

Name:

Day One

Slam Champion

Part 1: Silent read

➔ What does it take to be a poetry slam champion? Read silently.

A microphone waits in the spotlight. A young man stands at the back of the stage, his head bowed. The audience shouts and claps. Then, they fall silent. The young man steps forward, leans into the microphone, and begins to speak. “Mama,” he says, hitting each word hard, “I don’t think we hung the ghosts out long enough to dry!” Cries of “Whoo!” and “Yeah!” ring out. This is Justin, and he is 17 years old. He is a poetry slam champion.

At a poetry slam, poets become performers. Each poet has three minutes onstage. Poets may not read their poems or use props. Three judges score each poem. Often, the judges are picked randomly from the audience. Slams are about connecting people through poetry. They are about sharing emotion. The audience often gets loud, cheering a great poem or booing a bad one.

Many slam poems are experimental. Poets might scream or cry. They might use wild gestures, or run and jump onstage. They use their bodies as tools to convey deep feelings.

Successful slam poets connect with the audience. Justin is a big success. He has won \$10,000. He has won box seat tickets to a Knicks game. He has even worked as a teen ambassador, speaking about the power of poetry. He told the *Daily News*, “Every time I perform, I intend on changing someone’s life.”

Sources: “Justin Long (1st place),” *Youtube*, February 18, 2010.

“NYC’s Youth Poet Laureate Justin Long-Moton loves the written word but enjoys slam poetry best,” *Daily News*, April 11, 2011.



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// one minute

Part 2: First timed read

WPM _____

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Part 3: Comprehension and discussion

What do poets do at a slam?

What has Justin won?

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Part 4: Phrase-cued reading

- Read the passage **out loud** in phrases to your partner.
- Pause at each / mark for a phrase.
- Also pause at each // mark that shows the end of a sentence.

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I read the passage in phrases out loud to my partner.