



**PRESENTS**



# Mayhem Poets

**2023-2024**  
**FIELD TRIP**  
**EDUCATOR GUIDE**

# Dear Educators,

Welcome to ArtsBridge’s 2023-2024 Field Trip Season! We are thrilled to present *Mayhem Poets* to you and your students.

Thank you for sharing this special experience with your students. We hope this field trip guide helps you connect the performance to your in-classroom curriculum in ways that you find valuable. In the following pages, you will see guidelines regarding your field trip, contextual information about the performance and related subjects, as well as a variety of pre and post discussion questions and assessment activities. On page 22, you’ll find the Curriculum Connections included in *Mayhem Poets*. Please “pick and choose” materials and ideas from the guide to meet your class’s unique needs.

We look forward to inspiring and educating your students through the arts on January 30, 2024 at the world-class Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre!

**See you at the theatre,**

**The ArtsBridge Team**

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# About Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre



The landmark Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre is a cultural, entertainment and special events venue of a national significance. Atlanta's first major performing arts facility in four decades, Cobb Energy Centre boasts state-of-the-art systems, amenities and design features that allow the expression of any artistic idea and captivate performers, patrons and event planners. The Centre's strong suit is versatility. It can accommodate events as diverse as Broadway, concerts, corporate functions, private parties and family entertainment.

The Centre's distinctive façade and three-story lobby – highlighted by a 65-foot, floor-to-ceiling glass curtain wall – offer visitors a grand welcome and stunning introduction to a venue of great warmth, elegance and possibilities. Nothing speaks "special occasion" like the majestic lobby – a gathering space and promenade with two grand staircases, specially designed, colored-glass chandeliers and walls of Venetian plaster.

The Centre's 2,750-seat John A. Williams Theatre captures the richness and intimacy of vintage theatres. Yet, it incorporates modern touches and technology – including advanced sound, lighting and acoustical elements – that allow fine-tuning for each performance. With equal poise, the Theatre can host concerts, opera, drama, comedy, lectures, dance and spoken word.

The Cobb Energy Centre is a premier location for black-tie balls, galas, wedding receptions, corporate meetings, banquets, bar and bat mitzvahs, and parties.

- 10,000-square-foot ballroom, divisible into 3 sections, holds up to 630 for a seated meal, 800 in theatre setting and up to 650 for a reception
- 2,750-seat theater ideal for graduations or general sessions
- Unique special event spaces on theater stage, 3-level lobby, and outdoor terrace

The Centre is equipped to ensure ArtsBridge's vision of making sure everyone has access to arts experiences. Designated seats in various locations are available at every event for guests with disabilities and those needing special assistance. The venue is equipped with wheelchair accessible restrooms, elevators, plaza ramps, wheelchair accessible ticket windows, phonic ear devices, wheelchair accessible drinking fountains, and handicapped parking. Please call for more information about this and sign language interpreted performances. For safety purposes, ArtsBridge follows the Safety-First Guidelines of the Centre.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- More than 250,000 patrons visit the Cobb Energy Centre each year.
- The Cobb Energy Centre opened in 2007.
- The Cobb Energy Centre has two main spaces:
  - John A. Williams Theatre, 2,750 seats
  - Kessel D. Stelling Ballroom, 10,000 square feet
- No seat is more than 160 feet from center stage in the John A. Williams Theatre.
- There are 1,000 parking spaces on site.
- The Centre is located one mile from the new Braves stadium and only 15 minutes from downtown Atlanta.
- ArtsBridge programs began in 2007 and reach 30,000 students each year.

# Field Trip Guidelines

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*Below are simple guidelines for ArtsBridge Field Trips to Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre. Please read carefully and contact us at (770) 916-2805 if you have questions.*

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**Reservations:** All field trip admissions are to be made in advance. Please do not bring more than the number of seats reserved. Performances are expected to sell out and we will not be able to accommodate an increase in numbers at the last minute. All patrons, including teachers and chaperones, must have a reservation in order to attend these performances. Children under the age of three are not permitted to attend.

**Payment:** Payments must be made in full, 4 weeks prior to the day of show, or we will not be able to accommodate your reservation. An invoice will be given to you at the time your reservation is made. Once you have paid in full, we will send a confirmation, which will serve as your school's ticket into the performance. ArtsBridge reserves the right to cancel unpaid reservations after the payment due date.

**Transportation:** The Centre can accommodate school buses, vans and cars. Please be aware that vans and cars will incur a \$15 per vehicle parking fee. A third party contractor runs the Centre's garage and charges this fee. There is no charge for parking school buses. All buses, vans and cars must comply with directions provided by on-site staff.

**Arrival:** All vehicles should approach the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre from AKERS MILL ROAD (map enclosed). Upon entering the driveway, buses will be directed to the circular drive where they will temporarily pull up to the curb for unloading. A Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre representative will board the bus and check-in your school. Students will be immediately unloaded and buses will be directed to their designated parking areas.

**Seating:** Students are seated as they arrive, starting with the floor level, first row. The exception to this is for programs with older and younger students in attendance at the same time. In this case, students in kindergarten and first-grade will be seated in the first few rows of the theatre. There are three levels of seating, with the back row of the top level no more than 160 feet from the stage.

**Restrooms:** Please seat your entire group, before taking restroom breaks, so that you can be easily found. Students MUST be accompanied by adult chaperones when going to the restroom. We encourage that you take groups so there are fewer trips.

**Chaperones:** Chaperones have a job to perform while at the Centre. Please make sure that your chaperones are interspersed among students, and that they are prepared for the day's responsibilities. Please discuss restroom visits, emergencies, behavior, etc. with your chaperones prior to arrival.

**Behavior:** Students and teachers are encouraged to enjoy performances, applaud and express enthusiasm in a manner that is appropriate for the performance, yet not disruptive for others. We request that all phones, tablets and any other electronic devices be completely turned off or on silent mode during the performance. We ask that chaperones on upper levels watch for students tossing or throwing items to lower levels and prevent students from climbing or leaning on railings. No student can leave the audience chamber without an accompanying chaperone. Students/classes that are disruptive may be asked to leave the performance with no refund. (See *Theatre Etiquette on Page 8*)

**Departure:** Performances last approximately one hour. Upon conclusion of the performance, classes will be dismissed to the designated parking area to board their buses and return to school.

**Lunch:** There is no facility for students to eat lunch in the Cobb Energy Centre. We recommend students eat lunch at the Galleria Specialty Mall, Cumberland Mall, at a park on the route to/from the venue or on their bus. Check Page 7 for some of ArtsBridge's favorite restaurants to eat at around the theatre! Snack Packs will be provided for students, teachers and chaperones attending an 11am or noon performance. For more information, visit [www.ArtsBridgeGA.org/snack-pack-program](http://www.ArtsBridgeGA.org/snack-pack-program).



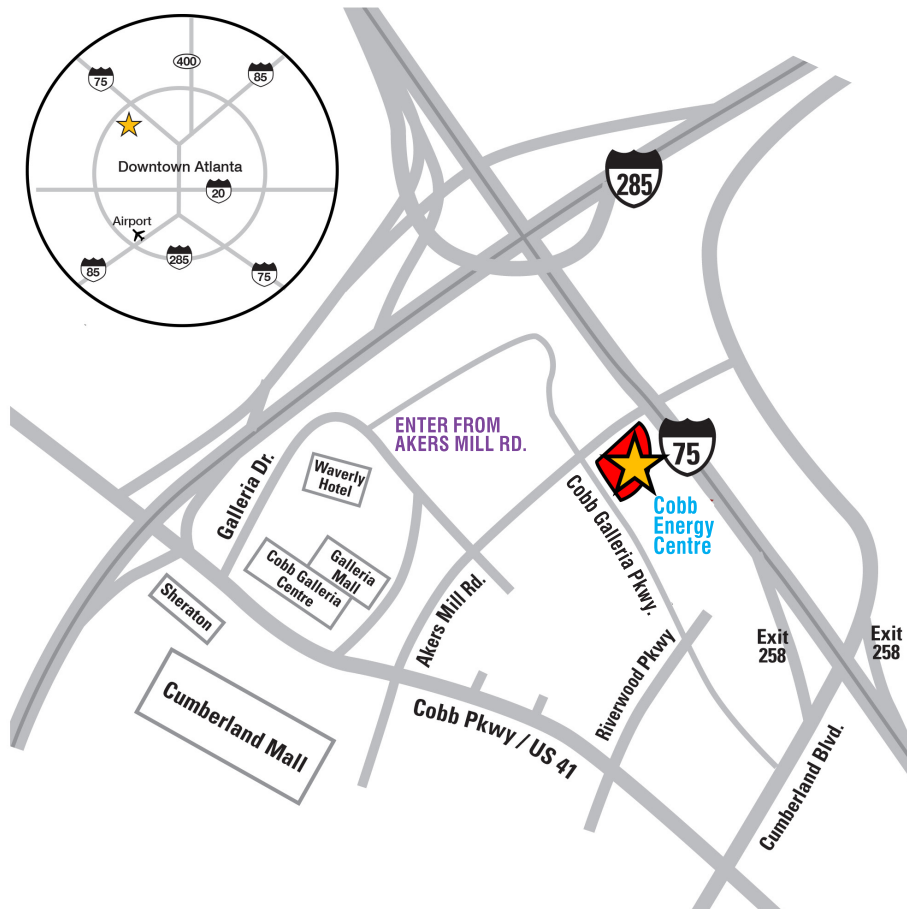
# Transportation Information

**Buses:** All school buses must approach the building from AKERS MILL ROAD on the North side of the building. This will be crucial in assuring a fairly smooth flow of traffic. There will be Centre representatives guiding you. Buses will pull onto the site from behind the building and then drive to the front. PLEASE MAKE SURE YOUR DRIVERS USE THE MAP BELOW. There is no charge to park school buses on-site.

**Checking In:** When you arrive at the front of the building, a representative from the Centre will board your bus to check-in your school. You and your bus driver will be given a large number that will be taped to the bus windows. Please remember your number, as it will help you find your bus after the performance.

**After the Show:** After the performance, buses will be parked in the Centre's surface lot in numerical order and representatives will assist you in locating your bus(es). We encourage everyone to board their buses as quickly and safely as possible. For safety reasons, we hold all buses until everyone has boarded, so please make your way directly to the surface parking lot following the performance (see map below).

**Cars/Vans/SUVs:** You will approach the building in the same manner, but will park in our parking deck. Please note there is a \$15 per vehicle parking fee for cars/vans/SUVs. After you have parked, make your way to level 2 of the deck and to the west side (theatre side) of the building. When you emerge from the parking deck, there will be a Centre representative to check you in and direct you to your seats.



# Additional Map for All Vehicles Attending



2800 Cobb Galleria Pkwy, Atlanta, GA 30339

# LOCAL DINING

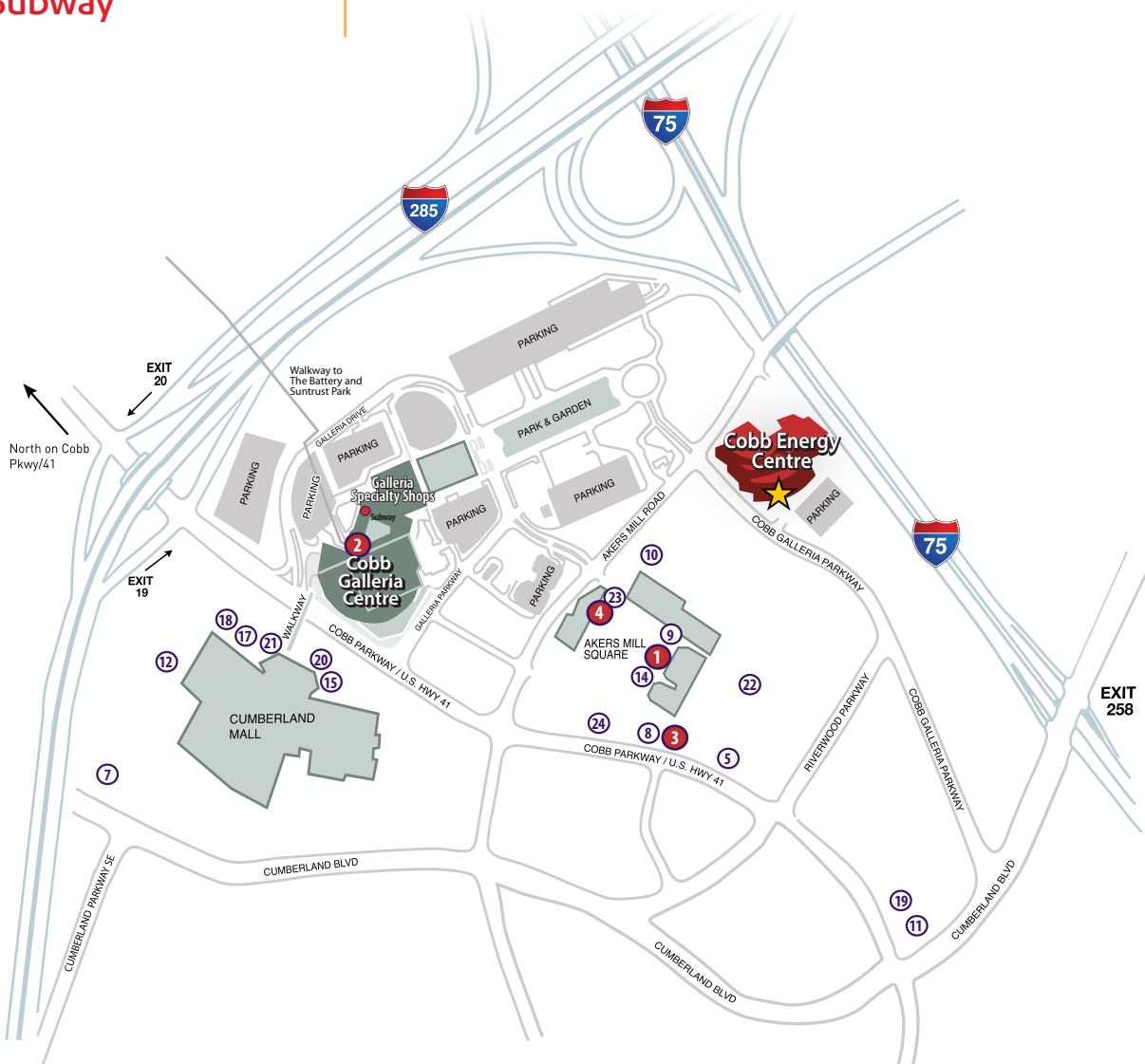
## Food Sponsors

ArtsBridge Program Food Sponsors within driving distance of Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre:

1. **Hopdoddy Burger Bar**
2. **Murph's**
3. **Chick-fil-A**
4. **Subway**

## Other Nearby Restaurants

- |                                |                                   |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 5. Bonefish Grill              | 15. Maggiano's Little Italy       |
| 6. C&S Seafood and Oyster Bar  | 16. Olive Garden                  |
| 7. Carrabba's                  | 17. P.F. Chang's                  |
| 8. Chipotle Mexican Grill      | 18. Stoney River Legendary Steaks |
| 9. Korean BBQ & Hot Pot        | 19. Taco Mac                      |
| 10. Cinco's Mexican Cantina    | 20. Ted's Montana Grill           |
| 11. Copeland's of New Orleans  | 21. The Cheesecake Factory        |
| 12. Fresh To Order             | 22. Top Spice                     |
| 13. Kuroshio Sushi Bar & Grill | 23. Blaze Pizza                   |
| 14. Longhorn Steakhouse        | 24. CAVA                          |



# Theatre Etiquette

*A live performance is a unique experience shared between performers and audience members. Unlike television or movies, audience distractions can disrupt the performers, production and audience. Before you arrive at the Cobb Energy Centre, please review the following information with your students and chaperones, and help ArtsBridge create a meaningful experience for all.*

- Arrive early. Groups are seated on a first-come, first-served basis. Seats are not assigned for ArtsBridge events.
- Food, drink, candy, gum, etc. is not permitted in the theatre.
- Silence or turn off all electronic devices. We encourage you to share your ArtsBridge experience at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre via social media, but please refrain from doing so or texting during performances; the glow from your device is distracting.
- Photography and video/audio recording of any kind is not allowed in the theatre during the performance.
- Respect the theatre. 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 theatre is designed to amplify sound, so the other audience members and the performers on stage can hear your voice!
- Use the restroom before the performance or wait until the end.
- Appropriate responses such as laughing and applauding are appreciated. Pay attention to the artists on stage – they will let you know what is appropriate.
- If you need assistance during the show, please find your nearest volunteer usher.
- As you enter and exit the theatre, remember to walk and stay with your group.
- Open your eyes, ears, mind and heart to the entire experience. Enjoy yourself!





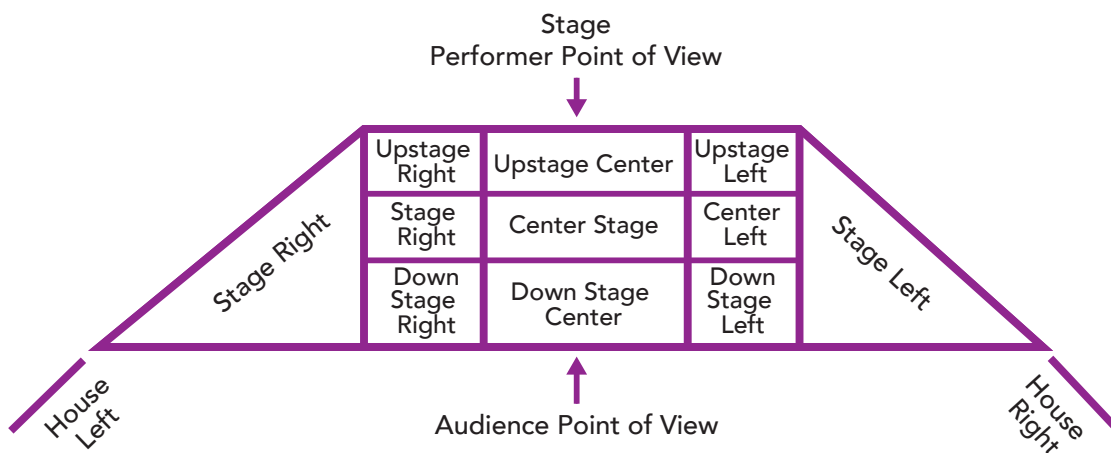
# PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

Before attending an ArtsBridge Field Trip, review the following questions and vocabulary with your students:

1. How many of you have experienced a live theatre performance? What did you see?
2. What are some of the differences between going to the theatre and watching television or going to a movie?
3. The BAD Audience Member! A fun way to review theatre etiquette with your students is to have them point out bad audience behavior during a show. Here's one way to illustrate this concept:



- a. Have students present something to the class. The key is they are “actors” and the class is the audience.
  - b. Once they are into the activity, you (the teacher) leave the room and then re-enter. Enter loudly, chew gum, step on people’s feet, talk to them, etc. Be the worst audience member. Find a seat and continue to talk to others, ask what’s going on in the performance, take pictures, talk on your cell phone etc.
  - c. Ask the class to list all the bad behavior. Write these on the board.
  - d. Ask the audience members how they felt when the bad audience member came into the theatre. Could they hear the actors? Were they distracted?
  - e. Ask the actors how they felt. Could they concentrate on their performance?
4. Review the stage diagram below with the students. Draw the diagram on the whiteboard and have students come up and write in each part of the stage.



# THEATRICAL VOCABULARY

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*Review the following theatrical terms with your students before attending the performance! This will help them better understand all of the elements of a production.*

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**Author** – the writer of a script; also called the book

**Audition** – to perform to get a role for the production; usually includes singing, dancing, and reading scenes from the show; usually takes place in front of the Director & Creative Team

**Ballad** – a slow song for actors to showcase vocal clarity

**Blocking** – the specific movement of actors on stage; usually given by the Director

**Box Office** – a booth inside the theater where tickets are sold

**“Calling the Show”** – the process of calling out the lighting, sound, and scene-change cues during a performance; usually done by the stage manager

**Casting** – the process through which actors are chosen for roles in the production

**Casting Agent** – one who chooses actors for roles in the production

**Choreographer** – one who designs dance sequences and teaches them to the cast of the production

**Composer** – one who writes the music

**Conductor** – one who directs the orchestra

**Costumes** – a set of clothes in a style typical of a particular country or historical period

**Curtain Call** – the appearance of one or more performers on stage after a performance to acknowledge the audience’s applause

**Director** – one who supervises the creative aspects and guides the artistic vision of the production

**Dress Rehearsal** – rehearsal in which performers practice with costumes, props, lights, and microphones

**Dresser** – one who assists performers with their costumes during dress rehearsals and shows

**Electrician** – one who works with the lighting designer to adjust and operate lighting instruments

**Ensemble / Chorus** – typically singers, dancers, or actors who perform in group numbers

**Head Carpenter** – one who builds the sets for the production

**House Left** – the left side of the theater, when facing the stage (audience’s point of view)

**House Manager** – one who oversees all aspects of the audiences; responsible for ushers and audience safety

**House Right** – the right side of the theater, when facing the stage (audiences point of view)

**Lighting Designer** – one who decides where the lighting instruments should go, how they should be colored and which ones should be on at any particular time to affect mood, visibility, and to showcase costumes and sets

**Lyricist** – one who writes the words to a song

**Makeup Artist** – one who applies cosmetics to a performer’s face and body

**Music Director** – one who teaches and rehearses the music with the orchestra

**Orchestra Pit** – the lowered area in front of a stage where the orchestra (musicians) sit and play during the performance

**Overture** – an orchestral piece at the beginning of an opera, suite, play, oratorio, or other extended composition

**Producer** – a person responsible for the financial and managerial aspects of staging a play, opera, musical, ballet, etc.

**Program** – a listing of the order of events, names of the cast and crew, and other relevant information for the production

**Property (Props) Manager** – one who manages all items used on stage that cannot be classified as scenery, electrics, or wardrobe

**Proscenium arch** – the arch opening between the stage and auditorium; the frame of the stage

**Read-through** – the cast reads through the script without movement or music; typically done at the first rehearsal

**Set Designer** – one who creates the scenery for the stage

**Sitzprobe** – the first rehearsal with both the performers and the orchestra, with no staging or dancing

**Sound Designer** – one who plans and executes the layout of all sound playbook and equipment for the show

**Sound Operator** – one who handles the sound playbook and mixing equipment for the show; works with Sound Designer

**Sound Board** – a desk comprising a number of input channels where each sound source is provided with its own control channel through which sound signals are routed into two or more outputs; controls all microphones and music

**Spotlights** – a lamp projecting a narrow, intense beam of light directly onto a place or person, especially a performer on stage

**Standby / Understudy** – one who studies a role and is prepared to substitute a performer when needed

**Stage Left** – the left side of the stage, when facing the audience (performer’s point of view)

**Stage Manager** – one who is responsible for the quality of the show’s production, assists the director, and oversees the show at each performance

**Stage Right** – the right side of the stage, when facing the audiences (performer’s point of view)

**Technical Rehearsal** – rehearsal incorporating the technical elements of a show such as the scene and property shirts, lighting, sound, and special effects

**Uptempo Song** – a fast, upbeat song for actors to showcase dancing and acting ability

**Usher** – one who guides audience members to their seats

**Wig Master / Mistress** – one who obtains and customizes wigs for performers to wear

# MEET THE **MAYHEM** POETS

## **Kyle Sutton**

Kyle was born in Michigan and raised in New Jersey, where he received his Bachelors degree in Spanish from Rutgers University. He is a two-time Grand Slam semifinalist at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe in New York City.

## **Scott Tarazevits**

Scott, a 2005 Bowery Poetry Club Slam Finalist, is a poet and actor who cowrote and performed in two spokenword plays. The New Jersey native received his Bachelors degree in journalism and theater from Rutgers University. While at Rutgers he cofounded/hosted the performance poetry open mic, Verbal Mayhem.

## **Mason Granger**

Mason, originally from Willingboro, New Jersey, began his writing career as a freshman at Rutgers University in 2000. This multiple slam winner is the former co-host of Verbal Mayhem, the longest running open mic in New Jersey.



New Jersey's Mayhem Poets met as students at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, drawn together by a shared passion for wordplay and open mics. Their poems comment on everything from literature and school to politics and fast food. They have performed from New York City to Ireland and even appeared on The Today Show. Eager to spread their enthusiasm for their art form, they have run a poetry day camp with writing, performance, rapping, rhyming, hip-hop dance, graffiti art, and hip-hop culture classes. In 2007, Mayhem Poets won the Microsoft Idea Wins challenge, a national competition looking for innovative ideas for new small businesses. They used the prize to open Slam Chops, a spoken word poetry club in New York City

[www.myspace.com/mayhempoets](http://www.myspace.com/mayhempoets)

[www.mayhempoets.com](http://www.mayhempoets.com)

[www.slamchops.com](http://www.slamchops.com)

# Spoken Word/Slam Poetry



**S**poken-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. It was Shakespeare's actors who wrote down the text of his plays; if they hadn't done so, we would not be studying and performing these works today.

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**, an interactive poetry competition, is thought to have begun in Chicago 1985 at a jazz club called the Green Mill. A construction worker named [Marc Smith, a.k.a. "Papi"](#) created a lyrical "boxing match," pitting poets against each other one-on-one. The judges were randomly-chosen audience members, who scored the poets on a scale from 0-10. From there, slam poetry caught on in cities such as New York and San Francisco. In New York's East Village, the [Nuyorican Poets' Café](#) became the mecca of performance poetry. Slam teams sprang up all over the United States and Canada; the best go on to compete in the National Poetry Slam, an annual event occurring every summer since 1990.

Slam poetry 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. You can find poetry slams in such diverse countries as Australia, Austria, Bosnia, Great Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Nepal, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, Singapore, and Macedonia. In this country, performance poetry can be seen on television and even on Broadway, where [Russell Simmons Def Poetry Jam](#) won a 2003 Tony® Award for Best Special Theatrical Event.

## SLAM POETRY:

poetry in performance, merging theater, hip-hop, music, and stand up comedy

Shakespeare wrote over 100 sonnets with Sonnet 18 as the most recognizable. Take one of his sonnets and rewrite it as a spoken word piece using some of the tools on the following pages.

Slam Poetry isn't the first time artists have used word play to get a message across to their audiences. Rap musicians do it all the time, but even they weren't the first. Singer-songwriters Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen have been using wordplay for years, and they are only some of the latest in a long line of that tradition. The next time you listen to your favorite song, see if you can pick out some of the techniques discussed in this guide.

## SLAM—

1. *v.*— to shut with force and noise.
2. *v.*— to strike, knock, throw, slap down, etc., with violent and noisy impact.
3. *v.*— to criticize harshly; attack verbally.
4. *adj.*— excellent, good. (slang)
5. *n.*— a poetry competition where the participants perform their work aloud and are judged by the audience.

Why do you think a poetry competition is called a "slam"?

# ACTIVITIES

**W**hen the Mayhem Poets begin writing a new piece, the poem doesn't just magically appear. They have a process that they use to work out their ideas and then put them into creative, powerful language. The exercises outlined on the next couple of pages were developed by the Mayhem Poets to help students get their creative juices flowing and begin to think like poets. Here are the basic steps:

- 1 Warm up your imagination.
- 2 Find your words and rhymes.
- 3 Make a personal connection.
- 4 Use the Poet Tree.
- 5 Get ready to perform.
- 6 Hold your own poetry slam!



## 1 Imagination Warmup

Standing in a circle, toss a ball to someone across the circle. As you throw the ball, say a random word out loud. The person catching the ball then throws it to someone else, saying a word completely unrelated to the initial word. Keep tossing the ball around the circle and saying your words until your group has mastered the exercise.

### THE NEXT STEP:

The ball is tossed and every time it is thrown, the words must be within a specific ENVIRONMENT (for example: circus, bowling alley, DMV, aquarium, beach, baseball game, classroom). As the words are spoken, your teacher writes them down on the board. Keep this as a vocabulary list for writing your own slam poems.

# ACTIVITIES

**D**id you know there are all kinds of rhymes? Using different types of rhymes will make your poems more interesting to the listener. Varying your rhymes will also give you the freedom to pick the best words for the lines instead of choosing a word only because it fits a particular kind of rhyme.

Here are some different types of rhymes:

There are **normal rhymes**, words like **gutter/butter/stutter**

There are **slant rhymes**, where either the vowels or the consonants of stressed syllables are identical. Slant rhymes look like this:

**Hellman's mustard/General Custard/Mother Hubbard**

There are **multi-syllabic rhymes**, used most often in hip-hop with a background beat:

**I'm here to melt your ears with hot sounds  
To grab the kids with adjectives and spit-on-the-spot  
nouns**

Here's an example of multi-syllabic rhyme in spoken word poetry that also that uses **alliteration** (repeating the same beginning consonant sound in two or more words in the same line), **onomatopoeia** (where a word or phrase imitates the sound it is describing), and **internal rhyme** (rhyming words within a single line):

**I'm a blend of my friends, N'sync with their  
idiosyncrasies  
Merely mimicking their ticks and tocks  
like Timberlake shaking and talking  
while moon-walking like Michael.**

Here are some additional suggestions for using rhyme in spoken word poetry:

- Don't stick to using only end rhymes (couplets).
- Vary the rhyme scheme and rhythm to keep your poetry from becoming "sing-songy."
- Don't settle for a particular word just because it rhymes. Choose the word or phrase that best expresses what you want to say.
- Remember: absence of rhyme is not an absence of rhythm. Pay attention to crafting a good rhythm for your poetry.
- Listen to hip-hop (mainly for rhythmic pattern).
- Memorize lyrics.
- Read aloud whenever possible.



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## Find Your Rhymes.

Using the word list you created in the ball-toss exercise on the previous page, create some different types of rhymes.

### Rhyming Resources

[Glossary of Poetic Terms](#)

[RhymeZone Rhyming Dictionary and Thesaurus](#)

[Lyric-Pro Slant Rhyme website](#)

# ACTIVITIES

**S**poke word poetry uses lots of other tools besides rhyme to play with words. Here are some literary devices and alternate ways of putting words together outside of rhyme or in conjunction with rhyme.

**Acronyms** are letter abbreviations for proper names and common phrases. (Text messaging has made acronyms a big part of our language!) Spoken word poets sometimes create their own versions of existing acronyms. For example:

**KFC meant to me that I'd Kill For Chicken.**

**Clichés** and popular phrases are a great way for a poet to get creative. The best part about playing with these well-known sayings is that your audience will recognize them immediately. There are lots of creative ways to play with clichés:

- You can **ADD YOUR OWN ENDING** to them.  
**A stich in time saves nine...  
pair of pants from embarrassing a group of  
13-year-olds at the school dance.**
- You can **CHANGE** parts of them.  
**Stink bombs bursting in air giving proof  
through the school that the drag is still  
there...**
- You can **USE ONLY PARTS** of them.  
**Oh say can you see, by the dawn's early  
light,  
that the chronically late have a date  
for Saturday detention while the honors  
student  
will never get suspension.**

**Puns** are another technique for playing with words. For example:  
**Lord of the Ringmaster**



2

## Find Your Words.

- Redefine these familiar acronyms:

LOL \_\_\_\_\_

CIA \_\_\_\_\_

BFF \_\_\_\_\_

- Add your own ending to these clichés:

People in glass houses \_\_\_\_\_

Don't put all your eggs \_\_\_\_\_

Sticks and stones \_\_\_\_\_

- Now try changing around the clichés above or use your own.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- Take your own cliché, popular song, or phrase, and reinvent it.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# ACTIVITIES

## More Tools

**Pop-culture references** are another tool for connecting with your audience. Take several well-known names, characters, titles, etc. and put them together by free association.

**Daniel Day Lewis and Clark Gable**  
**Wheel of Fortune Cookie Monster Mash**  
**with Alan Alda**  
**Imagine U R Kelly...Clarkson on MTV,**  
**BET VH1 o6 and Park.**

**Similes and metaphors** find ways to relate seemingly different words and phrases. You can use the following template to create your own similes:

**Life is like a \_\_\_\_\_, which is like a \_\_\_\_\_, which is like a \_\_\_\_\_.**

For example:

**Life is like a nose, which is like a downward ski slope, which is like the Batman franchise of movies thus far.**

**Life is like a remote control, which is like replaying of events, which is like a dream, which is like becoming a movie star, which is like passing a kidney stone, which is like fitting into a mouse hole.**

**Breaking down words** is a type of punning. Pick two words at random and look for alternate meanings of each word or some part of the word. For example, the sentence below plays on the word "parent" that is contained inside "apparent."

**It was apparent that the relationship between my father and me was sinking.**

Want to take it a step further? Here are some other literary devices you can use:

**Alliteration**  
**Hyperbole**  
**Oxymoron**

**Antithesis**  
**Onomatopoeia**  
**Personification**



2

## Find Your Words.

- Take a pop-culture icon, TV show, song title, etc. and free associate.

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- Write your own "Life is like a..." word association:

Life is like a \_\_\_\_\_,  
which is like a \_\_\_\_\_,  
which is like a \_\_\_\_\_.

- Pick two of the words from the list below to use on your own in a sentence or two, by breaking down the words and exploring their alternate meanings:

deceive	demonstrate	goodbye	self-esteem
canteen	in-sync	mystery	period
steal	mall	lapse	macaroni
righteous	nights	professor	hostile

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🔗 Explore more literary devices [here](#).



# ACTIVITIES

## Making a Personal Connection

**N**o matter how well you write, the best way for your poetry to resonate with an audience is for it to have a personal meaning for you. By writing about specific ideas, issues, places, and things that matter to you, you are opening yourself up to your audience and connecting with them on a personal level. How do you write about things that have a personal connection for you? Start by making a list of things you feel strongly about, whether they are positive or negative. Use this as a starting point and use the exercises on this page to explore the topic further.

### Exploring Your World

Explore your connection to an environment. Pick a specific place that you have something to say about. Free write about home, school, your job, a favorite place you like to hang out and see where that leads you.

### The Place You Come From

Fill in this poem about yourself. It does not need to rhyme, it does not have to make literal sense—it just needs to be true. (Think of it as one of those “Mad Libs.”) When you are finished, you will have a poem that you can draw from to help with your slam poem, or it can be a poem all on its own.

I am from \_\_\_\_\_. (where home is for you)  
I am from \_\_\_\_\_. (where you feel most comfortable)  
I am from \_\_\_\_\_. (your favorite thing to do)  
I am from \_\_\_\_\_. (something from your childhood)  
I am from \_\_\_\_\_. (your plans for the future)

You can add as many lines as you want and fill them in with whatever you want. This poem is all about YOU.

### Group Identity

Working in a group of 3-5, write a “boast rap” about yourselves or a “message rap” about something you strongly believe. Share it with the rest of the class.

### Personal Connection + Imagination

Using the worksheet below...

- In column A, list five things that hold power in your life, and choose one or two to expand upon if you feel it's too general.  
Example: Family (relationship to my brother, my dad getting remarried).
- In column B, list five things you'd find in three different environments (five things total).  
Example: ENVIRONMENTS - circus, the shore, a mall / THINGS - cotton candy, seashells, clothing stores, sale
- Using something from column A, craft a few lines of poetry using something from column B. (Use something from B to describe something from A.)

Example: **Yesterday I went to the GAP and tried to return my brother for a pair of loose-fit khakis, but instead I got back these ill-fitting corduroys that annoyed me more than my brother ever did.**

A. Things that hold power in your life	B. Things you'd find in 3 different environments
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.



# ACTIVITIES

## Using the Poet Tree

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

# ACTIVITIES

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

## POET

## TREE

PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

RHYME BANK

RELATED WORDS & PHRASES

ACRONYMS

POP-CULTURE REFERENCES

CLICHÉS & PUNS

# ACTIVITIES

## Getting Ready to Perform

Here are some activities you can do to help you get your poem ready for performance. They will help you work on: creating an interesting and varied way of speaking your poem; projecting your voice and speaking clearly so that you command the room when you speak; and creating a comfortable physical presence that enhances your performance.

### Syllable/Word Stressing

1. Working with a partner, pick a favorite line from one of the poems you have written.
2. You and your partner take turns practicing your lines out loud, emphasizing different syllables and words, using different vocal inflections and stresses. Give each other feedback on your line readings until you each find the best way to present your lines.

### All in the Timing

1. Working in groups of four, each person picks a joke out of a hat or comes in with one of their own.
2. Take 30 seconds to think about how you are going to deliver your joke for the best effect.
3. Take turns telling your joke to the rest of the group, rotating so each person tells her or his joke twice. Each time you tell your joke, you should change the way you say it. For example: add pauses, slow down or speed up, change the emphasis on certain words, or add a rhythm.

### Enunciation

No matter how well-written your poem, it's no good if your audience can't understand what you're saying when you perform it. Use some of the tongue-twisters below to warm up your mouth before delivering your poem. Start slowly and then build up speed as they get easier.

**Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.  
Did Peter Piper pick a peck of pickled peppers?  
If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers,  
where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?**

**I am not the pheasant plucker,  
I'm the pheasant plucker's mate.  
I am only plucking pheasants  
'cause the pheasant plucker's running late.**

**The sixth sick sheik's sixth sheep's sick.**

**Red leather, yellow leather.**

### "Tongue-twister Telephone"

1. Work in a group of four people, sitting or standing in a line.
2. The first person in line is given a tongue twister. She or he whispers it into the ear of the next person, who then passes on the message, until it reaches the last person, who says it aloud.
3. Put two groups together and try it again. Then try it with the entire class in one group.



### Learn to Project.

Choose a line from your poem to deliver to your teacher, who will be standing at the back of the room. While you're performing your line, the rest of your class will be talking at the same time. (Volume levels of conversation can vary to add effect.) Do your best to make your line as coherent as possible to the teacher despite the "heckling."

### Get Physical.

Having trouble figuring out how to move your body during your poem? Pick one line in your poem—it can be your favorite or the one you're not sure about. Find a pose or motion to get into when you get to this line in your poem so that the line is emphasized. Practice getting into the pose and then try some different ways to get back into your normal stance. If you are doing a motion, decide when would be the best time to start and stop. What this is starting to look like? Pick another line and do the same thing. Don't get too complicated, but don't be afraid to move around and get into your poem. You wrote it, so you get to decide!

# ACTIVITIES

## Hold Your Own Poetry Slam!

**N**ow that you have written your own poetry, it's time to hold your very own poetry slam. Decide as a group whether or not the slam will be competitive and whether you want to award prizes for winners or all the participants. If you don't think you are ready for a poetry slam involving the whole school, have a slam within your class and have students judge each other.

You will need an M.C. to host the event and a scorekeeper with a calculator. Invite other students, teachers, parents, or staff to serve as audience and judges. All a judge needs is paper and a big marker. Instruct your judges to score on a scale of 1-10, with 10 representing the best poetry performance a judge has ever heard. Contestants should be judged on the poem itself and on how effectively the poem is presented to the audience.

While the official slam rules say that poems can be no longer than three minutes and can't include props, costumes, or music, your group can have a little more fun with it. Take the time to add in props, costumes, or music to give your poem something extra. How intense can your battle get?

When the slam is over, publish a collection of all the poems that were presented and distribute it to other classes.

### Official Slam Rules:

- No more than 3 minutes.
- No props.
- No costumes.
- No music.



## Self Assessment Checklist

### WRITING

#### *Rhyming and Rhythm*

- Used rhyme where appropriate.
- Varied rhyme scheme and used slant rhymes.
- Used internal rhyme.
- Used alliteration.

#### *Alternate ways of putting words together*

- Used inventive acronyms.
- Took clichés and changed them around.
- Incorporated pop-culture references.
- Used puns, wordplay, etc.

#### *Personal Connection to poems*

- Created personal connections.
- Combined personal connection with imaginative/creative concepts/ideas.

### PERFORMANCE

#### *Using voice to its full capacity*

- Enunciated entire poem clearly and sustained energy throughout.
- Stressed punchlines when appropriate.
- Projected so everyone could hear.
- Was aware of timing, pacing, and rhythm.

#### *Using body to enhance performance*

- Incorporated gestures and movement.
- Had poem memorized so hands were free and body open.

#### *Connecting with an audience*

- Looked at audience while performing.
- Fed off the audience's energy throughout.
- Stayed focused during disruptions and took in the unexpected.

#### *Overall performance of poem*

- Used several performance tactics throughout.
- Used own unique distinct voice.
- Took the audience on a journey from beginning to end.

# CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

English Language Arts, Fine Arts (Dramatic Arts/Theatre)



# RESOURCES



## Books

*Double Snaps* by James Percalay. Harper Perennial, 1995.  
Clever put-downs; contains some explicit language.

*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, tips for memorizing poems, and more.

*The Seventh Octave – The Early Writings of Saul Stacy Williams*. Moore Black Press, 1998.

*She*, by Saul Williams. MTV Books, 1999. Poetry.

*The Spoken Word Revolution*, by Mark Eleveld. Sourcebooks MediaFusion, 2005.

*What Learning Leaves*, by Taylor Mali. Hanover Press, 2002. A collection of poems about teaching, love, and dogs.

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



## On The Web

poetryslam.com – General info, history, etc.

brickcity.net – Submit/post your own poetry online.

Organize a Poetry Slam – A detailed, practical guide.

New Victory Theater's Mayhem Poets School Tool

Bowery Poetry Club

Saul Williams' website

Education World® Great Sites for Teaching About Poetry

Everypoet.com – "Every resource for every poet."

Poetry Portal – A bird's-eye view of Internet poetry.



## Video

*Slam*. Lions Gate, 1998. Rate R. A prison-and-poetry drama about a young poet's rise to self-awareness, featuring Saul Williams.

*Slam Nation: The Sport of Spoken Word*. New Video Group, 1998. Not rated. The film follows slam poets Saul Williams, Beau Sia, Mums the Schemer, and Jessica Care Moore as they journey to the National Poetry Slam.



## Audio

*A Light in the Attic*, by Shel Silverstein. Sony Wonder, 1985.

*Eat Your Words*, by Mayhem Poets. 2005.

*Episode I*, by Thought Breakers. 2004. Hip-hop.