

Alliance Theatre

institute

Slam Poetry Resource for High School

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What is Slam Poetry?

Slam Poetry is an art form that blends poetry, performance, and competition to create a literary relationship with the audience. Slam poetry is a term that describes a style of spoken word poetry composed to be performed in front of a live audience, often in a competitive arena.

What is a Poetry Slam?

A poetry slam is the actual performance or event that features slam poets. Five judges from the audience (who are picked randomly and preferably do not have a personal connection to any of the competing poets) are given score cards to score each poem based on content, originality, and performance on a scale of 1-10 (decimal points may be used to avoid ties).

Content and Style

- Content: slam poetry can be about anything the writer is passionate about, from personal narratives to social observation, and often include a combination of themes.
- Style: poets use literary devices (such as metaphor, simile, alliteration, and word play) to tell their three-minute stories.

Examples

#1: *Touchscreen* (<https://youtu.be/GAx845QaOck?t=3s>)

#2: *Copse* (<https://youtu.be/zvne-JEMf8g>)

Reflection Questions

- What examples of word play do you notice in Example #1: *Touchscreen*?
- What do you notice about audience response in Example #1: *Touchscreen*?
- The artist featured in Example #2 is an Atlanta-area artist. Ask her anything – email your inquiry to liz.davis@alliancetheatre.org and it will be shared with the poet for possible response.

Writing Prompts

#1: What is your favorite hobby? Compose a poem about that hobby and utilize as much word play as possible to describe the activity.

#2: Personification is a poetic device that attributes human emotions and characteristics to inanimate objects. Compose a poem that personifies an object related to current events connected to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, what would hand sanitizer say to people who bought more than they need? What would the empty arcade, amusement park, or skating rink say?

Learn More

Check out “The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Poetry Slam” by Marc Kelly Smith.