5:1 The Poetry Slam

Poetry Slams are considered performance poetry because they emphasize quality of writing as well as manner of presentation. At a Poetry Slam, poets enthusiastically perform their work while judges score them in a fashion similar to Olympic events.

Poet Marc Smith invented the poetry Slam in 1984 at a Chicago jazz club popular for its open mike evenings, called the Get Me High lounge. Smith offered in 1986 to host a weekly, Sunday night poetry competition at another club in Chicago, the Green Mill, considered the birthplace of the Poetry Slam. The competition continues each Sunday night, with judges chosen from the audience and money awarded to winners.

5:2a Range of Poetry Day Activities

Poetry Day is a very successful, full day of activities. The plan outlined here comes from the collaboration of two Merrimack, New Hampshire educators and their work in The Write Room, the high school's interdisciplinary writing center. Rae Bruce, a talented poet and long-time English teacher, and Sharon McKeon, gifted and talented educator, developed this plan over several years. Poetry Day at Merrimack High School began as a one-period reading, then evolved into the full-day event described here, taking weeks of planning and involving many students, faculty, administrators, commy members, and New England poets. The most rewarding part of Poetry Day is that it brings together a wide range of the student body, administrators, and faculty members through their enthusiasm for poetry. Various groups of students and faculty look at each other differently when they share their mutual admiration for and involvement with poetry.

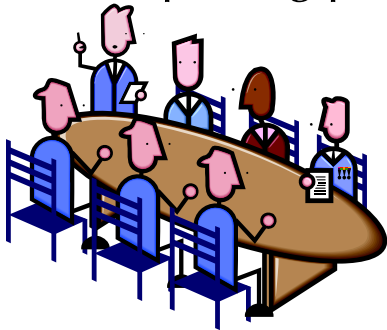## 5:2b Range of Poetry Day Activities

These three activities require a full day, but one or more could be carried out in a smaller block of time. Each component could take one class period.

    A. Poetry Workshops – Ideally, two different workshops given by local poets, each a full class period. If possible, one workshop could be given in the morning and one in the afternoon, or both could run simultaneously with two different groups of students at the same time. Then both groups could attend both workshops. Examples for basic topics are specific types of poetry, pre-writing strategies for poems, incorporating voice in poetry, vivid imagery in poetry, developing character, and revision strategies.

    B. A Poetry Reading during lunch periods so that students can participate without missing classes. Poetry Contest entrants could be invited to participate, with prizes announced at the end of the reading.

5:2c Range of Poetry Day Activities

      C. A Poetry Reading at the very beginning or end of the day by the guest poet(s)

Student committees will be needed to assist the teacher in completing preparations:

- Finding, communicating with about expectations, greeting, ordering lunch for, and thanking poets in writing for giving workshops and/or providing readings.
- Organizing sign-ups if other students are to be invited and making sure that students who will be released from classes have proper permission.
- Arranging for and running technology, including sound equipment and lighting.
- Locating proper spaces for the day, getting permission, and completing proper paperwork as well as providing for refreshments if possible.

5:2d Range of Poetry Day Activities

- Organizing, publicizing, and carrying out a poetry contest with submissions.
- Selecting, contacting, and procuring a variety of people to five judges to decide winners. Prizes need to be procured by donations or through budget, if available.
- Organizing a poetry reading by the school commy, with faculty, staff, student, and administrative participants reading their favorite poems. Poems will need to be read and approved by faculty in advance.
- Arranging for publicity within and without the school by creating posters, calling local media, and making announcements through the public address system and school newspaper and television and radio station, if available.

- Any other tasks that the specific school community requires to make the day a success.