

teacher resource guide

**schooltime  
performance  
series**



**mayhem  
poets**

**arts  
education  
njpac**



## about the performance

The Mayhem Poets are theater-trained, comedically-gifted, lyrical virtuosos who seamlessly blend raw elements of hip hop, theater, improv and stand-up comedy to tell gut-wrenching truths that leave audiences forever changed.

*The New York Times* has called the Mayhem Poets' performances "an amazing ride" and described the experience as "The Simpsons meets Malcolm X at a Notorious B.I.G. concert." In 2006, The Mayhem Poets won first place in the *Microsoft Idea Wins Challenge* and were featured on *The Today Show* and *Eyewitness News*.

The group has toured nationally and internationally at prestigious venues such as the Apollo Theater, Lincoln Center, New Victory Theater, New Jersey Performing Arts Center and other stages — in addition to countless universities, schools, group homes and incarceration facilities. The Mayhem Poets are Kyle Rapps (co-founder), Scott Raven (co-founder), Mason Granger and Mikumari Caiyhe.



## about the artists

**Scott Raven** is a poet, writer, performer, teacher and co-founder of The Mayhem Poets. He has a dual degree in acting and journalism from Rutgers University and is a member of the Screen Actors Guild. He has acted in commercials, plays and films. He has been published in *The New York Times* and *New York Post*, and is the author of *Sconnetts*, *The Polygons* and *Sports Stories*.

**Kyle Rapps** is a slam poetry artist, rapper, producer and co-founder of The Mayhem Poets. As an award-winning slam poet, his stage work has propelled him all the way to the Grand Slam finals at the legendary Nuyorican Poets Cafe in New York City. As a rapper, he has recorded with Action Bronson, Talib Kweli, KRS-One and Joell Ortiz.

**Mason Granger** is a poet, host, producer and teaching artist who joined The Mayhem Poets in 2005. He created SlamFind, the world's first mobile app dedicated to performance poetry, featured in *Huffington Post*, *Upworthy*, *Buzzfeed* and *Cosmopolitan*. He is the Deputy Director for Get Lit, an organization dedicated to fostering poetry and literacy in schools.

**Mikumari Caiyhe** is an actor, emcee, spoken word poet, arts educator and advocate. Caiyhe graduated from the Duke Ellington School for the Arts and went on to study at Rutgers University's Mason Gross School of the Arts. As an arts educator, Caiyhe has taught literary arts, acting, and ballroom dance for NJPAC, the Boys & Girls Clubs of America and the YMCA.

## njpac on the mic podcast

with spoken word artist, Sean Battle



**How to listen to this episode of NJPAC On the Mic**  
Scan the QR code or visit [njpac.org/arts-education/teacher-resources](https://njpac.org/arts-education/teacher-resources) to access the podcast and the following show notes:

**Part 1: About** | Pre-show audio, 6 minutes

**Includes:** An introduction to the performance, artists, venue and welcome message

**Welcome message voiced by** Sean Battle

**Part 2: Connect** | Post-show audio, 7 minutes

**Includes:** Reflection question, a look at the evolution of spoken poetry

**Opening question voiced by** Sean Battle

**Part 3: Spotlight** | Post-show audio, 10 minutes

**Includes:** An interview with a New Jersey spoken word artist and discussion starters

**Interview guest:** Sean Battle

### Additional Episode Credits

**Series producers:** Michael Aquino and Dania Ramos

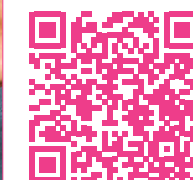
**Written and hosted by** Dania Ramos

**Additional writing by** the team behind The Mayhem Poets

**Theme and outro music:** NJPAC Student Hip Hop program

**Additional music from** Epidemic Sound

**Sound editing, sound design and voiceover by** Michael Aquino



Scan the QR code to access the NJPAC on the Mic Podcast & show notes

### About NJPAC On the Mic

*NJPAC On the Mic* allows students to engage their listening skills and deepen their understanding of creative content. This installment features three exclusive, curriculum standard-aligned episodes that supplement the production of *The Mayhem Poets*, presented as part of NJPAC's 2023 – 2024 *SchoolTime* Performances series.

# inspired ideas in the classroom

## Teacher Focus

## Student Activity

## NJ Student Learning Standards

P

### Prepare for the performance

Show two short clips of a **traditional poetry recitation** and a **spoken word poetry recitation**, and ask students to compare and contrast the two during a classroom discussion.

Liken The Mayhem Poets to the style of the spoken word recitation. Introduce them as artists who combine poetry, hip hop, theater, improvisation and stand-up comedy. Define each of these art forms using the provided vocabulary list. Have students listen to *NJPAC On the Mic: About*.

Review audience etiquette expectations with students. By establishing these, students are guaranteed to garner a more enriched experience.

Watch the video clips of two different styles of poetry recitation.

What is the same about them, and what is different? The performance of The Mayhem Poets you are about to attend will be similar to the second video — but even more versatile. Be sure you understand each of the art forms they embody so you can identify them while watching.

Listen to *NJPAC On the Mic: About*.

**Reading**  
RL.9-10.10  
**English Language Arts**  
NJLSA.SL1.  
NJLSA.L3.

E

### Experience the performance

Invite students to make note of the five art forms The Mayhem Poets incorporate during the performance: poetry, hip hop, theater, improvisation and stand-up comedy. Ask students to note the part of the performance that made the strongest impression on them.

The Mayhem Poets integrate poetry, hip hop, theater, improvisation and stand-up comedy into their performances. Look for examples of these elements during the performance. Note the part(s) of the performance that caught your attention the most.

**English Language Arts**  
NJLSA.SL1.  
**Visual & Performing Arts: Theater**  
1.4.12prof.Cr2a.  
1.4.8.Re7a.

R

### Reflect, respond and read

Have students listen to *NJPAC On the Mic: Connect*.

Lead a discussion surrounding the atmosphere created by The Mayhem Poets. Did they feel safe to express their feelings and share their identity? Were their words genuine? How do we know?

Either as a class in “popcorn” fashion or independently, have students read **the article 10 Spoken Word Performances, Folded Like Lyrical Origami**. In response, have students complete **Activity Sheet 1**, describing the cultural aspects of spoken word poetry and drafting expectations for in-class performances. Compile responses and narrow them down to three-to-five common expectations to stand as classroom agreements.

Listen to *NJPAC On the Mic: Connect*.

Consider the “vibe” created during The Mayhem Poets’ performance. Did they seem comfortable and confident expressing themselves? Did you feel welcomed and encouraged to do the same?

Read **the article 10 Spoken Word Performances, Folded Like Lyrical Origami**, provided by your teacher, considering the cultural aspects of spoken word poetry. What actions and words of your classmates would make you feel safe to express yourself during an in-class spoken word poetry performance?

Complete **Activity Sheet 1**.

**English Language Arts**  
NJLSA.SL1.  
**Visual & Performing Arts: Theater**  
1.4.12prof.Re8a.  
**NJ Social-Emotional Learning**  
Self Awareness 3.11  
Self Awareness 3.08

F

### Focus

Share The Mayhem Poets’ segment *My Name Is* with the students. Introduce the concept of “boasting” in hip hop as an opportunity for a performer to share the dynamic elements that make them unique. Lead a discussion surrounding the mood created during this segment (serious versus sarcastic, or a mix of both).

Have students listen to *NJPAC On the Mic: Spotlight*.

Watch The Mayhem Poets perform their segment *My Name Is* — an example of “boasting,” a technique hip hop artists employ to brag about their unique traits. Do The Mayhem Poets seem serious or sarcastic during the segment? How do they change their bodies and voices to communicate the mood?

Listen to *NJPAC On the Mic: Spotlight*.

**English Language Arts**  
NJLSA.SL1  
**Visual & Performing Arts: Theater**  
1.4.12prof.Re8a.

O

### Originate

**Display the following quote from The Mayhem Poets member Mason Granger for the class:**  
“Everybody has a silly side and everybody has a serious side and everybody has, you know, the deep side, whatever gets you going in that way ... how to acknowledge all of them at once is hard. That’s what kind of got me in was the way of acknowledging all your sides, and not have to be like, ‘I’m a dude, I gotta be this’ or ‘I’m 19, I gotta be this’ ... none of that. You could do all of it at the same time.”

Lead a discussion on identity, self-concept, stereotypes and pressure from family and friends to conform to others’ expectations. Reference the *My Name Is* clip for specific examples.

Hand out **Activity Sheet 2**. Consider providing an example of your answers as a model.

Read the quote by The Mayhem Poets member Mason Granger. How does he describe the different sides of people? What does he say about stereotypes? According to Granger, can a person be many things at once?

**Consider the many different sides of you:** silly, serious, deep and many more. Also, consider the stereotypes placed upon you. Who pressures you to live up to them? Complete **Activity Sheet 2**, exploring the many sides of you. Then, transform your answer into a spoken word poem in the same style as The Mayhem Poets’ *My Name Is* segment.

**English Language Arts**  
NJLSA.SL1  
L.9-10.3.  
**Visual & Performing Arts: Theater**  
1.4.12prof.Re9c  
**NJ Social-Emotional Learning**  
Self Awareness 1.01  
Self Awareness 1.02  
Self Awareness 1.03

R

### Rehearse

Allow students time to rehearse their spoken word performances. Once they have practiced independently, instruct students to perform for a partner or small group. Provide students with a performance checklist including tone, inflection, volume, body language, facial expressions, movement, rhythm, tempo, originality/creativity, etc. Encourage students to provide constructive feedback to their classmates.

Once students have finalized their *My Name Is* poems, review the student-created classroom agreements for spoken word poetry performances. Allow students to recite their poems back-to-back in the same style as The Mayhem Poets. Encourage collaboration and interaction amongst students.

Think back upon the ways The Mayhem Poets combined poetry, hip hop, theater, improvisation and stand-up comedy. How did they change their body language, facial expressions and voice to accomplish this? While you rehearse, experiment with ways you can exemplify their performance style. Provide constructive and empathetic feedback to your classmates on their performances and welcome the same from them.

Recite your poem for a partner or small group, and then for the entire class. Interact and collaborate with your classmates like The Mayhem Poets did in their performance.

**English Language Arts**  
NJ123  
**Visual & Performing Arts**  
1.4.12prof.Pr4a.  
1.4.12prof.Re9a.  
**NJ Social-Emotional Learning**  
Relationship Skills 4.13

M

### Make magic

Cultivate an audience for the performance: in-person, online or both. You may record the performance as a video or audio project that can be uploaded to an online hosting site and available to family and friends anytime, anywhere. Remind your students how brave they are to examine their dynamic selves and share them with others.

Cue the audience! It’s time to share your performance as a class with an audience. Remember how you felt as an audience in The Mayhem Poets’ performance and know you can recreate the same atmosphere for your audience. Excellent job sharing your original poems!

**Visual & Performing Arts: Theater**  
1.4.12prof.Pr6a.



# curriculum standards

## FIND THE STANDARDS

For more detailed information on the standards, visit these websites:

NATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

[corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy](http://corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy)

NATIONAL SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

[socialstudies.org/standards](http://socialstudies.org/standards)

NATIONAL CORE ARTS ANCHOR STANDARDS

[nationalartsstandards.org](http://nationalartsstandards.org)

# common core state standards

## English

### NJSLSA.SL1.

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

### NJSLSA.L3.

Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

### ELA: L.9-10.3.

Apply knowledge of language to make effective choices for meaning, or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading, writing, speaking or listening.

## Reading

### RL.9-10.10.

By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems at grade level text-complexity or above with scaffolding as needed.

## Visual & Performing Arts: Theater

### 1.4.8.Re7a.

Describe and record personal reactions to artistic choices in a theatrical work.

### 1.4.12prof.Cr2a.

Explore the function of history and culture in the development and subsequent interpretations of devised or scripted theatre work.

### 1.4.12prof.Pr4a.

Rehearse various acting exercises to expand skills in a rehearsal for devised or scripted theatre performance.

### 1.4.12prof.Pr6a.

Perform devised or scripted theatre work for a specific audience.

### 1.4.12prof.Re8a.

Examine a devised or scripted theatre work and identify the supporting evidence/criteria for its effectiveness to communicate the central message considering plays' history, culture, and political context.

### 1.4.12prof.Re9a.

Analyze and compare artistic choices developed from personal experiences in multiple devised or scripted theatre works.

### 1.4.12prof.Re9c.

Justify personal aesthetics, preferences, and beliefs through participation in and observation of devised or scripted theatre work.

## NJ Social-Emotional Learning

### Relationship Skills 4.13

Utilize positive communication and social skills to interact effectively with others

### Self Awareness 1.01

Recognize one's feelings and thoughts

### SEL Self Awareness 1.02

Recognize the impact of one's feelings and thoughts on one's own behavior

### Self Awareness 1.03

Recognize one's personal traits, strengths, and limitations

### Social Awareness 3.08

Recognize and identify the thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of others

### Social Awareness 3.11

Demonstrate an awareness of the expectations for social interactions in a variety of settings



# vocabulary

## Boasting

In slam poetry, when a performer shares the dynamic traits that make them unique

## Hip Hop Music

A type of popular music with a strong rhythm in which the words are often spoken rather than sung

## Improvisation

An artistic work composed, recited, played or sung without preparation

## Poetry

Writing that formulates a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience in language chosen and arranged to create a specific emotional response through meaning, sound and rhythm. Poetry can be written in meter (following a rhythmic pattern) or free verse (without a specific rhythm)

## Slam poetry

A form of performance poetry that combines the elements of performance, writing, competition and audience participation

## Spoken word

Poetry intended for performance and characterized by rhyme, repetition, improvisation and wordplay

## Stand-up Comedy

Comedy that generally is delivered by a solo performer speaking directly to the audience in some semblance of a spontaneous manner

## Theater

Dramatic performances as a branch of art; the field or discipline of staged drama





## resources

### NJPAC

About NJPAC  
[njpac.org/about](http://njpac.org/about)

NJPAC's Arts Education Programs  
[njpac.org/arts-education](http://njpac.org/arts-education)

NJPAC Resources | The Mayhem Poets  
[njpac.org/education-program/mayhem-poets](http://njpac.org/education-program/mayhem-poets)

### Websites

The Mayhem Poets  
[themayhempoets.com](http://themayhempoets.com)

Scott Raven  
[scottraven.wordpress.com](http://scottraven.wordpress.com)

Kyle Rapps  
[facebook.com/kylerrappsmusic](https://facebook.com/kylerrappsmusic)

Mason Granger  
[masongranger.com](http://masongranger.com)

Mikumari Caiyhe  
[instagram.com/mikumari\\_caiyhe](https://instagram.com/mikumari_caiyhe)

"25 Slam Poetry Examples to Inspire Students of All Ages"  
[weareteachers.com/slam-poetry-examples](http://weareteachers.com/slam-poetry-examples)

Exploring Spoken Word Poetry  
[theatrefolk.com/blog/exploring-spoken-word-poetry](http://theatrefolk.com/blog/exploring-spoken-word-poetry)

"5 Spoken Word Poems to Listen to Today"  
[americanwritersmuseum.org/5-spoken-word-poems-to-listen-to-today](http://americanwritersmuseum.org/5-spoken-word-poems-to-listen-to-today)

"Everything You Need To Know About Improv"  
[backstage.com/magazine/article/everything-know-improv-3218](http://backstage.com/magazine/article/everything-know-improv-3218)

Excerpt from *Bossypants* by Tina Fey  
[kicp-workshops.uchicago.edu/eo2014/pdf/Tina-Feys-rules-of-improv.pdf](http://kicp-workshops.uchicago.edu/eo2014/pdf/Tina-Feys-rules-of-improv.pdf)

The Poetics of Hip Hop  
[kennedy-center.org/education/resources-for-educators/classroom-resources/lessons-and-activities/lessons/9-12/the-poetics-of-hip-hop](http://kennedy-center.org/education/resources-for-educators/classroom-resources/lessons-and-activities/lessons/9-12/the-poetics-of-hip-hop)

SEL Toolkit: Self-Awareness  
[actforyouth.net/program-toolkit/9d-activities/sel/self-aware.cfm](http://actforyouth.net/program-toolkit/9d-activities/sel/self-aware.cfm)

Why Spoken Word Poetry  
Is So Much More Than A Poetry Reading  
[psyche.co/ideas/why-spoken-word-poetry-is-so-much-more-than-a-poetry-reading](http://psyche.co/ideas/why-spoken-word-poetry-is-so-much-more-than-a-poetry-reading)

TEDblog | 10 Spoken Word Performances,  
Folded Line Lyrical Origami  
[blog.ted.com/10-spoken-word-performances-folded-like-lyrical-origami](http://blog.ted.com/10-spoken-word-performances-folded-like-lyrical-origami)

Dodge Poetry | Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation  
[grdodge.org/our-work/dodge-poetry](http://grdodge.org/our-work/dodge-poetry)

Modern American Poetry | Amiri Baraka  
[modernamericanpoetry.org/amiri-baraka](http://modernamericanpoetry.org/amiri-baraka)

EvoluCulture Ventures  
[evoluculture.com](http://evoluculture.com)

### Videos

Improv lesson from Tina Fey  
[youtube.com/watch?v=NmafRleet0](https://youtube.com/watch?v=NmafRleet0)

2020 Pulitzer Prize-Winning Poet  
Jericho Brown Reads "The Tradition"  
[youtube.com/watch?v=F-M0\\_eGmHWY](https://youtube.com/watch?v=F-M0_eGmHWY)

Amanda Gorman reads  
inauguration poem, "The Hill We Climb"  
[youtube.com/watch?v=LZ055iIiN4](https://youtube.com/watch?v=LZ055iIiN4)

Mayhem Poets: *My Name Is*  
[youtube.com/watch?v=bDkfwXfpwhl](https://youtube.com/watch?v=bDkfwXfpwhl)

Mayhem Poets performance at  
Usdan Summer Camp for the Arts  
[youtu.be/vWiGbN9ZjHA?si=OfxUokbqjhogGvo](https://youtu.be/vWiGbN9ZjHA?si=OfxUokbqjhogGvo)

Mayhem Poets on the Today Show  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UBKivBSAWgg>

CNN | Spoken Word: The Roots of Poetry  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GgqaVXE30FU>

Open Culture | Watch Langston Hughes Read Poetry  
from His First Collection, *The Weary Blues* (1958)  
[openculture.com/2014/02/hear-langston-hughes-read-two-poems-from-the-weary-blues.html](http://openculture.com/2014/02/hear-langston-hughes-read-two-poems-from-the-weary-blues.html)



# njpac staff

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## NJPAC Arts Education performances team:

Rosa Hyde, Treasure Borde, and Kendall Lipham. On the Mic is an NJPAC Arts Education production, produced in partnership with CM Studios. CM Studios producers: Michael Aquino and Dania Ramos. NJPAC and CM Studios are located in Essex County, New Jersey, situated on the traditional territory of the Leni Lenape people.

## the arts in your school

**In-School Residencies:** NJPAC teaching artists come right to your school to teach the performing arts to your students. Our super-flexible in-person residencies are designed to meet your needs and you'll have a dedicated program manager to help you every step of the way. It's the perfect program to keep your students creating, connecting and expressing themselves through the magic of the arts.

**Professional Development:** Calling all educators! Expand your teaching skills, deepen your curriculum and give yourself a creative boost in NJPAC's forward-thinking professional development workshops. Our virtual PD programs are for teachers all the way from pre-K to high school and include hip hop, dance, storytelling, theater, music and more. Not only will you learn something... you'll also have fun and be inspired.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please email our education sales team at [artseducation@njpac.org](mailto:artseducation@njpac.org). Or visit [njpac.org/education](http://njpac.org/education)

## study the arts at njpac

**Saturday Programs:** NJPAC's Saturday programs are geared towards students at every level – from those who dream of starring on Broadway to those who are still learning their scales. Students work with professional artists to build technique and develop their own creative style in hip hop, jazz, theater, musical theater and symphonic band.

**Summer Programs:** Want to begin to explore the arts? Or immerse yourself in the study of one genre? Then join us at NJPAC next summer in one of seven programs that spark the creativity in every child through the study of music, dance and theater.

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Turrell Fund



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+deceased