

# Alliance Theatre

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Slam Poetry Resource for Middle 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: *Somewhere in America* (<https://youtu.be/YshUDa10JYY>)

#2: *Ode to Thrift Stores* (<https://youtu.be/PFZJoU44uOo?t=4s>)

## Reflection Questions

- What is each poem about?
- Which lines stand out to you most?
- What choices did these artists make to deliver powerful performances?

## Writing Prompts

#1: What changes are you seeing in America? In your community? In your home?

#2: Odes give the opportunity to link an item, place, or memory to an activity or person. What is something that you once took for granted that you appreciate now because of lack of access? Celebrate that thing in an ode.

## Learn More

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