

Tuesday, January 26, 2010

Poetry Slams Past and Future

For those expecting a traditional poetry reading, the experience of a poetry slam can be disorienting, exhilarating, or both. A poetry slam first and foremost is a public performance, and a competitive one at that. Poets are judged not unlike Olympic figure skaters or the contestants on *Dancing with the Stars*. At a poetry slam, five judges are selected randomly from members of the audience. Each competing poet then performs a piece, after which the judges hold up cards with their score for that poem, ranging from zero to ten. The highest and lowest scores are dropped, and the remaining three are added, giving each performance a rating between zero and thirty points.

Kresge's slams are lively events; members of the audience are encouraged to voice their reactions. Particular judges' scores may be booed or applauded, given the audience's level of agreement. Karrie Waarala, director of Auburn Hills Public Library (a seasoned slam poet) emcees the events with aplomb. Winners walk away with cash prizes (First Place: \$100, Runner-up: \$50).



In our November 2008 contest, Tom Budday won first place with Curtis Childs taking runner-up, and in April 2009, Jarel Lowman won first prize and Cameron Underdown took runner-up. Congratulations to the winners and to all who participated!



We look forward to our next National Poetry Month Poetry Slam on April 8th of 2010. Competing poets will need to sign themselves in by 7:00 PM. Participants should bring TWO original poems, one for each round of competition; there will be no warm-up round this year, and scoring begins with the first poem! No props, costumes or musical accompaniment are allowed, and the poem may not be read off an electronic device of any kind. Contestants are encouraged to memorize their poems, but reading from the page or note cards is permitted. Judges are instructed to score based on content of the writing and enthusiasm or polish of the performance. All poets, whether affiliated with Oakland University or not, are welcome to participate.

If you've never been to a poetry slam, this is your chance! The energy is contagious and slam poetry can change the way you think of the art of the spoken word.

SUMMARY

Kresge Library hosted poetry slams in November 13th of 2008 and April 16th of 2009. Well-attended by enthusiasts of spoken poetry, these events were emceed by Karrie Waarala, library director at Auburn Hills Public Library, and co-sponsor of the event. In honor of National Poetry Month our next Slam will be held April 8, 2010, at 7:00PM.

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