

TOUCHSCREEN

Teacher Notes

Can-do: *Can give a clear presentation of reactions to a poem, develop ideas and support them with examples*

Can describe emotional response to a poem and elaborate on the way in which it has evoked response

Goal: Sharing opinions on slam poetry

Input: Slam Poem performance (video)

Output: Presentation

Focus: Expressing a personal response to creative texts



Introduction

There are perhaps 4 possible responses to a creative text: engagement, interpretation, analysis, and evaluation. There is a fundamental difference between the first two (engagement and interpretation) and the last two (analysis and evaluation). Describing a personal reaction and interpretation to creative texts is cognitively simpler than giving a more intellectual analysis and/or evaluation of creative texts.

Key concepts include the following:

- ✚ explaining what s/he liked, what interested her/him about the work
- ✚ describing characters, saying which s/he identified with
- ✚ relating aspects of the work to her/his own experience; relating feelings and emotions
- ✚ giving a personal interpretation of the work as a whole or of aspects of it

Can-do statements

The lessons are designed for students at B2 level, but can be adapted to B1 level:

- ✚ Can give a clear presentation of his/her reactions to a work, developing his/her ideas and supporting them with examples and arguments
- ✚ Can describe his/her emotional response to a work and elaborate on the way in which it has evoked this response
- ✚ Can express in some detail his/her reactions to the form of expression, style and content of a work, explaining what he/she appreciated and why (CEFR CV, 2020)

Slam poetry was started by a construction worker in the US, and is radical departure from the popular and literary connotations associated with poetry. It is definitely poetry, but it eschews the use of traditional poetic devices and is more akin to a pop concert or even a Karaoke bar than a poetry reading evening. It has now become the most popular form of poetry.

The objective is for the lesson to be relatable and enjoyable – and you'll know you've succeeded if the students start having fun with it, e.g.

No friends. There's an app for that.
No life. There's an app for that.
No homework. There's an app for that.
No groupwork. There's an app for that.

The language of *Touchscreen* is well within a B2 student's level but appreciating the word play, etc. and articulating their reaction to it might be challenging for them – both cognitively and linguistically, so we've included a few addition activities to help them formulate their ideas (Appendix 5 & 6).

This is either a double lesson, focussing on what slam poetry is and on expressing a personal response to *Touchscreen* in a review, or a triple lesson if you / your class would like to follow-up with another slam poem or two (in that caes, see Appendix 7).

Activities



Video viewing



Cross grouping aka cross-team collaboration

Materials

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| 1.Student worksheets [5 pages] | Appendix 2: Answer sheet on I.U.s |
| 2.Teacher notes [6 pages] | Appendix 3: Pros & cons of smartphones |
| 3.Slides for classroom work [16 slides] | Appendix 4: Touchscreen: QR & text |
| 4. Video "Touchscreen" | Appendix 5: Example presentation |
| 5. Appendices: Appendix 1.1: What is Slam Poetry? | Appendix 6: Comments and categories |
| Appendix 1.2: What is a Poetry Slam? | Appendix 7: List of Poetry Slams |
| Appendix 1.3: What's the difference between Rap & Slam Poetry? | |

Summary of procedure

LESSON 1	1. Slam Poetry: mediate 1 of 3 explanatory texts to your group	20
	2. Smartphones: brainstorm pros and cons	10
	3. Touchscreen: Watch video, discuss and agree a synopsis	10
	4. Reflections	5
LESSON 2	1. Review lesson 1, if appropriate	2 – 3
	2. Touchscreen: Discuss & write a review expressing group's personal response, using supplied criteria and agree how to perform the review à la a Poetry Slam with each group member participating equally; performing (ca. 3 min per group)	30
	3. Judging using Poetry Slam rules	5
	4. Reflections	5
LESSON 3	Choose or be assigned another slam poem to watch & review	45 minutes

LESSON 1

There's quite a long lead into this lesson.

Firstly, we're deep-ending the students by having them mediate a text with little or no preparation.

Groups Put students in groups of 3. Assign a letter A, B, C to each student. Distribute the 3 texts.

Student A: What is slam poetry?

Student B: What's a poetry slam?

Student C: What's the difference between slam poetry and rap?

Cross team If you feel your students can't handle being deep-ended, we suggest cross-team collaboration – regroup and ask Student As to study their text together before mediating it to their teams. Ditto student Bs and Student Cs.

Timing We're also doing this against the clock to make it a little more challenging.

- Make a thing of setting a timer, and act as timekeeper.
- Make it clear, before they begin, how long they have to prep their notes (5 minutes) and how long each person has to mediate their text (5 minutes each).

Mediation Also make it clear that they'll be judged not on how well they understood their own text, but on how well they've mediated the text, i.e. they'll be judged on how well their team-mates have understood and made fulsome notes.

How well did you mediate your text?

- 1) How many pieces of info did you note down? How many do your team-mates have?
- 2) What were they?

In whole class mode, check their understanding of the 3 texts by asking, e.g. a student B about a student A's text, not their own, and a student A about a student C's text, etc.

They will hopefully feel they've successfully mediated the text, but have them test it by focussing on the main ideas and the details. Appendix 2 suggests how many of each there are, but it's not an exact science, so check you agree with it *before* the lesson. Appendix 2 is for teacher reference, but you could give it to students as a self-checking activity if you prefer.

The issue here is how well they can mediate it. Do the other students have all the main ideas? How many of the details do they have? A light-hearted but telling way of "scoring" it, is to ask them to add up the number of main ideas each of the 3 group members made notes of, and then divide them by 3. They've only mediated well if all 3 of them noted each main ideas. Repeat the process for details – but obviously they may not have noted every detail – fair enough. However, point out that a good note taker makes more notes, not fewer.

Although it is an intro activity, it may take 20 – 25 min.

Pros and Cons of smartphones

This neatly contextualises *Touchscreen* but, in addition, having put thought into the pros and cons it will help them sort out their thoughts about their response to Touchscreen.

Appendix 3, primarily for teacher reference, includes 10 pros and 10 cons courtesy of Chat GPT. The student pages only include space for 5 of each but push them to add more, and maybe follow the brainstorming by eliciting and listing the pros & cons on the board.

Touchscreen

Watch the video:

- You could play it to the whole class, but it is a good idea to give them the QR code, Appendix 4, and let them watch / listen (with ear buds in) on their devices.
- Perhaps, ask them to watch it once, without the text, and then watch again with the text

1. What is it about?

Collaborating within their groups will help them here. They may have a positive response to the delivery and to the message but may take a while to be able to give a synopsis of it.

Suggest they start simply and develop their thinking, e.g. use sentence heads:

It's about ...	smartphones
It's about the effect of ...	smart phones on our lives
It's about the loss of ...	human contact and F2F interaction in the digital age
It's about the way we ...	have become addicted to smartphones

You'll probably need to finish the lesson here and let students know that they will be working in groups on preparing presentations on this slam poem expressing their opinion and views.

LESSON 2

Briefly review the first lesson. Check out their understanding of Slam Poem, Poetry Slam, and Slam Poems vs. Rap & a synopsis of Touchscreen.

Segue into:



I don't know anything about poetry, but I know what I like (with apologies to Orson Welles).

- Why apologies to Orson Welles? Who was Orson Welles?
- A famous actor and film director and he didn't say it about poetry, he said it about art – and so have many people.
- The point here is that poetry should be enjoyed, not analysed for the writer's ability to impress us with their use of (little known or understood) poetic devices (aka techniques).
- Slam poetry, as one of the initial texts explained doesn't or needn't follow poetic tradition, but it has its own more engaging, more entertaining, more enjoyable rules and standards – and Touchscreen is a brilliant example.

2. How much did you enjoy Touchscreen?

Give it a score.

Are they still in their groups of 3? If so, they could average the score (total their 3 scores and ÷ by 3)

	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
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3. Do you think that Marc Kelly Smith *did* have a good idea? Does slam poetry and do poetry slams help bring poetry back to life? If so, how?

It is a rather leading question, and some of them may feel that Smith didn't have a good idea, and it hasn't brought poetry back to life. Have them discuss it in their groups and follow up in whole class mode.

Some thoughts (which echo the rules for slam poetry – performance, theme/message, the impact, the eschewing of poetic rules) to add to whatever your students offer.

- Compare slam poetry with traditional poetry.
- They're not academic. They're not intended for academic study in school (not the traditional forms & rules of poetry): they're live, not intended to be silently read; they're intended to be performed – a large part of their value is in the performance – the use of voice (fast, slow; loud, soft; the use of body movement, facial expressions, use of gestures, pacing, movement, and standing still).
- It's not about poetic forms, it's about the performance and the performer's ability to engage, energise and move their audience: the subjects are not the traditional subjects of poems: love, nature, beauty, etc.; the subjects are real: political, social and personal commentaries; they're intended to resonate with the audience, to impact them emotionally & have a lasting impression.
- The venues are not rarefied, they're public and open to all. They're performed in bars, coffee houses, parks and other public venues, not poetry societies. They're more like popular music than operas.
- Slam poems may not follow the poetic rules for rhythm, alliteration, assonance, rhyming couplets etc. for you to appreciate but they offer something else for you to appreciate – word play.

4. What did you think of Touchscreen?

Here we move onto expressing a response, developing and elaborating on your thinking, and asking students to discuss and produce a review of the poem using specific criteria, including poetry slam criteria.

- First, they discuss and write their review
- Next, they agree how they are going to perform their review
- Then, they actually perform their review
- And finally, 5 randomly selected students judge each review

Contents of review: A) Synopsis, b) Performance and delivery, c) Theme / message, d) Language, e) Personal response

If they are short on ideas, you could take each criterion, do a whole class Q &A and elicit and add to their ideas e.g.

- Performance and delivery:
 - How did he sound? Robotic monotonic
 - How did he move? Like a robot
- Theme &/or message
 - What is his poem about? Smartphones
 - What about them? They're stealing our humanity;
They're replacing human interaction and relationships with
online superficial relationships.
We're addicted to them
- Language (examples and effect)
Give examples ...
 - Of repetition. What is its effect? It adds to the rhythm and the engagement
 - Of word play They make you think. They have an emotional impact
 - Of imagery
 - Of irony
- Personal response, reaction, interpretation
 - How real is his poem? How resonant? Does it reflect your life, your use of your Smartphone?

Categorise comments

If they need more help to develop ideas and thinking, Appendix 6 includes c. 20 of the hundreds of comments made on the You Tube video. Give your students a copy of Appendix 6 and ask them, in their groups, to categorise the comments under 5 – 6 headings. This will help them think about the kind of reactions to include in their review (see suggested headings on page 11 of the appendices, if you'd rather supply categories.)

Example Review, formatted for group performance

Additionally, Appendix 5 is an example review. It includes an actual review, divided up between students A, B, and C ready for performance. You could go through this briefly before they start but it's not advisable to give them a copy – they may simply copy it and undermine the point of the exercise.

Discussing Touchscreen, mapping out a review and “performing it” will take most of the lesson. If time allows, you could invite reflection.

Reflections

Either ask them to discuss the questions in their groups and follow up with whole class plenary or, in order to maximise time, you could ask the questions of the class and look for a show of hands (slide 14).

LESSON 3

Follow-up

If, on a show of hands, the students indicate that they enjoy Slam Poetry and would like to do it again, use Appendix 7 and follow the same procedure as with Touchscreen.

1.	Slam Poem	Assign or let each group of 3 choose one of the eight slam poems. They then work in their groups
2.	Video viewing	Use the QR code to access the poem on their devices & watch it (ear buds in)
3.	Write a review	Discuss their reactions to it, and, following the framework supplied, write a review to include: a) synopsis, b) performance and delivery, c) theme / message, d) language, e) personal response
4.	Prepare performance	They then agree how they are going to present i.e. perform their review, such that they participate equally and engage their audience.
5.	Performance	Each group then performs their review
6.	Judging	their performances are judged, in the spirit of Poetry Slams, by 5 randomly chosen judges. The scores are added and the winner is the one with the highest score. The acid test is whether or not the winning poem is the one most students actually want to watch.
7.	Reflections	

Note: this is genuine mediation, because there is a genuine information gap. Each group is mediating their personal response to a creative text which the rest of the class haven't seen. So, the most effective mediators are the team with the highest score.

It will take a full 45 minutes for their prep, performance and evaluation.