|---|--|
| Antanagoge  | Antanagoge starts out really mean and then pulls the punch. You let fly some really harsh stuff, and then you get yourself off the hook . . . by softening your first statement with a second qualifying statement. | <i>His rodent like head brought to mind<br/>The bobbing countenance of a rabid kangaroo,<br/>But the steady gleam of his big new teeth<br/>Charmed us as an unpouched baby's should.<br/>-from "My Brother's Child" by Pete LaFete</i> |
| Antiphrasis | Antiphrasis is the use of a word or phrase in opposite sense of its literal meaning, often as a form of name-calling.   |  |
| Aporia      | Aporia is the questioning of an issue to lead the audience to form an opinion about it without directly stating a stand on the issue:   |  |
| Apostrophe  | Apostrophe is speaking to someone or some personified thing that is not there.  |  |
| Bombast     | Bombast is a rant speech that goes overboard and is too inflated for the situation.   |  |
| Ecophonesis | Ecophonesis is an emotional exclamation or outcry.  | <i>Oh god how I long to be wrapped in golden<br/>singles of America cheese<br/>Drizzled in its salty goodness.</i>   |

|            |  |  |
|------------|--|--|
| Epiphonema | Epiphomena is a climatic summation at the conclusion of a poem | <i>The hydrogen bomb the neutron bomb<br/>engineered death and pantyhose Mom the flag<br/>and apple pie<br/>It's gotta be the cheese.<br/>-from "America" (It's Gotta be the Cheese)</i> |
|------------|--|--|

Rough Draft of Assignment 4—When Was the Last Time You Felt Free?

For this week's homework, we will be writing about the last time we felt free. Begin writing a rough draft on a separate sheet of paper. Attach your rough draft to your homework for potential bonus marks! Use the space below and on the back of the page to brainstorm.