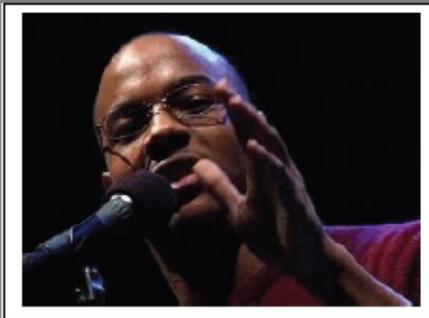


Louder Than A Bomb



Teacher Resource Package

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Spoken Word/Slam Poetry: A Canadian Context

Louder Than A Bomb introduces the viewer into the world of poetry slam competitions. Many students may not be familiar with slam poetry and the tradition out of which it rose. Before viewing the film, teachers should familiarise their students with terms such as spoken word poetry, poetry jams and poetry slams.

Spoken Word

Spoken word is a type of oral poetry that was popularised in the 1950s and 60s with the rise of the Beat movement led by Alan Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs. It was also an integral part of the underground African American scene during the 60s with groups such as The Last Poets being credited with laying the foundation of hip hop music. Spoken word poetry uses alliterated prose and occasionally metered verse to express social commentary. It is usually performed as a solo piece and it deals with issues of contemporary social relevance.

Poetry Jams

Poetry jams are informal performances that are the poetry equivalent of a jazz jam session. Improvisation and collaboration are its cornerstones and the poetry may or may not be original.

Poetry Slams

Poetry slams are competitions in which poets perform original work within a certain time limit (usually three minutes). They are given numeric scores by five judges who have been selected from the audience by the MC. Most of the poems take the form of social and political commentary.

The first poetry slam was held in Chicago in November 1984 at the Get Me High Club. Marc Smith, a poet and construction worker is credited for establishing the first slam competition and it has grown exponentially, with slam competitions held in dozens of countries around the globe.

Slams can be “open” or “invitational”. They can also revolve around particular themes (e.g. “nerd” or “erotica”). Occasionally, Slams will restrict themselves to under-represented groups such as high school students or women.

Canadian Poetry Slam Scene

Canada has a thriving slam scene across the country. Spoken Word Canada (SpoCan) is an organisation of spoken word performers and organisers whose mission is to “nurture, develop and advance spoken word artists, the professional spoken word community and the art of spoken word in Canada” (source: <http://spokenwordcanada.com/about>). Every autumn, SpoCan produces a national gathering of spoken word poets at the Canadian Festival of Spoken Word.

Related Resources:

Spoken Word Canada

<http://spokenwordcanada.com/>

Toronto Poetry Slam

<http://torontopoetryslam.com/>

BAM Youth Slam

<http://torontopoetryslam.com/bam-youth-slam>

Throw Poetry Collective

<http://www.throwcollective.com/>

Vancouver Poetry House

<http://www.vancouverpoetryhouse.com/vanslam/>

Canadian Festival of the Spoken Word

<http://cfsw.ca/>

Related Activities

1. Conduct a poetry jam in your classroom. Divide students into groups, assign them a topic (e.g. literacy, poverty) and have them prepare a three-minute performance piece for the rest of the class.
2. Have students watch some performances of Canadian slam poets (youtube has several). What are some of the themes that emerge in their poetry? Is it different from the topics covered by American slam poets? If so, how? (NB: many of the pieces on youtube contain strong language and themes that would be suitable only for senior high school students)

Louder Than a Bomb Curriculum Expectations

The exercises in the American study guide for *Louder Than A Bomb* are all appropriate for a Canadian classroom. Below is a list of selected subjects within the Ontario curriculum that correspond to these exercises including the particular strand within that course to which these activities can be applied and the criteria that need to be addressed.

SUBJECT	STRAND	EXPECTATIONS
English, Grades 9-12	Literature Studies and Reading	Understanding the meaning of texts: -analyse and interpret information, ideas and themes in texts -select and use specific and relevant evidence from a close reading of texts to support analyses and interpretations (e.g. identify literary techniques used to convey a theme) -select and use a range of effective reading strategies (e.g. reread a text closely)

		<p>to relate repeated images to a theme)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -compare their own ideas and values with those expressed in a text (e.g. students write their own poems based on the same theme as one of the poems used in film -explain the influence of social and historical values and perspectives on texts and the interpretation of texts (e.g. explain the influence of beat poetry of the 1960s to the slam poetry of today.
		<p>Understanding the Forms of texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -analyse and explain how key elements of poetic forms influence their meanings (e.g. analyse the relationship between character revelation and theme in one of the poems featured in the film) <p>Understanding the Elements of Style</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -analyse how language and syntax are used to create a voice appropriate to the purpose and audience (e.g. compare two poems in the film on a similar theme and determine how each poet creates a personal voice) -describe how authors use rhetorical and literary devices such as hyperbole, sarcasm and invective to enhance the meaning of texts (e.g. identify how Adam Gottlieb uses “thick description) to convey a sense of place in the poem “Maxwell Street”. -analyse the effect on the reader/viewer of poets’

		<p>choices of language, syntax and literary devices by examining their own and other' interpretations of the style of texts</p>
	<p>Writing</p>	<p>Generating Ideas and Gathering Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -investigate potential topics by posing questions, identifying information needs (e.g. brainstorm five different communities, cultures or activities that you identify with and write a poem about yourself 0 -organise and analyse information and ideas to suit specific purposes and forms for writing (e.g. create a pattern of imagery to write a spoken word poem about where you live)
		<p>Choosing the Form to Suit Purpose and Audience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -demonstrate an understanding of the uses and conventions of various forms through a written piece (e.g. write a spoken word poem that acts as a piece of social commentary) -select and use appropriate form to produce written work for an intended audience and purpose (e.g write a poem about being Canadian for a non-Canadian audience) - select and use a level of language and voice appropriate to the specific purpose and intended audience for a piece of writing (e.g. colloquialisms to establish an authentic voice of a teenager)

		<p>Organising Ideas and Information in Written Work</p> <p>-select and use appropriate organizational devices and patterns to structure poems (e.g. use extended metaphor in a poem)</p> <p>Revising Drafts</p> <p>-revise drafts to strengthen content and improve organisation by refining the controlling idea; making connections among ideas; integrating details, and reordering ideas and images (e.g. change the order of images in a poem to enhance the emotional impact)</p> <p>-revise drafts to improve clarity of expression</p> <p>-revise drafts to refine voice in written work</p> <p>Editing and Proofreading</p> <p>-edit and proofread their own and others' writing, identifying and correcting errors according to the requirements for grammar, spelling and punctuation.</p>
	<p>Language</p>	<p>Developing Vocabulary and Knowledge of Language Structures and Conventions</p> <p>-apply a variety of strategies to extend vocabulary while reading, with an emphasis on understanding the denotation, connotation and pronunciation of words (e.g. decoding/encoding the language used to create</p>

		<p>the poems performed in the film)</p> <p>Developing Listening and Speaking Skills</p> <p>-communicate orally in large and small groups (e.g. performing and listening to each others' poems)</p>
	<p>Media Studies</p>	<p>Analysing Media</p> <p>-explain how form, style and technique in media works convey messages with social, ideological and political implications (e.g. analyse and assess the representation of poetry slam culture as represented in the film)</p> <p>-explain how representation, form, style and techniques in media works convey messages with social, ideological and political implications (e.g. compare the slam poem "Counting Graves" with a news item about a drive by shooting)</p> <p>-explain the relationship between media works and their audiences (how do the poets in the film adapt their group performances for their audience)</p> <p>Creating Media Works</p> <p>-create a media work based on the ideas and themes raised in the poems performed in the film (e.g. create a group poem based on one of the poems in the film)</p>
<p>Dramatic Arts Grades 9-12</p>	<p>Theory</p>	<p>Role/Character</p> <p>-describe the process of creating a character (e.g. experimentation with movement and voice)</p> <p>Elements, Principles</p>

		<p>and Techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - describe how movement and non-verbal communication can be used to portray character and communicate dramatic tension <p>Dramatic Forms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -describe the conventions of different forms of drama (e.g. slam poetry) -describe the social and historical contexts of slam poetry
	<p>Creation</p>	<p>Creating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -create the inner and outer life of a character using a variety of strategies (e.g., improvisation) -reinterpret roles in rehearsal and performance apply appropriate voice and movement techniques in rehearsal and performance create an original or adapted dramatic presentation using a variety of strategies (e.g. improvisation, workshop techniques) -create a working script for production, using a variety of techniques (e.g. improvisation, revision of drafts) <p>Presenting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -demonstrate the ability to take responsibility both as an individual and group member when working in an ensemble piece -identify the needs and interests of different audiences and use the elements of drama in way that are appropriate for each audience

		<p>-select or prepare an original or adapted dramatic presentation for a specific audience (e.g. a group slam poem to be performed at a slam poetry competition)</p> <p>-use technology effectively (e.g. slides projected as background to performance piece)</p>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>Analysis and Evaluation</p> <p>-evaluate their dramatic presentation using specific criteria</p> <p>justify their artistic choices of elements, principles and techniques in their dramatic performances</p> <p>demonstrate their ability to review dramatic performances given on film</p> <p>identify the artistic choices made by performers in a dramatic production and assess the effectiveness of these choices</p> <p>analyse the connections between the theatre, themselves and society</p> <p>Personal Development</p> <p>-analyse through writing and discussion the significance of what they have gained from their artistic experiences</p> <p>explain how the portrayal of roles and characters in drama is connected to their personal experiences, universal truths and specific aspects of the human experience</p>