

Working with slam poetry – Analysis, interpretation and creative writing

by Linda Weiland



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Slam poetry ist kurz, packend und direkt.
Slam poetry ist vielfältig, inklusiv und offen.
Slam poetry ist interaktiv und performativ.
Slam poetry ist sozial.

Es ist daher eine besonders geeignete Textsorte für Jugendliche, da in den *poems* auf eine lockere, unkonventionelle Weise Probleme und Themen angesprochen werden, die für Jugendliche ein hohes Wiedererkennungseffekt aufweisen. In der Unterrichtseinheit *Working with slam poetry* lernen die Schülerinnen und Schüler ausgewählte *slam poetry*-Texte kennen und werden mit den typischen Merkmalen des Genres vertraut gemacht. Sie führt in das Format *poetry slam* ein und veranlasst die Lernenden, *slam*-Texte mit eigenen Gedanken und Vorlieben zu erarbeiten. Und sie ermutigt die Schüler und Schülerinnen, ihr eigenes *slam poem* zu schreiben und es in einem Klassen-*slam* aufzuführen.

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Competences and skills:

The unit *Working with Slam poetry* first and foremost trains **listening, viewing and text analysis skills**. In each of the topics, students watch a video of a slam poem and analyse the content as well as the performance. In addition, every topic offers a creative writing task in which students get the opportunity to practise writing their own slam poems which culminates in them organising their own class slam. As slam poems are a combination of text and performance, alongside with their **creative writing skills**, students also train their **presentation and performance skills**.

Overview:

List of abbreviations:

A Analysis	C Comment	CT Creative task
D Discussion	G Group work	L Working with language
P Working with a photo	R Research	RC Reading comprehension
T Working with a text	W Writing	V Working with video
VLC Viewing/listening comprehension		



Topic	Material	Method/Skills
1: Family conflicts	M1–M2	A, D, L, T, VLC
2: Defining slam poetry	M3–M4	A, D, RC, W, T
3: Father and son	M5–M6	A, CT, D, L, T, V
4: Dealing with anxiety	M7–M8	A, CT, D, T, V
5: How to say no	M9–M10	A, D, G, RC, P, T, V
6: Spoken word versus slam poetry	M11	A, D, V, R
7: How to write a slam poem	M12	A, CT, G, R, W
8: Exam		A, C, CT, L, RC, T, W, VLC

M2 Worksheet – Maia Mayor: *Perfect*


Pre-listening activity

-  1. What are typical conflicts between parents and children? Collect ideas with a partner.



Comprehension

-  2. Listen to/watch Maia Mayor's *Perfect*. What is the poem about? Compare and contrast it with your results from task 1:
<https://raabe.click/MaiaMayorPerfect>
-  3. Read the poem.
- Who is the speaker? Find evidence in the text.
 - Of what does the speaker accuse Maia?

Working with the text

-  4. Analyse the speaker's tone and language. What is the effect?
5. Interpret: what is the message of the poem?

Discussion and reflection

-  6. Discuss in a group:
- To whom do you think is the poem addressed?
 - Which pieces of advice should the voice take, which should she leave?
 - How should the voice react to the mother's confrontation?
 - To what extent can *Perfect* be considered a typical "teen poem"?
-  7. Reflect: how would you describe Maia Mayor's performance? What does her performance add to the poem?

Worksheet – Marc Smith: *The Big Definition of Slam Poetry* M4

Working with the text

- Maia Mayor's poem is a slam poem: <https://raabe.click/MaiaMayorPerfect>
 - Compare and contrast *Perfect* with your associations of traditional poetry.
 - What might be characteristics of slam poetry?
- Marc Smith is often considered as the "father of slam poetry". Read his definition of slam poetry and collect characteristics of it.



Further development

- Slam poetry is typically performed at competitions called "poetry slams".
 - Work in groups of three. Split up the following texts and read them.



 https://raabe.click/SlamPoetry1	 https://raabe.click/SlamPoetry2	 https://raabe.click/SlamPoetry3
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Explain: what is a poetry slam and how does it work?

Reflect: how might the competitive format influence the poems that are written for and performed at a poetry slam?

- Meet and share your findings. Add your ideas to your list of slam poetry characteristics from task 2.
- Reread *Perfect* and identify features of slam poetry in Mayor's poem.
 - Write Maia's response to the slam as a slam poem.



Worksheet – Olivia Gatwood & Megan Falley: *Say No*

M10

Pre-reading activity

1. Study the picture.



Source: Pete Souza/Wikimedia Commons/White House (public domain)

- a) What do you think is the situation?
- b) Find out what "kiss cams" are. Then watch the video at <https://raabe.click/KissCam>

Explain what is happening. What do you think of the situation? Do you think it is a good idea? Why (not)? Discuss.



Working with the text

2. Read the first part of Olivia Gatwood's and Megan Falley's *Say No*. How does it connect to the video? What is the message? Explain.
3. *Say No* is performed by Olivia Gatwood and Megan Falley in a group performance. Both poets present as a team and take turns performing lines of the poem. Some lines they perform together.

Work with a partner. Which are the most important lines/words/phrases for you? Which lines would you want to stress? How would you convey the message of the poem?



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