

(Suggested) Ways To Use Spoken Word Poetry At Camp!

Dear Counselors!

Spoken word poetry – the art of performing poetry – is an exciting, amazing, and powerful tool to bring to camp. The possibilities are endless, and it’s up to you as a counselor and staff member to decide how best to use this art form to serve your camp’s desires and needs. There are ways to use spoken word poetry activities, workshops, and programming for any sized group of any age. The trick and key is catering the subject matter / content, to the context / framework at hand!

An amazing way to take a writing workshop from small groups and bunks and to a camp-wide activity is to have smaller groups and/or bunks replicate writing workshops – on any chosen theme – and have a camp-wide or age-group-wide open-mic or poetry slam competitions.

While I encourage counselors / staff to use any themes for the writing prompt in writing workshops, and performance activities, I recommended keeping the structure of the writing workshop the same, and then changing the following sections: the poem or art used at in the performance / sharing opener, the nature of questions in the discussion, and the writing prompt.

Have fun! Spoken word poetry has the potential to offer incredible “pikuach nefesh” magic!

All best,
Caroline Rothstein

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(Suggested) Writing Workshop Structure (30 to 60 minute program):

- Intro / Welcome / Icebreaker
- Inspiration / idea generator (this could be a personal story from the facilitator, an outside poem or example related to the topic, a news article or TV clip, or any other source of inspiration or art)
- Group or small group discussion responding to “inspiration / idea generator”
- Writing prompt / workshop connected to “inspiration / idea generator” topic/theme
- Sharing writing
- Closing activity

(Suggested) Writing / Poetry Prompts:

- Write a thank you note / love letter to something that scares you.
- Write a thank you note / love letter to someone with whom you don’t normally hang out.
- Imagine a world without violence or discrimination. Consider Tikkun Olam. Think about the cause / issue about which you most care: write about / describe this new, peaceful world.

- It takes three legs to hold up a stool. What are the three tenants of your Jewish identity and faith? What a poem about your “Jewish identity” stool. The three things that hold you together and strong.
- Take a poetry video from YouTube / online, or a poem, or a visual art piece, or a clip of TV show or movie and ask participants to write a poem responding to that piece of work.
- Write poems for a specific Jewish holiday / festival, or camp celebration!
- Make up your own!

(Suggested) Performance Activities:

- Organized a poetry slam (bunk, age-group, or camp-wide; staff-wide)!
- Organize an open mic night!
- A standard writing workshop!
- Encourage journaling and freewrite exercises!
- Use poetry to commemorate an event!
- Use poetry to celebrate a festival / holiday!
- Incorporate spoken word poetry into Shabbat programming (without microphone wherever appropriate!)!
- Encourage campers who write / perform poetry to share their work to open camp-wide meetings, events, and activities!

(Suggested) Resources:

- Caroline Rothstein: www.youtube.com/CarolineRothsteinTV
- Button Poetry: www.youtube.com/ButtonPoetry
- Poetry Slam, Inc.: <https://www.youtube.com/thisispoetryslaminc>
- Speak Easy NYC: <https://www.youtube.com/speakeasynyc>
- Urban Word NYC: <https://www.youtube.com/UrbanWordNYC1>
- Youth Speaks: <https://www.youtube.com/YOUTHSPEAKS>
- All Def Digital: www.youtube.com/AllDefDigital