



Teen Poetry Slams Series

Mission/Purpose:

To promote the performance and creation of poetry by Cincinnati teens while cultivating literary activities and spoken word events in order to build participation by younger and family audiences, stimulate creative critical thinking, awaken minds, foster education, inspire mentoring and encourage artistic statement that is relevant to and sought out by diverse communities.

Vision:

To encourage, build confidence and self esteem, fostering a better understanding of oneself and the world around them by introducing Cincinnati teens to the artistry, fundamentals and competition rules of spoken word slam poetry.

Oversight

The program will be coordinated by national slam poet and 2007-2009 Poetry Slam, Inc. Cincinnati slam master Jennie Wright (dba. Black Budda'fly).

The program coordinator will:

- develop curriculum guidelines
- assist in the marketing of the teen poetry slam series
- match a poet/mentor to each arts organization/school
- recruit community organizations and centers as host sites
- recruit and match individual teen poets with host sites
- serve as host for the grand slam off at the end of the series

Instruction/Creation Sessions

A poetry slam mentor will conduct two hour weekly classes free of charge to interested teens ages 13-18.

We would like to begin these sessions by the week of November 8, 2009.

Most of the poet mentors are slam poets on the national or regional level. Many of the poet mentors were members of the city of Cincinnati's very first slam team sent to nationals. All of the poet mentors are well versed in the performance art of slam poetry and have a sincere desire to pass their gained skills and techniques on to the next generation of performance poets.

What is a Poetry Slam?

Simply put, poetry slam is the competitive art of performance poetry. It puts a dual emphasis on writing and performance, encouraging poets to focus on what they're saying *and* how they're saying it.

Poetry slam is a competitive event in which poets perform their work and are judged by members of the audience. Typically, the host or another organizer selects the judges, who are instructed to give numerical scores (on a zero to 10 or one to 10 scale) based on the poets' content and performance.

Unlike traditional poetry readings audience members are *urged* to participate. Slam is engineered for the audience, whereas a number of open mike readings are engineered as a support network for poets. Slam is designed for the audience to react vocally and openly to all aspects of the show, including the poet's performance, the judges' scores, and the host's banter.

What are the rules?

- Each poem must be of the poet's own construction;
- Each poet gets three minutes (plus a ten-second grace period) to read one poem. If the poet goes over time, points will be deducted from the total score.
- The poet may not use props, costumes or musical instruments;
- Of the scores the poet received from the five judges, the high and low scores are dropped and the middle three are added together, giving the poet a total score of 0-30.

Individual Slams

The teen slam will follow the format of Poetry Slam Inc., the largest international sanctioned poetry slam governing body, allowing any teen 17 and older to seamlessly compete on the National level if so desired.

The poet/mentor will serve as the host of the slams and will encourage audience participation and ensure slam rules are enforced.

Once every 4-6 weeks, an evening teen poetry slam would take place at the centers/schools. Admission of \$2 or \$3 would be charged. Centers/schools could offer some type of cash prize or incentive (in addition to bragging rights) for each slam. The teens, from the class, will slam and walk-in teen poets will also be permitted to slam in the individual slam. In order to compete as part of a slam team, teen poets must attend classes at one of the community art center or school sessions.

In the spring there would be a regional slam off at the Playhouse in the Park where the winners of the center/school slam will compete against each other for a cash prize.

Community Arts Center Slam Teams

Each participating arts center will construct a spoken word poetry slam team. Slam teams may consist of as many teen poets as the center/school can accommodate, however only six of them will compete as a team in the group slam category.