

English 22.2.21

Wednesday, February 10, 2021 11:22 AM

TBQ: Can I read and discuss a wide range of poetry?

Our new unit will be all about **slam poetry**. This is a type of **performance poetry**. You will be writing and performing a **slam poem of your own about identity** at the end of this unit.

► What is slam poetry?

A slam is a knockout performance poetry competition in which poets perform their own work to a time limit and are given scores based on content, style, delivery and level of audience response. Over two or three rounds, poets are knocked out until one top scorer emerges as the winner. They're designed with audiences in mind, and their reaction to a poem can be a factor in how the judges score each poet. Poets are free to do work in any style on any subject: slams attract a wide range of performers and can encompass heartfelt love poetry, searing social commentary, uproarious comic routines, and bittersweet personal confessional pieces. What unites slammers is their attention to the dual skills of writing and performance.

A bit of history

Slams began in the United States in the 1980s. The slam scene quickly spread from cities like Chicago and New York, and is now thriving all around the world. There are hundreds of regular slams run in clubs, bars, pubs, theatres and at festivals all over Britain every year.

Slam Rules:

Rules may vary from slam to slam, but the basic rules are:

- Each poem must be the poet's own writing
- Each poet gets a limited time to perform one poem per round
- Of the scores the poet receives from the (usually) five judges, the high and low scores are dropped and the middle three are added together, giving the poet a total score for that round

After each round the poets with the highest scores progress to the next round until a winner is determined (often start with 8 poets in the first round, then keep the 4 best for the second round and have a final between 2 poets)

If you can, watch the poets *Paul Lyalls* and *Elsbeth Murray* slam, with their poems about *equality*.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/events/exdmxj/play/p020y4nb/p011zdsc>

If you were voting, who would win and why?

Now read this poem by Michel Rosen and then follow the link below to listen to it (or read it in your head and out loud, if you do not have access to the computer).

Then answer the following question:

Was it better to read it, or listen to it?

Why did you feel this way?

The Torch by Michel Rosen

I nagged my mum and dad for a torch.
'Oh go on. I'd love a torch.
One of those ones with black rubber around them.
Go on. Pleeeeeeeese.'
It was no good. I wasn't getting anywhere.

Then came my birthday.
On the table was a big box
in the box
a torch.
My dad took it out the box.
'You see that torch,' he says,
'It's waterproof.
That is a waterproof torch.'

Waterproof. Wow!

So that night I got into the bath
and went under water swimming with it.
Breathe in,
under the water,

switch on
search for shipwrecks
and treasure.
Up, breathe
under again
exploring the ocean floor.

Then the torch went out.
I shook it and banged it but it wouldn't go.
I couldn't get it to go again.
My birthday torch.
So I got out, dried myself off
put on my pyjamas and went into the kitchen.

'The - er - torch won't work. It's broken.'
And my dad says,
'What do you mean, "it's broken"?'
It couldn't have just broken.
How did it break?
'I dunno, it just went off.'

'I don't believe it. You ask him a simple question
and you never get a simple answer.
You must have been
doing something with it.'
'No. It just went off.'
'Just try telling the truth, will you?'
How
did
it
break?
'I was underwater swimming with it.'

'Are you mad?'
When I said the torch is waterproof
I meant it keeps the rain off.
I didn't mean you could go deep-sea diving with it.

Ruined. Completely ruined.

For weeks and weeks he nags us stupid that he wants one of these waterproof torches and then first thing he does is wreck it.

How long did it last?

Two minutes? Three minutes?

These things cost money, you know.

Money.'

I felt so rotten.

My birthday torch.

At the weekend, he says,

We're going into Harrow to take the torch back.

We walk into the shop,

my dad goes up to the man at the counter

and says:

'You see this torch.

I bought it from you a couple of weeks ago

It's broken.'

So the man picks it up.

'It couldn't have just broken,' says the man,

'how did it break?'

And my dad says,

'I dunno, it just went off.'

'Surely you must have been doing something with it.'

'No, no, no,' says my dad,

'it just went off.'

'Come on,' says the man, 'these torches don't just break down.'

So I said

'Well actually, I was in the -'

and I got a hard kick on the ankle from my dad.

'I was in the, you know, er kitchen and it went off.'

So the man said that he would take it out the back
to show Len.

He came back a few minutes later and said that Len
couldn't get it to work either
so he would send it back to the makers.

'You'll have to have a new one,' he says.

'I should think so too,' says my dad.

'Thank YOU.'

Outside the shop

my dad says to me,

'What's the matter with you?

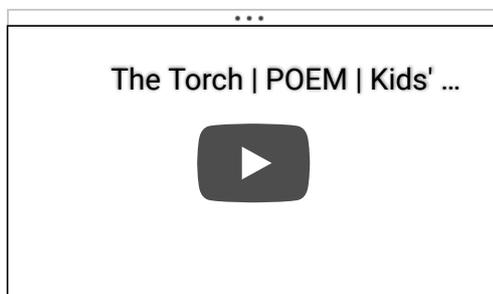
Are you crazy?

You were going to tell him all about your underwater
swimming fandango, weren't you?

Blabbermouth!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SnrHpytIMRM>

[The Torch | POEM | Kids' Poems and Stories With Michael Rosen](#)



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