

Chris hands out flyers for the citywide slam

For homework 13,
~~So take notes!~~
slam poetry performance in class 14!



What is slam poetry?



What You Think You Know May Not Be Slam

In case you're wondering, here's the oversimplified definition that appears on Wikipedia at the time of writing:

"A poetry slam is a competition at which poets read or recite original work (or, more rarely, that of others). These performances are then judged on a numeric scale by previously selected members of the audience."



The Big Definition of Slam Poetry

Stumble into any bar or coffee shop during a *slam*, and you'll witness poets slinging words Out Loud! to win the adulation of animated audience and the high scores of randomly selected judges. You might think that's all there is to it, but if you stick around and listen long and hard you'll discover that a poetry slam isn't just a high-energy one-hundred plus decibel *reading* of or a heated head-on competition.



Slam poetry is a word circus, a school, a town meeting, a playground, a sports arena, a temple, a burlesque show, a revelation, a mass guffaw, holy ground, and possibly all of these mixed together. Slam poetry is *performance* poetry, the marriage of a text to the artful presentation of poetic words onstage to an audience that has permission to talk back and let the performer know whether he or she is communicating effectively.

What Slam Is and Isn't

- Slam is *poetry*
- Slam is *performed*
- Slam is *competitive*
- Slam is *interactive*
- Slam is *community*



What Slam Is and Isn't

- Slam is *not* just text on a page
- Slam is *not* a formalized poetry reading during which the audience listens passively and applauds politely regardless of what they really feel or think
- Slam is *not* an art form that lets an elite few decide what's of value and what's not
- Slam is *not* a talent show or gimmick—it's an experience that's artistic, educational, spiritual, reflective, and above all life-changing.
- Slam is *not* meant to be a serious determination of who's the mightiest poet. A slam competition is theatrical device for focusing an audience's attention on the art form—performance poetry



The Basic Rules of Slam Engagement

- Perform your own work
- Perform in three minutes or less
- No props or costumes
- Scores range from 0.0 to 10.0, using one decimal place to avoid ties



Slammin' Fundamentals

To be successful in rendering their art form, all performers must accomplish three goals; they must *engage*, *entertain*, and *affect*



The Entertaining Fundamentals

- Vary the Volume
- Tweak the Tempo
- Articulation
- Breathe Deep and Pause
- Look 'Em in the Eye
- Memorization



Body Talk—Shake, Gesture, and Move

Body-language scholars tell us that 90 percent of human communication is often more effective, more revealing than the words themselves.



Elements of Movement

- The element of weight in movement, characterized at one end of the spectrum as *firm, contending, and strongly resistant*, and at the other end as *gentle, indulgent, and weakly resistant*.
- The element of time in movement, characterized at one extreme as *sudden, broken, and quick*, and at the other as *sustained, indulgent, and slow*
- The element of space in movement, characterized by actions that are, on the one hand, *direct, contending, and in a straight line*, on the other hand, by actions that are *flexible, indulgent, and turning*.
- The element of energy flow at one extreme is *bound, holding, and contending*, and at the other *free, releasing, and indulgent*.



Laban's Eight Efforts

Rudolph Laban's analysis of movement also recognized and differentiated eight basic efforts humans make when they move:

- PRESSING
- GLIDING
- FLOATING
- PUNCHING
- WRINGING
- DABBING
- THROWING
- SLASHING



Down to Specific Body Parts

Let's divide the performance poet's body language into the following categories:

- Head movement
- Facial expressions
- Arm movement
- Hand gestures
- Leg and hip jive
- Posture and stance
- Movement and positioning across the stage



Posture and Stance

When you take the stage, remember three things about your stance and position:

1. Inclining your body toward the audience is a position of strength.
1. Keeping your body erect (neither forward nor back from the audience) is a neutral position).
2. Leaning backward conveys a weakened position.



Do & Don'ts of Movement

- Don't move without a purpose
- Do root your feet to the floor if you have a habit of pacing.
- Don't use literal hand gestures and arm movements that have become physical clichés.
- Do discover natural movements by allowing your body freedom to unconsciously communicate in its own language.



REHEARSE,
REHEARSE,
REHEARSE



Now that we know what slam poetry is and what the slammin' fundamentals are, we will watch and score 5 slam poetry performances. But before we do so, we will co-construct a scoring rubric as a class.

After each performance, we will share our scores and comments.

You may want to take notes on what you could incorporate into your own slam poetry performance.



"Poet Breathe Now" by Aaron Gottlieb:
youtube.com/watch?v=IXIjFOERvYY





"What Teachers Make" by Taylor Mali:
[youtube.com/watch?v=RGKm201n-U4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RGKm201n-U4)

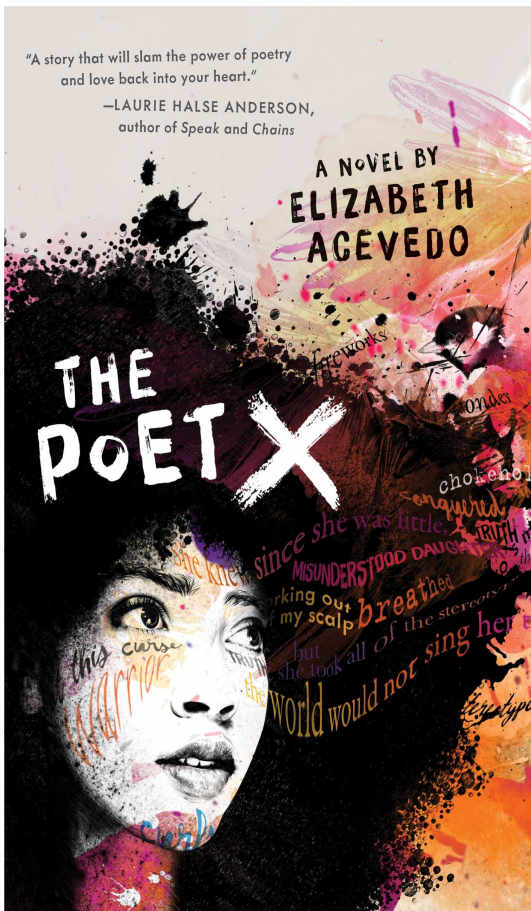


"Explaining My Depression to My Mother"
by Sabrina Benaim:
[youtube.com/watch?v=aqu4ezLQEUA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aqu4ezLQEUA)

"Lost Voices" by Darius Simpson & Scout Bostley
youtube.com/watch?v=lpPASWlnZIA



"Why Are Muslims So...": youtube.com/watch?v=3_i7wELTVi0&t=180s



Describe someone you consider
misunderstood by society



Read and discuss "Kanye West is Misundestood" by Brian Doherty

Listen to the clean version of “Ye vs. The People”:
youtube.com/watch?v=VS-ecKU2b80



Do you agree with Kanye West or The People (T.I.)?