



Slam as Alternative Literacy

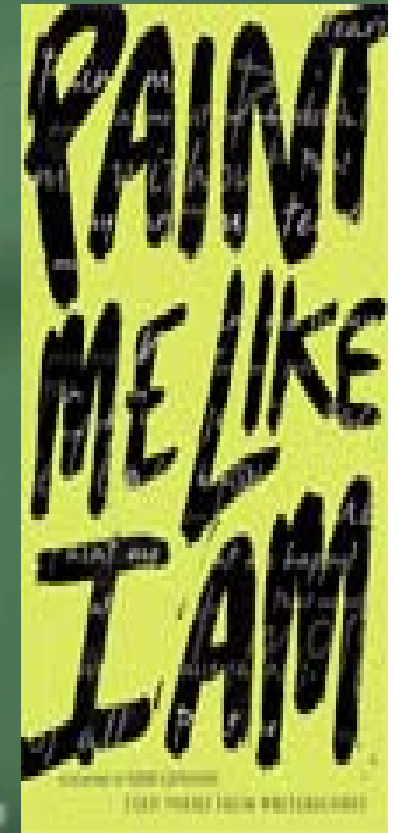
DC WritersCorps Model

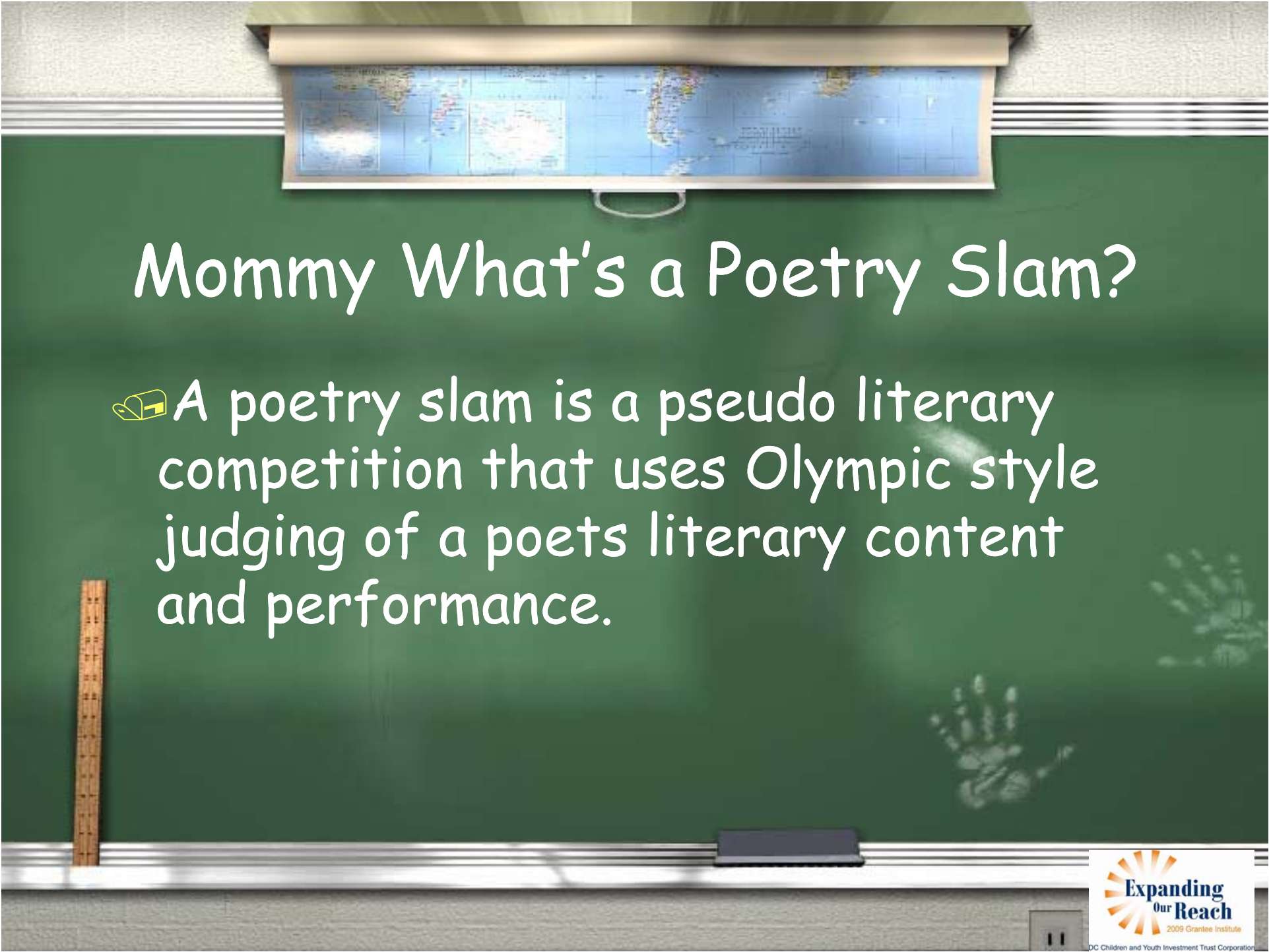





My Real Name by Elana Noel

Today my name is colorful
Yesterday my name was dead souls
Tomorrow my name will be lively spirits
I think my name is fire
The police think my name is burden
My parents think my name is symphony
Secretly I know my name is anything I want
it to be.






Mommy What's a Poetry Slam?

 A poetry slam is a pseudo literary competition that uses Olympic style judging of a poets literary content and performance.



What is the Youth Poetry Slam League?

 In 1995 DC WritersCorps established the nation's first Youth Poetry Slam League. The league was comprised of 4 East of the River Middle Schools. Later the league expanded to include ten middle schools and held its yearly championship at the Kennedy Center.





What were the goals of the Youth Poetry Slam League?

- 📖 To encourage students to see the reading and writing of literature as tools for lifelong success.
- 📖 To exploit MS students love of competition with an engaging and exciting program.
- 📖 To encourage students to participate in the strengthening of their literacy skills.
- 📖 To create a fellowship of students who enjoyed literature, and to provide alternate and positive outlets.



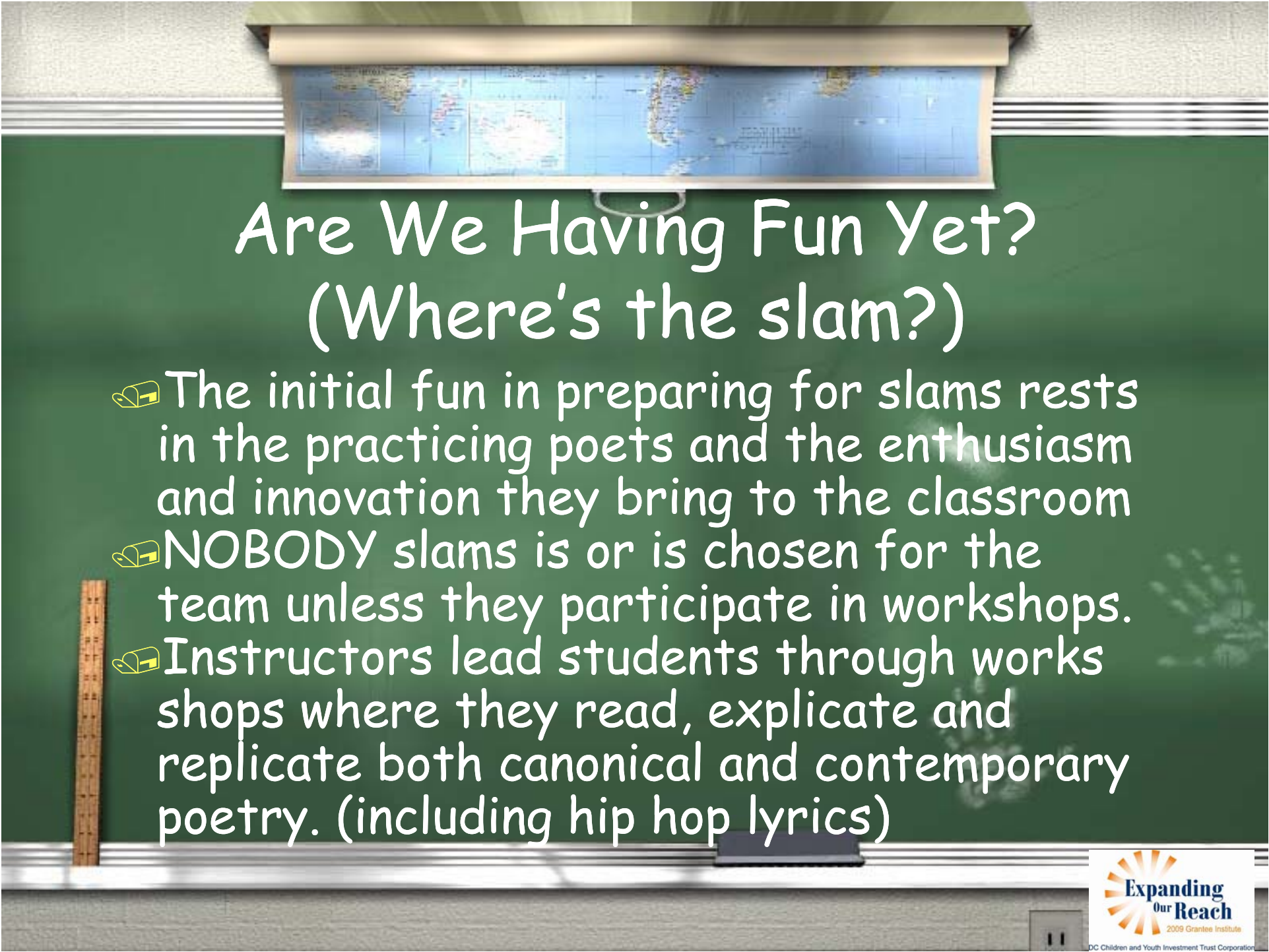
How did the program work?

- 📖 The YPSL ran as both a school hours and OST program.
- 📖 Practicing poets came to the schools once a week to conduct creative writing workshops DURING an English class and also held weekly OST slam workshops.



Lesson Planning for YPSL

- 📖 YPSL workshops are aligned with MS standards, and teachers aligned them with their lesson plans.
- 📖 Some MS ELA standards for the workshop shop are: 6.LD-V.9. Determine the meaning of figurative language, including similes, metaphors, personification, and grade appropriate idioms. 7.IT-E.1. Identify the author's purpose(s) in a text when it is not stated. 8.LT-S.10. Draw conclusions about style, mood, tone, and meaning of prose, poetry, and drama based on the author's word choice and use of figurative language.




Are We Having Fun Yet? (Where's the slam?)

- 📖 The initial fun in preparing for slams rests in the practicing poets and the enthusiasm and innovation they bring to the classroom
- 📖 NOBODY slams is or is chosen for the team unless they participate in workshops.
- 📖 Instructors lead students through workshops where they read, explicate and replicate both canonical and contemporary poetry. (including hip hop lyrics)



We Have Our Team!

 Once students decide on their team, (all interested students are on the team, no participating student is turned away) the team practices weekly for their first monthly competition against another MS.








Slamiteracy

- 📖 Students learn the rules and strategies for slam competition.
- 📖 Students study the writing, CDs and videos of accomplished slam performers, such as DJ Renegade, Saul Williams, Patricia Smith, Jeffrey McDaniel, et al.
- 📖 Students learn to work together as a team, helping each other to edit their poems and strengthen their public performances.



Slam Day!

-  Teams are brought together for a pre-performance meal.
 -  Students participate in ice breakers, getting to know their competitors as fellow writers and friends.
 -  Competitions are held in neutral sites, such as bookstores, colleges, DPR sites, etc.
 -  Competitions are held around 6pm to encourage parents, students and school staff to attend.
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School Slam Spirit!

- 📖 Slams are low cost programs that schools and OST organizations can utilize.
- 📖 Typical supplies and costs include, poetry instructor, pencils, paper, journals. (That's it)
- 📖 Schools have gotten into the Slam League spirit by outfitting their teams with school color shirts and hats. (Bookstores have also underwritten these costs)




Emphasizing Literacy and Friendship, not competition

- 📖 Pre-game meet and fellowship
- 📖 All teams receive the same prize
- 📖 Teachers, Poetry tutors, judges, slam host, constantly remind the students of the importance of their words and the bravery associated with being willing to read it publicly.



Grand Slam

- 📖 After regular league play is completed, students participate in the poetry equivalent of "March Madness"
- 📖 The three highest scoring teams compete at the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage for trophies and donated books.



Youth Poetry League Highlights

- 📖 Fun weekly reading and writing workshop!
- 📖 Strengthening of literacy skills while having fun!
- 📖 Chance to compete and represent school!
- 📖 Opportunity for self-expression and recognition!
- 📖 Chance to meet other young writers!



Resources for Schools and Providers

- 📖 District of Columbia Area Writing Project
- 📖 Sol y Soul
- 📖 DC WritersCorps
- 📖 Slam Your Stress
- 📖 American Poetry Museum
- 📖 DC Creative Writing Workshop



Bibliography

DC WritersCorps Publications

- 📖 Paint Me Like I Am, 2002 Harper Collins
- 📖 Tell The World, 2006, Harper Collins

📖 Teachers and Writers Publications

- 📖 Poetry Everywhere
- 📖 Luna, Luna
- 📖 Sing Up The Sun
- 📖 Listener In The Snow

Won't You Celebrate With Me

won't you celebrate with me
what i have shaped into
a kind of life? i had no model.
born in babylon
both nonwhite and woman
what did i see to be except myself?
i made it up
here on this bridge between
starshine and clay,
my one hand holding tight
my other hand; come celebrate
with me that everyday
something has tried to kill me
and has failed.

