



THE MAYHEM POETS

Applause Series Curriculum Guide
March 10, 2015



CIVIC CENTER • STONER THEATER • TEMPLE THEATER • COWLES COMMONS

THE MAYHEM POETS

Dear Teachers,

Thank you for joining us for the Applause Series presentation of The Mayhem Poets! We are thrilled to bring these three talented spoken word artists to the Des Moines Civic Center stage. It is our hope that their words, delivery style, and commitment to speaking truth will spark a new appreciation and love for poetry within your students and challenge their preconceptions of this language-based art.

We thank you for sharing this very special experience with your students and hope this study guide helps to connect the performance to your in-classroom curriculum in



ways that you find valuable. In the following pages, you will find contextual information about the performance and related subjects, as well as a variety of discussion questions and assessment activities. Some pages are appropriate to reproduce for your students; others are designed more specifically with you, their teacher, in mind. As such, we hope that you are able to “pick and choose” material and ideas from the study guide to meet your class’s unique needs.

See you at the theater,

Des Moines Performing Arts Education Team

Support for Des Moines Performing Arts education programs and the Applause Series is provided by:

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This study guide was compiled, written and edited by Yvette Zaord Hermann and edited by Karoline Myers.

ABOUT DES MOINES PERFORMING ARTS



Des Moines Performing Arts is a private, nonprofit organization and is an important part of central Iowa's cultural community. It is recognized nationally for excellence as a performing arts center and is committed to engaging the Midwest in world-class entertainment, education, and cultural activities.

Des Moines Performing Arts presents professional touring productions, including theater direct from Broadway, world-renowned dance companies, family programming, comedy, and concerts.

Education and Community Engagement programs are core to Des Moines Performing Arts' mission as a nonprofit performing arts center.

Public education programs allow audience members and local artists to make meaningful and personal connections to the art they experience on our stages. Guest lectures and Q&As with company members allow audiences to explore the inner workings of the performance. In addition, master classes, workshops, and summer camps taught by visiting performers give local actors, dancers, and musicians the chance to increase their skills by working directly with those who know what it takes to succeed on the professional stage.

Through its **K-12 School Programs**, Des Moines Performing Arts strives to ensure that central Iowa students have affordable access to high quality arts experiences as part of their education. More than 50,000 students and educators attend curriculum-connected school matinee performances through the Applause Series annually. In addition, Des Moines Performing Arts sends teaching artists into the schools to provide hands-on workshops and residencies in special opportunities that engage students directly in the creative process. And, through its partnership with the John F. Kennedy Center, Des Moines Performing Arts provides teachers with in-depth professional development training on how to use the arts in their classrooms to better impact student learning. The Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards is Des Moines Performing Arts' newest initiative to support the arts in Iowa schools, providing important learning tools and public recognition to celebrate the achievements of students involved in their high school theater programs.

DID YOU KNOW?

More than 300,000 people visit Des Moines Performing Arts venues each year.

Des Moines Performing Arts opened in 1979.

Des Moines Performing Arts has three theater spaces:

- *Civic Center, 2744 seats*
- *Stoner Theater, 200 seats*
- *Temple Theater, 299 seats (located in the Temple for the Performing Arts)*

No seat is more than 155 feet from center stage in the Civic Center.

Cowles Commons, situated just west of the Civic Center, is a community gathering space that is also part of Des Moines Performing Arts. The space features the Crusoe Umbrella sculpture by artist Claes Oldenburg.

As a nonprofit organization, Des Moines Performing Arts depends on donor funding to support facilities, programming, and education programs.

The Applause Series started in 1996. You are joining us for our 19th season of school performances.

GOING TO THE THEATER . . .



YOUR ROLE AS AN AUDIENCE MEMBER

Attending a live performance is a unique and exciting opportunity. Unlike the passive experience of watching a movie, audience members play an important role in every live performance. As they act, sing, dance, or play instruments, the performers on stage are very aware of the audience's mood and level of engagement. Each performance calls for a different response from audience members. Musicians and dancers may desire the audience to focus silently on the stage and applaud only during natural breaks in the performance. Audience members can often take cues from performers on how to respond to the performance appropriately. For example, performers will often pause or bow for applause at a specific time.

As you experience the performance, consider the following questions:

- * What kind of live performance is this (a play, a dance, a concert, etc.)?
- * What is the mood of the performance? Is the subject matter serious or lighthearted?
- * What is the mood of the performers? Are they happy and smiling or somber and reserved?
- * Are the performers encouraging the audience to clap to the music or move to the beat?
- * Are there natural breaks in the performance where applause seems appropriate?

A SPECIAL EXPERIENCE

Seeing a live performance is a very special experience. Although it is not required, many people enjoy dressing up when they attend the theater.

THEATER ETIQUETTE

Here is a checklist of general guidelines to follow when you visit the Civic Center:

- * Leave all food, drinks, and chewing gum at school or on the bus.
- * Cameras, recording devices, and personal listening devices are not permitted in the theater.
- * Turn off and put away all cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices before the performance begins.
- * Do not text during the performance.
- * Respect the theater. Remember to keep your feet off of the seats and avoid bouncing up and down.
- * When the house lights dim, the performance is about to begin. Please stop talking at this time.
- * **Talk before and after the performance only.** Remember, the theater is designed to amplify sound. Other audience members and the performers on stage can hear your voice!
- * Use the restroom before the performance or wait until the end. If you must leave the theater during the show, make sure the first set of doors closes before you open the second — this will keep unwanted light from spilling into the theater.
- * Appropriate responses such as laughing and applauding are appreciated. Pay attention to the artists on stage — they will let you know what is appropriate.
- * Open your eyes, ears, mind, and heart to the entire experience. Enjoy yourself!

GOING TO THE THEATER information is adapted from the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts study guide materials.

CIVIC CENTER FIELD TRIP INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS



Thank you for choosing the Applause Series with Des Moines Performing Arts. Below are tips for organizing a safe and successful field trip to the Civic Center.

ORGANIZING YOUR FIELD TRIP

- * Please include all students, teachers, and chaperones in your ticket request.
- * After you submit your ticket request, you will receive a confirmation e-mail within five business days. Your **invoice will be attached to the confirmation e-mail.**
- * Payment policies and options are located at the top of the invoice. **Payment (or a purchase order) for your reservation is due four weeks** prior to the date of the performance.
- * The Civic Center reserves the right to cancel unpaid reservations after the payment due date.
- * Tickets are not printed for Applause Series shows. Your invoice will serve as the reservation confirmation for your group order.
- * Schedule buses to arrive in downtown Des Moines at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the performance. This will allow time to park, walk to the Civic Center, and be seated in the theater.
- * Performances are approximately 60 minutes unless otherwise noted on the website and printed materials.
- * All school groups with reservations to the show will receive an e-mail notification when the study guide is posted online. Please note that study guides are only printed and mailed upon request.

DIRECTIONS AND PARKING

- * Directions: From I-235, take Exit 8A (Downtown Exits) and the ramp toward 3rd Street and 2nd Avenue. Turn onto 3rd Street and head south.
- * Police officers are stationed at the corner of 3rd and Locust Streets and will direct buses to parking areas with hooded meters near the Civic Center. Groups traveling in personal vehicles are responsible for locating their own parking in ramps or metered (non-hooded) spots downtown.
- * Buses will remain parked for the duration of the show. At the conclusion, bus drivers must be available to move their bus if necessary, even if their students are staying at the Civic Center to eat lunch or take a tour.
- * Buses are not generally permitted to drop off or pick up students near the Civic Center. If a bus must return to school during the performance, prior arrangements must be made with Des Moines Performing Arts Education staff.

ARRIVAL TO THE CIVIC CENTER

- * When arriving at the Civic Center, please have an **adult lead your group** for identification and check-in purposes. A Des Moines Performing Arts staff member may be stationed outside the building to direct you to a specific entrance.
- * Des Moines Performing Arts staff will usher groups into the building as quickly as possible. Once inside, you will be directed to the check-in area.
- * Applause seating is not ticketed. Ushers will escort groups to their seats; various seating factors including group size, grade levels, arrival time, and special needs seating requests may be used to assign a group's specific location in the hall.
- * We request that an **adult lead the group into the theater and other adults position themselves throughout the group**; we request this arrangement for supervision purposes, especially in the event that a group must be seated in multiple rows.
- * Please allow ushers to seat your entire group before rearranging seat locations and taking groups to the restroom.
- * As a reminder, children under the age of three are not permitted in the theater for Applause performances.

IN THE THEATER

- * In case of a medical emergency, please notify the nearest usher. A medical assistant is on duty for all Civic Center performances.
- * We ask that adults handle any disruptive behavior in their groups. If the behavior persists, an usher may request your group to exit the theater.
- * Following the performance groups may exit the theater and proceed to their bus(es).
- * If an item is lost at the Civic Center, please see an usher or contact us after the performance at 515.246.2355.

QUESTIONS?

Please contact the Education department at education@desmoinesperformingarts.org or 515.246.2355.
Thank you!

VOCABULARY



SLAM VOCABULARY

slam poets: A slam is a competitive, high energy poetry performance. Slam poets have one enemy — boredom! If their audience is bored, then they have missed their goal entirely. Their whole purpose is to grab your attention so that you care about the words and ideas they are expressing.

open mic: means “open microphone”, meaning everyone can get a chance to take the stage with poetry, music, or spoken word



poetry: the written form of poems, the study of the art of “few words/ big meaning”

spoken word: poetry that is meant to be heard, not just read silently. The art of spoken word includes both content (*WHAT* the poet is saying) and performance (*HOW EFFECTIVELY* the poet says it)

POETIC DEVICES

alliteration: repeated sounds at the beginnings of two or more words. For example, “wildly weeping” “crazily creeping”



allusion: a reference to a famous person, place or thing. For example, The Mayhem Poets refer to Malcolm X.



MalcolmX.com



napiagnol.blogspot.com

imagery: From the word “image”, imagery describes words that bring up a picture in the reader’s or listener’s head.

Listen for the use of imagery in The Mayhem Poets’ poems.

rhyme: two or more words that have identical sounds in their endings.



belsizecommunitylibrary.com

rhymed couplet: two lines of poetry that end in rhymed words. For example, from William Shakespeare’s *MacBeth*:



covermytimeline.com

slant rhyme:

Two or more words that have similar-sounding endings, but not perfectly the same.



hearhythmguide.com

rhythm: from *rhythmos* (Greek) which means “measured motion”. Rhythm is a pattern of

stressed and unstressed syllables in verse form. In order to hear rhythm, a poem must be read aloud.

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE



Get ready for a verbal adventure as these vibrant poets take the stage and present poetry like you've never heard it before. This accessible collective of young poets show how meter, rhyme, and verbal dexterity are not only the concerns of the poets that young people study in school, but also of contemporary slam performers.

Run Time: Approx. 60 minutes

WHAT YOU WILL EXPERIENCE

Slam poets have one enemy — boredom! If their audience is bored, then they have missed their goal entirely. Their whole purpose is to grab your attention so that you care about the words and ideas they are expressing.

The Mayhem Poets are three theatre trained, comedically gifted, lyrical virtuosos. They seamlessly blend raw elements of hip hop, theatre, improvisation and stand-up comedy to tell gut-wrenching truths that leave audiences forever changed.

CHANGING REPERTORY

The Mayhem Poets are always up to date with a changing repertory that addresses contemporary world issues. They keep it fresh by writing and rehearsing new pieces all the time. Do you think it would be fun if that was your job?

“on a mission to change peoples lives and reshape society’s view of poetry...”

SPOKEN WORD SKILLS

Let's see if we can get a jump-start on your spoken-word training! Watch for examples of these skills in The Mayhem Poets' performance. Then try them out yourself!

Articulation: using the mouth to form words clearly

Projection: using your breath to amplify your vocal sound without yelling

Physical Presence: using your hands, face, and body to help the audience understand your meaning

Interpretation: using expression to show the different emotions in a piece of writing



ABOUT THE MAYHEM POETS



Learn more about The Mayhem Poets prior to seeing their performance.

BEGINNINGS

The Mayhem mission originated at Rutgers University in 2000, when Kyle Sutton and Scott Tarazevits started an open-mic on campus called Verbal Mayhem. Their idea was to find a way to access people from all walks of life with spoken word. As a result they reached out to prisons, fraternities, churches, and hip hop/poetry fans alike to attract the most diverse poetry open-mic scene in the world. The spirit of Verbal Mayhem convinced the two young performers to craft a show and go on a mission to change peoples lives and reshape society's view of poetry.

COLLABORATIONS

The Mayhem Poets' unique approach to spoken word has them collaborating with the likes of hip hop legends such as KRS ONE as well as world class musicians including Greg Patillo (beat box flute) and Jane Hunt (violin). Their CD, *Reverse Birth*, was hailed as one of the top spoken word CD's of 2007 by about.com's poetry section. Their NYC-based educational training operation "Slam Chops" is providing opportunities for aspiring poets of all ages.

Always up to date with a changing repertory addressing contemporary world issues, this one of a kind Tour de Force stays fresh no matter what the venue. From theatre festivals to hip hop or rock concerts, community events to youth performances, Mayhem is the future.

ACCOLADES

The Mayhem Poets' unique approach to spoken word has landed them feature spots on the *Today Show* and *Eyewitness News* after winning first place and a grant for \$100,000 in the Microsoft Idea Wins Challenge in 2006. Since then, the Mayhem Poets have been touring internationally and spreading their mission to reshape society's view of poetry.

may•hem
[mey-hem, mey-uh m]:
deliberate damage

Why would poets choose to use the word "mayhem" to describe themselves?

MEET THE MAYHEM POETS



KYLE RAPPS

Kyle was born in Michigan and raised in New Jersey, where he learned how to “lyrically split atoms” and “Kill-em with Concepts.” His smooth flowing, hard-hitting hip hop style and dynamic theatrical presence have garnered him poetry slam victories across the nation, and brought him all the way to the Grand Slam finals at the legendary Nuyorican Poets Cafe’ in New York City. Under the name Black Skeptik, Kyle released two hip hop singles: “Rent” featuring rap legend KRS ONE, and “Frankenstein Saves Hip Hop” featuring production by Blockhead and a video with Crazy Legs of Rocksteady crew. Looking for a more cutting edge sensibility Kyle is now finishing up his debut album, which was recorded in Los Angeles, New York, and a Liberian refugee camp in Ghana, Africa with the new alias, Kyle Rapps. With a B.A. in Spanish from Rutgers University, Kyle can communicate with a multitude of audiences and has led writing and performance workshops around the globe. He dedicates all of his artistic endeavors to the memory of his mother, Barbara Sutton.



SCOTT RAVEN

Scott was drawn to the stage since birth; his pacifier his first microphone. As a teen he quickly became active in the local Jewish community, giving Shabbat speeches and histrionic-filled haftorah portions, assuring his Jewish identity would remain an important part of his writing and career. His penchant for performance led him to Rutgers University where he studied theater and journalism. After graduation, he co-created Mayhem Poets, blending his love for acting and writing. Scott has co-authored and performed in two full length spoken-word plays, *Masque* (2001) and *New Street Poets* (2005), has taken Shakespeare and voice classes at the Stella Adler Acting Studio, and studied improvisation with the UCB. He is currently working on a collection of Shakespearean “Sconnetts”, a fictional as well as a novel loosely based on his touring experiences throughout elementary and middle schools, and he recently finished shooting a commercial and two independent films.



MASON GRANGER

Originally from Willingboro, New Jersey, Mason took his exceptional SAT marks and perfect score on the math section of the New Jersey High School Proficiency Test and to Rutgers University to pursue a life of poetry. Once there, Mason infused academia into his creative writings, resulting in a style that Albert Einstein and Ralph Waldo Emerson would admire.

Sweeping through the collegiate poetry scene like a breath of fresh air, Mason hosted the campus open mic Verbal Mayhem for three years, eventually becoming the poet laureate of Livingston College.

TALK ABOUT IT!

1. Which poet do you think is most like you? Why?
2. How do you think what they studied in college influences what they write about?
3. What would you put in your own “bio”? (Short for biography)

PRE-SHOW EXPLORATION, pg. 1

1) CLASS POETRY SLAM

Goal: Students will experiment with the competitive nature of poetry slams in a fun setting.

Explanation: Poetry slams are a tradition that shaped every member of The Mayhem Poets. Slams are how they honed their skills and learned from other performers. The purpose of this slam is not to focus on the quality of the performances or the winner, but to demystify the whole poetry slam process.

Activity:

1. Before students arrive, set up the classroom with an audience-style seating arrangement. Prepare the “mic” area by taping a spot on the floor, setting up a podium, or with a real (not necessarily “live”) mic and/or mic stand, borrowed from the chorus or music teacher.
2. Post a sign or write clearly on the board “Poetry Slam!” Perhaps play some hip hop beats low in the background to set the mood.
3. Tell students, “We are going to hold a class-wide poetry slam in less than an hour!”
4. Give students the rules of poetry slams: (based upon National Poetry Slam standards at <https://www.poetryslam.com/book/nps-rules>)
 - A. Everyone has an opportunity to perform.
 - B. Each performer is assessed by five judges, who score the performance from 1-10. (One decimal place is encouraged to help prevent ties.) When tabulating the results, the lowest and highest scores are dropped and the remaining 3 scores are averaged.
5. Tell students that everyone, including the judges, will have a turn at “the mic.” (This helps to foster empathy and respect among students.) For this first slam, Instead of the national standard of three minutes, reduce the performance time to one minute.
6. Expect students to clamor to be judges... which you can capitalize on when you stage another slam.
7. Create a simple and quick rubric on the board for the judges to use as a guide. (See example at right).
8. Tell students that they have 5 minutes to find and rehearse their text. They may write it or take it from any text in the room. (For a first “poetry slam,” ask younger students to choose only one sentence from a class text, and to read it with expression and feeling. For older students, ask them to write one true statement or describe one thing that is beautiful to them and choose two words to emphasize.)

Slam Criteria	points
content: the words and ideas expressed in the piece	5
performance: the poet makes eye contact and engages the audience with voice and physical presence	5

9. While students are working, quietly select an MC, a timekeeper, and a scorekeeper.
 - A. Give the MC a class list and a highlighter to call upon students. (Determine the performance order in advance; it’s easy to go reverse-alphabetical so there’s no bargaining for performance order.)
 - B. The timekeeper operates a one-minute timer and alerts the performer with a hand signal when only ten seconds remain. A performer who goes over time is deducted one full point from their final score.
 - C. The scorekeeper uses a calculator and records each participant’s score.
10. Keep it moving quickly! Supply judges with scrap paper to write their scores on. Make sure each judge writes the name of the performer on the scrap paper to prevent confusion.
11. Do not announce the winner at the end of class. Save that for your next class meeting, when you might prepare the students for a second slam — perhaps with a theme, or with teams competing. You can get more specific on the content assessed or the speaking skills you are looking for in their next performances.

Follow-up Questions:

1. What was your favorite part of our first slam?
2. How did you choose your text?
3. What would you do differently next time?
4. What makes a good slam performer?
5. What rules would you change about this contest?
6. What other rules would you add?
7. Is it possible to be completely “fair” when judging poetry? Why or why not?



PRE-SHOW EXPLORATION, pg. 2

2) LIST POEM

Goal: To experiment with the writing of free-verse (unrhymed) poetry and practice purposeful revision.

Explanation: In this activity, students will use the Shel Silverstein poem “Sick” as a mentor text to write their own self-inspired list poem.

Materials: Copies of “Sick” (Page 13)

Activity:

1. Have students first list everything on themselves: each piece of clothing, everything in their pockets, everything that is touching them. Encourage them to use adjectives and nouns. “Tattered blue denim jacket that belonged to my sister” is more powerful than just “jacket.”
2. Ask one or two students to share their lists, allowing other students to comment on things they may have missed or ways to be more descriptive.
3. Give students a copy of “Sick” by Shel Silverstein.
4. Read it aloud three times, by three different readers. What can you tell about the author of this poem? What parts do you like best? Why?
5. Ask students to notice punctuation, line breaks, italics, and the ending of the poem. What is this poem a list of?
6. Create a checklist or rubric with the class to clarify what needs to be in their poem. A list, at least ___ lines, a final line that reveals what the poem is a list of, other poetic devices you may have worked on previously in class.
7. Guide students in the writing of their own list poem. Ask them to refer to the lists they made in step one as ideas in crafting their own poem. If students would rather “list” things other than a personal inventory, allow them to do so. They could write about the classroom, things that make them happy or any familiar place or person.
8. With a few minutes remaining, ask students to revise their poem to put in something unexpected or funny.
9. Ask students to pair and share their poems with one another, or to share with the entire class.

Follow-up Questions:

1. Did you learn anything valuable about your classmates? About yourself?
2. What was most challenging for you about this assignment? What was easiest for you?
3. Did you make anyone (including yourself!) laugh with your poetry?

3) ARTICULATION!

Goal: To appreciate the strong articulation skills of slam poets

Explanation: In this activity, students will practice tongue twisters to heighten their articulatory agility.

Materials: Copies of “Articulatory Agility” (Page 13)

Activity:

1. Talk with students about how The Mayhem Poets have a rapid-fire style of delivery that requires quick speaking. They weren’t born with the talent to speak quickly, clearly, and with emphasis. They learned from others and practiced polishing their articulatory agility. As a class, you are going to do an activity will give students an opportunity to practice their own clear speaking.
2. Have students do a simple warm-up by repeating five times fast the following:
 - A. “Toy Boat”
 - B. “Unique New York”
 - C. “Swiss Wristwatch”
3. Ask students to contribute other tongue twisters that they know and have the class try them out.
4. Tell students they are ready for the ultimate challenge. Hand out copies of “Articulatory Agility”.
5. Put students in partners and have them try reading the tongue twister aloud to each other.
6. You may even decide to have students write their own tongue twisters! What makes a good tongue twister? Is it rhyme or alliteration? Or something else?

Follow-Up Questions:

1. What was easy about this activity? What was challenging?
2. Why do you think articulation is an important skill for slam poets?



REPRODUCIBLES (For use with Pre-Show Activities 2 and 3 on page 12)

“Sick” by Shel Silverstein

“I cannot go to school today,”
Said little Peggy Ann McKay.
“I have the measles and the mumps,
A gash, a rash and purple bumps.
My mouth is wet, my throat is dry,
I’m going blind in my right eye.
My tonsils are as big as rocks,
I’ve counted sixteen chicken pox
And there’s one more — that’s seventeen,
And don’t you think my face looks green?
My leg is cut — my eyes are blue —
It might be instamatic flu.
I cough and sneeze and gasp and choke,
I’m sure that my left leg is broke —
My hip hurts when I move my chin,
My belly button’s caving in,
My back is wrenched, my ankle’s sprained,
My ‘pendix pains each time it rains.
My nose is cold, my toes are numb.
I have a sliver in my thumb.
My neck is stiff, my voice is weak,
I hardly whisper when I speak.
My tongue is filling up my mouth,
I think my hair is falling out.
My elbow’s bent, my spine ain’t straight,
My temperature is one-o-eight.
My brain is shrunk, I cannot hear,
There is a hole inside my ear.
I have a hangnail, and my heart is — what?
What’s that? What’s that you say?
You say today is. . . Saturday?
G’bye, I’m going out to play!”

From *Where the Sidewalk Ends* by Shel Silverstein.
Copyright © 2003 by [HarperCollins Children’s Books](#).

“Articulatory Agility”

“Articulatory agility is a desirable ability to manipulate with dexterity the tongue, the teeth, the lips.”

OR

"Articulatory agility
is developing the ability
to effortlessly and believably
utter clearly
the most conceivably
convoluted consonant combinations
in the world.

Flexible lips and strengthened tongue tips
are needed to toss off Cowardian quips.

And who can dispute a relaxed lower jaw for
spewing forth a torrent of Shaw?

It takes superlative diction
to theatrically mumble
and clearly be misunderstood in the
jumble.

Be it couplets or prose, be it "dese, dem, or
dose"

from Shakespeare to Simon,
from Moliere to Mamet,
it simply won't do
if they don't understand it!"

-Lilene Mansell

POST-SHOW ASSESSMENT, pg. 1

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who was your favorite poet and why?
2. What type of poet would you be if you were part of Mayhem?
3. What did you notice (besides poetry) about The Mayhem Poets' performance? What were they wearing? What did they have with them? How did they interact?
4. What did The Mayhem Poets remind you of?
5. What emotions did you see expressed in the show? When?
6. Is there a particular line or phrase that struck you as "hitting the nail on the head"? Why was this statement so powerful? Was it the content alone? What was it about the structure of the words itself that made it so striking?
7. How did The Mayhem Poets use humor or comedy in their performance?
8. Would you describe The Mayhem Poets' poems as being personal? Why or why not?
9. How did The Mayhem Poets address real-world or current issues in their performance? How did the art form of spoken word shed light on these issues?
10. What were your expectations about poetry prior to seeing the show? Have your thoughts and feelings about poetry changed at all? If so, how?
11. If you had to guess, what or who do you think influenced the different members of The Mayhem Poets? What led you to that speculation?
12. What would you do to improve the show?
13. What clothes would you decide to wear if you were a poet performing on stage? Why?
14. After seeing the show, why do you think the group is called The Mayhem Poets?

POST-SHOW ASSESSMENT

1) SLAM — ROUND TWO

Stage a second poetry slam (see page 11 for tips on your first class poetry slam) that now features all original student writing. Give students an opportunity to write, revise, rehearse, and add other students to the performance of their piece. Make a little Mayhem in your class!

2) POEMS TO CHANGE THE WORLD

The Mayhem Poets address current issues or things they care deeply about in their poems. Have students work together to brainstorm a social problem that they care deeply about and then write free verse about the steps we need to take to make change possible.

3) BRAG RHYMES

Have students work as a team to describe their individual talents. Each student's talents should be described in two lines that rhyme with one another (a rhyming couplet). Last, have the group put their lines together as a performance.

4) WRITE A LETTER

Write a letter to The Mayhem Poets describing how their poems made you feel. Give bonus points if students write their letters in verse form or as a haiku.

Mail letters to:

Des Moines Performing Arts
Attn: Education Department
221 Walnut Street
Des Moines, IA 50309

5) WRITE A REVIEW

Ask students to imagine that they are a critic for the school newspaper. They are going to write a review of the The Mayhem Poets performance to inform others about what they experienced. They should describe with detail: what they saw; what they heard; how the performance made them feel; what the performance reminded them of; and what their favorite part was and why. Remind students that they must paint a picture of the experience with their words so that others who did not see the performance can imagine it as vividly as possible.

RESOURCES AND SOURCES



BOOKS

For Students

Poetry Slam: The Competitive Art of Performance Poetry, edited by Gary Glazner. Manic D Press, 2000.

An anthology of poems by slam champions, essays on how to run a slam, winning strategies, and tips for memorizing poems.

Where the Sidewalk Ends: Poems and Drawings by Shel Silverstein. HarperCollins, 1974.

For Teachers

A Note Slipped Under the Door
by Nick Flynn

Pizza, Pigs, and Poetry: How to Write a Poem
by Jack Prelutsky

Poetry Matters: Writing a Poem from the Inside Out
by Ralph Fletcher

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Video:

Slam Nation: The Sport of Spoken Word. New Video Group, 1998. Not rated. The film follows three slam poets as they journey to the National Poetry Slam.

Websites:

Nuyorican Poets Café

<https://www.poetryslam.com/slam/nuyorican-poets-cafe>

Teen Ink. A teen literary magazine and website www.teenink.com/

Turn Your Students Into Well-Versed Poets

http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson262.shtml

SOURCES

Geodesic Management: <http://www.geodesicmanagement.com/>

The Mayhem Poets: Official Site. <http://www.mayhempoets.com/>

“The Mayhem Poets Study Guide” by State Theatre New Jersey:

<http://gator3029.hostgator.com/~geomgmt/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/mayhemPoetsSG.pdf>

“The Mayhem Poets Study Guide” by Tilles Center:

http://www.tillescenter.org/pdf/education/201213/studyguide_mayhem_poets.pdf

Slam in the Schools

http://www.whbpac.org/media/events_1087768791.pdf