**Notes on Spoken Word Poetry**

* Spoken word is written on a page but performed for an audience. It relies on a heavy use of rhythm, improvisation, rhymes, word play, and slang.
* Spoken Word is writing that is meant to be read out loud.
* When writing a spoken word piece use words and phrases that project onto the minds of the listeners like vivid images, sounds, actions and other sensations.
* If your poem is rich with imagery, your listeners will see, smell, feel and maybe even taste what you’re telling them.

**Spoken word poetry uses many Language Features some of which include:**

* Alliteration – is the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of a word, to intensify the beat.
* Hyperbole – is an exaggeration or overstatement.
* An imperative sentence gives advice or instructions or expresses a request or command.
* Lists: can be used as an emphatic device. Can also provide coherency.
* Repetition of a Key Term or Phrase: This helps to maintain the listener’s focus keeping your reader on track. It is also an emphatic devices that emphasises
* Rhetorical Question is a question intended to provoke thought, but not an expressed answer, in the reader. It is most commonly used in oratory and other persuasive [genre](http://www.galegroup.com/free_resources/glossary/glossary_fh.htm#genre)s.- to launch or further discussion.

**Spoken word poetry uses Voice Techniques such as:**

* Inflection: a rise or fall in the sound of a person's voice; a change in the pitch or tone of a person's voice
* Intonation: the rise and fall in pitch of the voice; the melody established by varying patterns of pitch
* Pace (speed with which something is said.), pause, breathing
* Pitch( high or low sound tone)
* Tone (speaker’s attitude toward subject)
* Volume
* Emphasis(emphatic devices)

**Rhetorical Questions** – Often used in the introduction, it is not a question to be answered, such as “What is the meaning of life?”

* **Purposeful Repetition** – It is important you study for your test. If you do not study, you will not get the marks you deserve! So, not studying could cost you valuable marks.
* **Sentence Fragments** – A sentence fragment is a piece of information that is punctuated as a sentence but that lacks some of the characteristics of a complete sentence, such as being a complete thought.  For example, here is a fragment: *A story with deep thoughts and emotion.*  It begs the question, what about the story?
* **Sentence Brevity** (Short sentences) – He jumped. There was silence.
* **Use of Punctuation** – “!”(exclamation mark) , “...” (ellipses), “?” (question mark), “--” (dash)
* **Use of FONT** – Cap lock, size, bold, italics, underlined words, etc.
* **Use of Parallel Structure** – Be sure to eat your supper, complete your homework, and study your notes before going to sleep tonight.
* **Unusual Expressions** – “*Beep*. I’m sorry there must be some mistake. *Beep.*”
* **Effective Diction** – Effective word choice, such as Cornucopia, Anguish, Peril
* **Listing** (numerical order, bullets, sequencing)

**Other elements of Spoken Word Performance:**

* **Body language, gesture and facial expression** -- use your body to convey the nuances of the poem.  Enhance the words with facial expression, hand gestures and movement, exuding confidence through your placement on stage and use of voice and/or microphone.
* **Memorization --** reading from a paper is allowed…so is memorizing!  Memorization allows you to make eye contact with the audience, pay attention to your delivery and appear confident on stage.

On-line Guide to writing spoken word poetry –

<https://www.udemy.com/blog/spoken-word-poetry/>

**Introducing Spoken Word Poetry**

1. Listen and watch the following spoken poems.
2. Deconstruct the artists’ use of
   1. Language
   2. Pacing
   3. Rhythm
   4. Voice
   5. Intonation
   6. Facial expression
   7. Gesture

Alicia Keys - Def Poetry Jam

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lW2uwvVq4so>

Def Poetry - Suheir Hammad - What I Will

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFbE8RBhSDw&NR=1>

Ted Talk:   Malcolm London: “High School Training Ground”

<http://www.ted.com/talks/malcolm_london_high_school_training_ground?utm_source=email&source=email&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=ios-share>

Ted Talk: Sarah Kay “if I Should Have a Daughter”

<http://www.ted.com/talks/sarah_kay_if_i_should_have_a_daughter>

Ted Talk: Lemon Andersen: Please don't take my Air Jordans

<http://www.ted.com/talks/lemon_andersen_performs_please_don_t_take_my_air_jordans>

**Spoken Word Poetry Worksheet**

**Sarah Kay: “Hands”**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VuAbGJBvIVY>

**Sarah Kay – “Hands”**

People used to tell me that I had beautiful hands. Told me so often in fact that one day I started to believe them, until I asked my photographer father ‘hey daddy could I be a hand model? To which he said ‘No way!’.

I don’t remember the reason he gave me, and I would’ve been upset but there were far too many stuffed animals to hold, too many homework assignments to write, too many boys to wave at to, many years to grow.

We used to have a game, my dad and I, about holding hands. Coz we held hands everywhere. And every time either he or I would whisper a great big number to the other, pretending that we were keeping track of how many times we had held hands. That we were sure this one had to be 8,002, 753.

Hands learn more than minds do. Hands learn how to hold other hands. How to grip pencils and mold poetry. How to tickle pianos, and dribble a basketball and grip the handles of a bicycle. How to hold old people and touch babies.

I love hands like I love people. They are the maps and compasses with which we navigate our way through life. Some people read palms to tell you your future, but I read hands to tell your past. Each scar makes a story worth telling. Each callused palm, each cracked knuckle is a missed punch or years in a factory.

Now I’ve seen middle eastern hands clenched in middle eastern fists, pounding against each other like war drums. Each country sees their fists as warriors and others as enemies. Even if fists alone are only hands.  But this is not about politics, no hands are not about politics. This is a poem about love, and fingers. Fingers interlock like a beautiful zipper of prayer.

One time I grabbed my dad’s hand so that our fingers interlocked perfectly. But he changed position saying “No, that hand hold is for your mum!” Kids high-five, but grown ups shake hands. You need a firm handshake, but don’t hold on too tight, but don’t let go too soon, but don’t hold them for too long. But hands are not about politics. When did it become so complicated? I always thought it was so simple.

The other day my Dad looked at my hands as if seeing them for the first time and with laughter behind his eyelids, and with all the seriousness a man of his humour could muster he said “You know you’ve got nice hands, you could’ve been a hand model!” And before the laughter can escape me I shake my head at him and squeeze his hand 8,002,754.

**Poetry Unit – Worksheet -- The “Effectiveness” question**

* Writing devices such as **punctuation, repetition, imagery, figurative language and diction** are often used to create a particular effect for the reader.
* Questions that ask students to examine **“the effectiveness”** of a device usually have a **formula or pattern** that ensures you have answered the question correctly.
* **This formula looks like this:   Effectiveness = literary term**

- ie. theme/message, irony, character, imagery, tone, setting, symbolism, conflict, etc.

**In your exercise books, answer these questions for practice:**

1. What effect is created when the phrase “…not about politics” is repeated in Sarah kay’s spoken poem “Hands”?

1. Explain the effectiveness of the line “Now I’ve seen middle eastern hands clenched in Middle Eastern fists, pounding against each other like war drums.”

1. What effect is created by the poet’s use of diction in the line: “Each callused palm, each cracked knuckle is a missed punch or years in a factory.”?

**Steps for a one-paragraph constructed response:**

1. **Topic sentence:** restate the question as a statement.
2. **Define** the key term/device.
3. **Explain** the line/phrase.
4. **Explain the effectiveness** – this is where you “bring in” the literary term.
5. Offer a brief **explanation** of the connection between the device and the literary term.
6. **Summarize**/**conclude** your answer.
7. Use **transition** to connect ideas in your answer: **For example,  For instance, Furthermore, In addition**
8. **Do not use “I think” or “I believe in your answer.**