RECAP

WRITING A SLAM POEM

Have students write and recite a slam poem in class. Invite them first to share their knowledge on this oral tradition and obtain information on its origins. Then ask them to work in pairs to compose a spoken-word piece that should last about two minutes.

In the same way that poetry slams sometimes prescribe a theme, invite your aspiring slammers to be inspired by the quote by Henri Michaux: "We scream to silence that which screams." Slamming is a freeform poetry that advocates openness and flow. Emphasize that the theme is just a starting point.

The following list of emotions may help students get started: anger, rebellion, pleasure, fear, anxiety, shame, rejection, despair, loneliness, sadness, joy, frustration. Remind them that slam poems work to a rhythm that is sometimes based on repeating key phrases—a technique that can strengthen the structure of the text while leaving the verses less structured, more free.

Lastly, invite each team to recite their work in class, in an atmosphere of openness and listening. Then start a discussion, using the following questions to stimulate reflection:

△ Why do you think the slam is recited to a live audience instead of being published? What role does the voice play? The audience?

△ Have you ever been moved by poetry readings, lyrics or spoken-word performances? Why?

△ In your view, does any one text express "a heartfelt cry?" Which one?

You can also have students keep a journal to document their process, inspirations and drafts. This will be submitted and evaluated at the end of the activity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(to find out more about the primal scream)

Arthur Janov, *The Primal Scream*, Putnam [1970], Dell [1973]

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This guide was produced by NFB Education under the supervision of Sophie Quevillon, NFB Coordinator of Educational Materials. It was written by Marie-Douce St-Jacques, interdisciplinary artist and visual arts specialist, in collaboration with Sophie Quevillon.