



BROWARD
CENTER
— *for the* —
PERFORMING ARTS



STUDY GUIDE

MIDDLE SCHOOL



The Mayhem Poets

Performance Summary

Few people would say “let’s go see a poetry show!” The Mayhem Poets are on a mission to change that. Having been dubbed “an amazing ride” by the **New York Times**, these theatre trained, comedically gifted, lyrical virtuosos seamlessly blend raw elements of hip hop, theatre, improv and stand up comedy to tell gut wrenching truths that leave audiences forever changed.

The show is fast-paced, funny, creative, and thought provoking. The performers hope you will leave the show with a new appreciation for the power of well-chosen and well-spoken words---and motivation to write your own spoken word pieces.

Background Information

Spoken-word poetry has been around for thousands of years. Before there was written language, oral poets were the keepers of the history and mythology of their people. Epic poems such as Homer's *Iliad* and the Scandinavian saga *Beowulf* were passed down orally for generations before they were finally written down. West Africa has the griot (pronounced GREE-oh), a storyteller and historian who speaks or sings the history of his people. William Shakespeare is probably the world's best-known performance poet; his plays were written in verse and were meant to be performed, not read.

America in the 20th century saw the rise of spoken-word poetry among the writers of the Harlem Renaissance, the Beat generation, and the hip-hop scene. These artists used poetry to interpret and comment on the social upheaval of their day and to encourage ordinary people to tell their stories. Today's spoken-word poetry is heavily influenced by these earlier movements.

Slam poetry is an interactive poetry competition that uses elements of theater, hip-hop, music, and stand-up comedy as poets work to impress the crowd with entertaining, imaginative poetry. Poets sometimes wear costumes, incorporate songs, music, or chants in their poetry, and can have a funny, serious, or political message. Official slam rules require a poem to be no more than three minutes in length. In competition, props, costumes, and music are not allowed. This American-born art form has spread all over the world.

Theatre Etiquette

(Before the Show)

It is often helpful to remind students of appropriate audience etiquette by explaining and discussing **why** these rules of behavior are important.

Audience members should:

- listen carefully to the ushers, your teachers – this gets everyone to their seats quickly and ensures a pleasant experience
- walk single-file and hold hand-rails as you use steps – this also keeps everyone safe
- listen carefully to the performers – they are working hard to entertain and inform you with lots of clues about the story
- refrain from talking – this allows everyone to enjoy the performance without being distracted
- laugh if something is funny, but not too loudly – you don't want to miss any dialogue
- pay attention to the lighting, scenery, costumes, and music – all of these elements help provide more details to tell the story in an interesting way
- applaud at the end – this shows the performers that you respect and appreciate their work

Teacher Instructions (After the Show) – *Choose from the activities listed on the following pages to extend student learning.*

Language Arts Connection

Writing Your Own Poetry
Follow the Mayhem Poet's Process

Warm Up Your Imagination – (Step 1) - Stand in a circle – toss a ball to someone across the circle and say a random word out loud. Keep tossing the ball around the circle until the group feels comfortable generating random words.

(Step 2) Toss the ball but generate words in a specific Environment (circus, bowling alley, beach, ...) One person (could be the teacher) keeps the list of words on the board as a vocabulary list.

Find Your Words and Rhymes – Use Acronyms (LOL, BFF, ...) Cliches (people in glass houses, sticks & stones, ...) and Puns (Lord of the Ringmaster, ...) to enhance your ideas about rhyming.

Make a Personal Connection – Write about specific ideas, issues, places, and things that matter to you

- Explore your connection to an environment (pick a specific place that you have something to say about). Free write about home, school, your favorite hangout.
- Expand on the place you come from – I am from _____ (where is home to you, most comfortable, favorite thing to do, something from childhood, plans for future)
- Group Identity – working in a small group – write a 'boast rap' about yourselves or a 'message rap' about something you strongly believe.

Use the Poet Tree (see the next two pages for an example and a blank template)

Get Ready to Perform

- Work with a partner – practice lines emphasizing different syllables and words, using different vocal inflections – provide feedback for each other.
- Work in groups – pick a joke out of a hat or bring in your own – take 30 seconds to think about how to deliver it for the best effect – take turns telling the joke and make changes each time you tell it (e.g. add pauses, change tempo, change emphasis, add a rhythm, ...)
- Enunciation – Use tongue twisters to warm up your mouth then work on being very clear – emphasizing the consonants!
- Practice projecting – speak loudly enough so that people some distance away can hear and understand you
- Get physical – if you are having trouble adding movement, pick one line in your poem and find a pose or a motion that helps emphasize it.

Hold your own poetry slam! (LAFS.6/7/8.SL.2.5)

- No more than 3 minutes
- Even though official Poetry slam rules don't allow it – considering adding costumes, props, and music
- Invite judges (students, parents, ...) to score on the poem itself and its presentation



Using the Poet Tree

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1. Pick one word or environment.
2. On a blank Poet Tree (see the next page), list 4 or more words or phrases related to that word.
3. Choose one of those words to generate some related ideas to add to the Poet Tree: clichés and puns, acronyms, pop-culture references, etc.
4. Start a rhyme bank using normal, multi-syllabic and slant rhymes.
5. Find an emotional/personal connection to something in the tree.
6. Write a simple statement about poem's overall concept. This can be the first line or last line of your poem.
7. Using your tree, begin crafting a few lines of poetry. Keep in mind you can follow this closely or more loosely as a way of generating ideas and making connections. You can start writing full lines, too, throughout the process. Here's Scott's "chicken" Poet Tree to use as a guide.

POET

PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

Love to eat, eat unhealthy, obsessive. I can make great chicken noises, etc.

STATE POEM'S OVERALL CONCEPT (and begin crafting poem's first few lines)

I was addicted to chicken.

Boston Market would spark it, Popeye's would satisfy my late-night cries, KFC meant to me that I would Kill for Chicken. I started reading Chicken Soup for the Chicken Soul. Did you see those breasts? I want to lick those legs. Still salivating over those mesmerizing thighs. Fast food wasn't enough slowly transform into a chicken...

TREE

RHYME BANK

finger lickin, sicken, satisfy my cries, thighs, quicken, things, onion rings, stings, tender, rocking, bgocking, side, wide, confide, slide, tide ride, guide

RELATED WORDS & PHRASES

turkey, salmonella, breasts, legs, thighs, wings, marsala, murphy, fast food, Purdue, skin, golden brown, eggs, chicken comb, buffalo tenders

POP-CULTURE REFERENCES

Chicken Soup for the Chicken Soul, Stella!!! to get to the other side, Roy's, KFC, Popeye's, Kenny Rogers, Chicken Holiday, Foghorn Leghorn, Back to the Future

ACRONYMS

KFC
(Kill for Chicken)

CLICHÉS & PUNS

play with drumsticks, cock-a-doodle-doo, chicken contender, New York chickerbocker, fowl out, hens and family hatch a plan, sweating grease

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STATE POEM'S OVERALL CONCEPT
(and begin crafting poem's first few lines)

POET

TREE

PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

RELATED WORDS & PHRASES

RHYME BANK

POP-CULTURE REFERENCES

ACRONYMS

CLICHÉS & PUNS

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Name: _____

(LAFS.6/7/8.W.1.3) (TH.68.C.1.1)

Write a Review

In the space below identify your favorite part of the performance and explain what was most effective. Describe how the text helped you understand the show's message. You should also include recommendations for areas to improve. In addition to the performers and their work, consider the production elements (lighting, scenery, props, music, ...)

Name: _____

(LAFS.6/7/8.L.3.5) (LAFS.68.RH.2.5) (TH.68.C.1.3) (TH.68.C.1.5) (TH.68.C.2.4) (TH.68.S.1.3)

Vocabulary

- **Harlem Renaissance** - an intellectual, social, and artistic explosion centered in Harlem, New York, spanning the 1920s.
- **Beat Generation** - a movement of young people in the 1950s who rejected conventional society and favored Zen Buddhism, and modern jazz
- **Improv / Improvisation** – a spontaneous performance without planning – making it up ‘on the spot’
- **Production Elements** – costumes, lighting, props, scenery, and sound that contribute to a production
- **Review** – writing that gives the audience a sense of what to expect at the performance – may include positive and negative feedback
- **Upheaval** – extreme agitation, disorder, radical change

Standards Alignment: The activities in this study guide are aligned with the standards listed below. When teachers incorporate the arts, they increase student engagement, offer multiple points for students to access the curriculum, and provide alternative means for students to demonstrate what they know.

Florida Theater Standards	
Grades 6-8	
Critical Thinking and Reflection	
TH.68.C.1.1	Devise an original work based on a community issue that explores various solutions to a problem.
TH.68.C.1.3	Determine the purpose(s), elements, meaning, and value of a theatrical work based on personal, cultural, or historical standards.
TH.68.C.1.5	Describe how a theatrical activity can entertain or instruct an audience.
TH.68.C.2.4	Defend personal responses to a theatre production.
Skills, Techniques, and Processes	
TH.68.S.1.3	Describe criteria for the evaluation of dramatic texts, performances, direction, and production elements.

Language Arts Florida Standards	
Grades 6-8	
Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects	
LAFS.68.RH.2.5	Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).

Language Arts Florida Standards	
Grade 6	
Speaking and Listening	
LAFS.6.SL.1.2	Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.
LAFS.6.SL.2.5	Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.
Language	
LAFS.6.L.3.5	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
Writing	
LAFS.6.W.1.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

Language Arts Florida Standards	
Grade 7	
Speaking and Listening	
LAFS.7.SL.1.2	Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue under study.
LAFS.7.SL.2.5	Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentations to clarify claims and findings and emphasize salient points.
Language	
LAFS.7.L.3.5	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
Writing	
LAFS.7.W.1.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

Language Arts Florida Standards	
Grade 8	
Speaking and Listening	
LAFS.8.SL.1.2	Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.
LAFS.8.SL.2.5	Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.
Language	
LAFS.8.L.3.5	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
Writing	
LAFS.8.W.1.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

Cover Sheet

Please collect student work samples and attach it to this cover sheet. Pony all work samples to:

KCW – 3rd floor.

Attention: Lauri Foster

School Name: _____

SEAS Show: Mayhem Poets

Grade: _____