

# the reading agency

## Participate: Creative Reading groupthing and creative groups

In this document you will find essential ideas and thinking about how to generate and sustain creative reading groups online using groupthing and offline in library settings.

### groupthing - where creative things meet

Public libraries are fantastic at engaging young children but find it harder when those children grow into teenagers. The traditional ways of engaging children with reading don't work with this older group. Libraries need something new if they are to attract large numbers of teenagers. They need to attract the young people who would never join a traditional reading group.

Groupthing.org is The Reading Agency's major new tool for public libraries to engage young people aged 13-18 in reading. It harnesses the two main drivers for young people today – being online, and generating and exchanging their own creative content. Young people are online up to 20 hours per week; groupthing.org gives them the tools to make the best use of that time.

### About groupthing

Groupthing ([www.groupthing.org.uk](http://www.groupthing.org.uk)) is an online community where young people creatively engage with reading and words. It gives the public sector and its partners a new tool to hook young people into words and reading. It redefines reading so that more young people recognise themselves as readers, are empowered by that realisation, and start reading more. groupthing's audience is young people aimed 13 up to 18 who consider themselves readers and those who don't.

groupthing promotes all forms of reading and words: magazines, nonfiction, manga, graphic novels, adult cross-over titles, plays, scripts, music (lyrics), short stories, film, games, websites, blogs, journalism, fiction, poetry, spoken words and 'how to' manuals.

groupthing manifesto is spontaneous, vivid, irresistible, curious, passionate, pushy, lively, tantalizing, inventive, fun, different, informative, irreverent, expressive, diverse, engaged, independent. It is a safe, easy to use, accessible networking site. Young people's content is post moderated by Tempero ([www.tempero.co.uk](http://www.tempero.co.uk)) and no personal details are visible. The site will have been risk assessed by the NSPCC. We are working with the RNIB to ensure that the site is accessible and that blind and partially sighted young people can join their sighted peers.

Young people's participation drives the site forward at every stage. They told us they wanted a place where they could communicate online, find out about activities locally, be part of virtual groups, create their own content, express and share their creativity.

"I had a look at the site which looks great! I'd like to write some things".

Katie, 15

## **Using groupthing with groups**

groupthing is exactly what it says it is. It's a place where young people can form groups around their creative interests. They can form strange clusters around Discworld, plan journeys to other countries, solve philosophical problems, and create new cover art. Maybe they'll storyboard favourite animations or swap lyrics. They can form groups, stack their shelves full of books, music, games, and films and then investigate what other young people have on their shelves.

As well as groups devoted to particular authors, genres, music styles, places, moods you can also use groupthing.org as a launch pad into other activities. Try....

### **A Twitter Book group**

Sign your group up to twitter (real time updates) and as they read a book they will be able to give very short comments which are sent to each member of the group's phone or pc.

### **A 60 second Rant**

Choose a topic that the group feels strongly about: green issues, bullying, getting a job etc. Discuss the topic (there may be more than one) thoroughly so each person has got a feel for how they can approach it. Ask each member of the group to film each other having a 60 second impassioned rant about what they think about the chosen topic. A rant doesn't need to be balanced. You don't have to see things 'from the other person's point of view' - the viewer will judge what you say. The important thing is to make the point clearly and make the viewer feel it is important to think about it. Upload it up on the groupthing creative section and/or your group.

### **Video yourselves reading poems in strange places**

You don't need high tech. Use the video on a mobile phone or a simple camera such as a Flip. The fun comes in choosing the poem to read (even better if your group can memorise them, and then choose a place to read it which will add to or contrast with the poem). Upload on to the creative section of groupthing

And yes you can post book reviews up there, but maybe do a video review rather than a written one or add some drawings to the words.

### **Make video trailers for books you're reading**

You can use actors, photographs, animation, software such as SIMS or simple images to make a trailer for a favourite book. Have a look on You Tube for inspiration.

And yes you can post book reviews up there but why not do a video review rather than a written one or add some drawings to the words.

## **Developing groups**

The rest of this document explores different kinds of groups and practical creative reading activities you can use with young people. They are arranged into:

- Book groups
- Gaming groups
- Manga groups
- Writing groups
- Events groups
- Poetry slams

## Book Groups

One of the simplest and most effective ways of getting young people involved in reading is through a book group. This is simply a group of people who decide to meet regularly to discuss a book they have all read. Apart from which books to choose there are a number of factors to take into account before and as you set up your group:

- **Age of members:** It's harder to work with a group spread over a wide age range.
- **Number of members:** the groups work best with around a dozen members. Depending on how regularly people turn up you might want to initially start with a few more to allow for those who may drop out.
- **Promotion:** the best kind of promotion is word of mouth so get the young people you work with already to tell others. Also hold a 'Design a poster' workshop so that they design and produce the poster, which is then a lot more likely to attract people of their age to the group
- **Venue:** It's important that the venue should feel private and comfortable. This can be when a library is closed if no separate room is available, or in a local café.
- **Facilitation:** most groups will need a facilitator who will ensure that conversation is brought back to the book when it wanders, and who will ensure that everyone gets a chance to speak, and no one person dominates. For an activity to count towards LAA targets for Positive Activities, it does need to be facilitated. It's a tricky balance and ideally it is a role for a young person, or a number of young people who take it in turns. They will need a little bit of training/mentoring at first to give them confidence but they will only have true ownership of their groups if they facilitate themselves and the adult professional is in a supportive role.
- **Length of time of meetings/ frequency:** the usual arrangement is once per month but you could vary according to group's needs. For example if you were reading through a shortlist for a prize you might want to meet more frequently to get through them all in an intense burst and then stop or slow down the meetings. As for how long the meetings should last, then this depends on the group/book but they usually last between an hour and an hour and a half.
- If your library service is a subscriber to groupthing you can have your own virtual reading groups – where the conversation can carry on in-between meetings.

## Choosing the books

You could choose a theme such as: childhood, war, or genre. Titles that fit them could be suggested and then the group could vote on which one to read.

It could be from a short/long list for a prize such as the Booktrust Teenage Book Prize, or the Carnegie, or for older teens The Orange Prize for Fiction. There are also lesser-known shortlists for horror, crime, and science fiction novels.

Otherwise each member of the group could come with a suggestion. These are all placed in a hat and one is pulled out.

It's important to consider how much book knowledge your group has. This will determine how easy they find it to suggest books and also the level of involvement. One suggestion is to get each member to write down the 'kind' of book they would like to read and then get the library service to offer titles based on that.

There is the facility to use reader polls on groupthing.org so young people can vote for what titles they would like to read.

## Things to think about

- Allow members to determine as much as possible - structure of the sessions, frequency and timing, what refreshments and ground rules for behaviour. There is evidence that this approach promotes a feeling of ownership of the group, and a higher level of commitment
- Take into account staffing levels when planning meetings and make sure that all staff are fully prepared before you start your teenage reading group. Consider whether it is better to run a group when the library is closed (easier to manage) or open (good to advertise the group)
- Don't worry if the group spends a proportionately small amount of time talking about books. Any discussion is better than none at all
- Young people may be reluctant to enter into an open-ended commitment. Sometimes it can be better to initiate a teenage reading group by saying that it will run for six months, or just one school term
- Bear in mind, though, it takes time to establish trust and respect, especially if you are working with hard-to-reach communities. Weeks may pass before you establish a rapport
- If your reading group is losing momentum, have a re-launch – ask them all to invite a friend along. Alternatively, it may be that your group has reached the end of its natural life. Let it go!
- Relax. The atmosphere in your group may be informal to the point of apparent chaos- but if the members are still reading books and discussing them, this is not a problem.
- On the other hand, some groups welcome support and structure. Observe, listen, facilitate when necessary.
- Rewards can be very effective. For example, if you want your group to write book reviews, have a competition.
- Be persistent. Your members may need frequent reminders of activities. Try using email or text messaging to keep in contact.
- Be realistic. Young people have many demands on their time, and the reading group may be much less important to them than it is to you.
- Be flexible. If something you have planned isn't working or is unpopular with group members, don't worry. Take the lead from the group.
- Be yourself and enjoy yourself!

## Tips for the first session

Even if young people are taking the lead role in running the group, it might be useful for you to have some ideas to get things started. Young people can be shy when they don't know each other and it's important that they go away from the first session feeling comfortable and like they've had an enjoyable time

- Try ice-breaking activities and tasks that everyone can get involved in. One idea might be to put lots of books on the floor and ask everyone to pick up a book that they'd like to read and one that they wouldn't be interested in, just from looking at the cover. This can keep people talking for ages, defending their choices and sharing their passions with each other
- Make sure you have good refreshments!
- Encourage the group to leave with a book to read and a plan for what's going to happen in the next session
- Discuss how the group is going to run and whether you need ground rules such as 'one person talking at a time'. Let young people set their own ground rules rather than imposing them on them
- Make a plan for the next few sessions in advance in conjunction with the young people

### **Tips for subsequent sessions**

Allow young people to set the agenda for the format of the groups. These can vary dramatically from library to library. Some things you might want to include are:

- An opportunity to talk about the chosen book/s
- An opportunity to talk about other books that have been read between sessions
- Some free time to chat about other things
- Time to contribute reviews to the reading group noticeboard, library website and groupthing
- Book quizzes and games such as Pictionary
- Arts, craft or creative writing activities

Try to make sure that everyone has a chance to contribute but remember that people who are very quiet may be perfectly happy to say nothing for the first few weeks. Gently encourage them to say a few words but don't pressure them.

'Trigger' questions to get people thinking and talking

- How did you feel about the book when you'd finished it?
- Where were you when you read it?
- Did the cover make you want to read it?
- Did it grip you right from the start?
- Did you want to read it right to the end?
- What was the thing you most liked finding out from this book?
- Which character did you like best and why?
- Was there any character you really didn't like? – why not?
- Have you read any other books by this author/in this series? Which?
- If not, has this book encouraged you to read more by him/her?
- If you gave up on this book, can you say why?

### **Case Study: High Wycombe HeadSpace**

When young people were asked whether they would like a reading group they were very keen to start one - with two conditions:

- No books like they would read in school
- They wouldn't all have to read the same book

In practice these conditions mean that all the young people talk for a bit about what they like reading or are reading now. One girl stood up and said 'Can I tell you why I read manga?' and gave what amounted to an informative and enthusiastic presentation on the subject, another boy talked about the Black Library novels that he read. In doing things their way, the young people gathered information about different reading choices, and also learnt more about the different people in the group. It also gave each speaker the opportunity to confirm themselves as readers through their own particular interest rather than one chosen for them.

## Gaming groups

Gaming is an example of where we can build on existing interests to connect with reading. Many public libraries have started to run Games Workshop or Warhammer (fantasy war-gaming) clubs over the last decade and have found that it attracts young teenage boys in particular.

A gaming club can help meet library targets by encouraging teenage boys into the library and changing their perception of what the service has to offer them. It is an ideal opportunity to get them reading and using the other services that are available. Most importantly it does this in a way that is relevant to them which they enjoy and which gives them a safe venue to pursue their hobby and meet with others who share their enthusiasm.

Games Workshop produces three main games: *Warhammer*, *Warhammer 40,000*, and *The Lord of the Rings*. The first is a classic fantasy battle game with Elves, Orcs, Chaos gods and dragons, influenced in part by the many fantasy novels of authors such as Michael Moorcock.

*Warhammer 40,000* (or *40K* as it is usually known!) is a gothic space fantasy where alien races and fantastic creatures battle it out with superhuman Space Marines and their tanks and machines of war.

*The Lord of the Rings* is based around the works of J R R Tolkien and allows the player to recreate their favourite battles from the books or films.

Games Workshop's publishing arm The Black Library produces many novels and background books set in the worlds created within *Warhammer* and *Warhammer 40,000*. [www.games-workshop.com](http://www.games-workshop.com)

Bek Hawkby is the Community Coordinator for Games Workshop and is the main point of contact for all libraries wishing to run a club. Bek used to work for the library service and still helps run a club in Ripley Library (Derbyshire). The club meets fortnightly and regularly attracts a dozen young boys aged 12-16. About half of these boys do not read anything other than games-related material and one of the challenges is to introduce them to wider reading via their interest in gaming. Bek has used the magazine *White Dwarf* (which is devoted to Games Workshop games) as a useful tool in expanding and promoting literacy.

If you want to set up a Warhammer group, contact Bek [bek.hawkby@games-workshop.co.uk](mailto:bek.hawkby@games-workshop.co.uk). Or by phone on 0115 900 4821 or 07826 911 555

Space needed is enough for 3 or 4 4x4 tables for the battles to be set up, and ideally a space for painting figures. It's the intense visuals that first attract people to the games and painting is a great way of bringing a bit of calm to the group after heated battles.

Running a Warhammer group is not only a way of bringing in boys who would not usually come into the library; they provide a visual element that attracts other young people. The gaming club is a very social activity and allows members to mix discussion, reading, and debating about a something they take very seriously.

You can run tournaments with your groups inter-library, cross-county, and build up young people's interest in a wide range of areas from military history, myths and legends, to novels based on the game (the Black Library) and other books that deal with similar scenarios.

Games Workshop offers library clubs help in setting up. There is a free information pack and a small package of free materials for any club which gets in touch with Bek. Games Workshop also run seminars aimed at giving library staff the skills and confidence to run these clubs. These seminars aim to do the following:

- Impart greater knowledge and understanding of what Games Workshop is and how it inspires young people
- Demonstrate through anecdotal evidence why this is a worthwhile activity for libraries and how it can help you achieve your targets
- Learn the best practise for running clubs, how to maximise the impact of the club and minimise the resources needed.
- Take part in the hobby and see for yourself the enjoyment, inspiration and creativity involved
- Create action plans, timelines and contacts to become part of a network of library clubs.

These seminars cost £100 per delegate and contain £100 of Games Workshop products. They can be arranged by contacting Bek.

An even more popular type of gaming is computer/video games. They range from simple(ish) shoot-em-ups to massively multiplayer role-playing games worlds (MMORPG), such as World of Warcraft (**WoW**) which involve thousands of people. WoW has its own manga and comic book series. Generally these games are not much talked about outside their immediate fan base but the storylines in the games allow themselves to be discussed in a similar way to novels. Both games and novels offer an 'immersive experience' which is a large part of their popularity. Like novels, people are divided about which games they like and why they like them.

What would a group discussing a game look like? Is it possible for everybody to have had a chance to try the same game – or choose two games that are age appropriate and compatible with the technology at either the library or in their homes?

Questions that are often used to start a book group conversation could work equally well in a games discussion, for example:

- What part of the story stayed with you after you finished? Which is the bit that made the game stand out to you?
- If you could talk to the designers/writers, which parts would you ask them to change and why?
- Have you played similar games, if so what, and what do they have in common
- How would you describe the game to other people?
- What kind of game did you think it would be before you started playing it?

Through this we can discuss and value the experiences of gaming in ways that we take for granted with books.

## Manga groups

### About Manga

Manga can be translated from Japanese as "comic books". That's certainly what they look like at first glance. Unfortunately the term "comic books" is often based on what is commonly available in the UK - either American style superhero comics or humorous strip cartoons. Manga is different. It is a medium, and just about every subject imaginable appears in this format: from "serious literature" to science fiction, romance, mysteries, crime, political thrillers, and humour. It's not just about Japanese comics: Korea and China also produce their own, but Japan, through manga and anime, has created the recognisable style that has spread globally.

Due to its huge range of subjects/themes etc, the format appeals equally to males & females. Probably the only contemporary foreign fiction many young people will have access to, manga is not just about gripping stories and great artwork – it also very much about the east-west mash-up that is global culture. It's great for getting groups to discuss cultural differences and provoking discussion about whether when something breaks our conventions is it wrong. The media will tell you these stories are full of sex and violence, but they are just as much about family, honour, bravery, love etc. They are all age-rated. Two types of manga are:

**Shojo** – primarily character-driven storylines aimed at girls.

**Shonen** - action-driven storylines for boys

"I got into manga a couple of years ago, I've read all eight of Marmalade Boy. It's mainly the girly stuff. I like these stories; they're different to the kind of things you get in usual books, more unpredictable".

Charlotte, 16

One of the most obvious things about manga is that although they are translated from the original Japanese, many of them still require you to read right-to-left. This has proven popular with young people in the UK and many prefer these to the ones that are 'flipped' to a Western left-to-right format.

### Running your manga group

Many of these series are very long – it's not unusual to have a series running to 10, 15, 20 or more books. Because of this, a manga book group might only read the first in a particular series and then move on. A manga club could have each person talking about their personal favorites.

What does pull a lot of people into manga is the distinctive artwork. Manga groups often start by drawing their own characters and entering competitions.

**Recons** are mini conventions involving dressing up as your favourite manga character, quizzes, food, and free books. They are often organized by publishers such as Tokyopop and take place in bookshops and public libraries.

Plymouth Headspace offers informal manga workshops. These are run by two of the older members of the HeadSpace and they get other participants to add their manga sketches and doodles to an ever-increasing sheet of cardboard. In this way people get a very immediate satisfaction in seeing their character evolve over several sessions, and also get to see what other people are doing and share tips.

Most popular Manga at Plymouth HeadSpace are:

- Naruto
- Bleach
- Fruits Basket
- Dears

### **Case Study: Scunthorpe Central Library**

The library ran a Recon in partnership with TOKYOPOP to promote its new manga collection. The event invited people to come in costume, dressed as their favourite Manga character and to submit their artwork for the Manga art competition. On the evening, the audience voted for their favourite piece of art and favourite costume. There was also a Manga quiz, a preview of forthcoming books and lots of freebies and giveaways provided by TOKYOPOP. The library provided Japanese style snacks such as Pocky, White Rabbits, rice, prawn and seaweed crackers.

Before the event, librarians worked with the Youth Service in The Base on an art workshop to help young people prepare artwork for the competition and they also worked with the 21 Arts Centre on a costume-making workshop.

150 people attended (13+) - many of whom were from "hard-to-reach" groups.

## Writing groups

A lot of young people are interested in creating things with words but many have had their confidence dented by a poor experience at school. The trick is to find ways in which everybody can participate and where the results are immediate. It's not about starting a novel writing group, or even a short story group (though both would be great if young people wanted them). Start with a group plan that young people can feel comfortable with.

Creative writing like creative reading can often provoke strong emotional responses - that's why they are so powerful. As with all activities, consider how you can ensure everyone takes part. Work with young people to agree ground rules that ensure that everyone speaks positively, and constructively, about each others work whilst not stifling genuine criticism.

Here are some exercises that work both in the library and online. Use the ensuing discussion to feed in pointers to further reading.

### The Mini-Saga

These can be any length from 6 words to 200 but the most popular are around 50 or 70. Ask your group to choose a number between 50 and 70. That will be the number of words for their story – no more and no less. It helps if you give people a theme and take the group through one story that they do together.

Here is an example of when this was used with a group of young people in a school. The theme chosen was animals and they chose a monkey to begin with, and a story of 57 words. This took 5 minutes, with the group facilitator starting it off by saying what happened to Monkey – something must happen for there to be a story. Once one line was established, the facilitator asked questions like 'What happened next?' to keep it moving. They came up with:

Monkey fell out of the tree.  
He took the hot air balloon to hospital.  
Hovering over the building a stork crashed into the balloon.  
Monkey crashed down through the maternity ward roof.  
He landed in the cot besides Mrs Williams's bed.  
Later her friends came in and said to her husband  
'He looks just like you, Bob'

The group was then asked to compose their own 57 word story, allowing them 15 minutes. All managed it in the required time and word limit.

*"We loved doing these"*

Caitlin, 13, Bishops Castle Community College

### Beginnings

Write the beginning of a story, about one hundred words. Get each member of the group to continue and finish the story. Read out the winners and give prizes. Upload them on to your group page on [groupthing.org](http://groupthing.org)

### Ex Libris

Ex Libris is a game published by The British Library but you can easily recreate it using library stock. It works like the dictionary game or Call My Bluff. A chairperson reads the

blurb from the back of a book. All group members then write an imaginary opening line or lines to the book. These are collected in and read out by a chairperson along with the real opening. Group members vote on which opening is the real one and gain points either for guessing correctly or for fooling people with their writing.

### **I know something about this place**

Investigate what has already been written about the area in which your group live. It could be in fiction, non-fiction – in books or the net, newspapers, or magazines. Local historians are a good place to start. Copy bits of these writings and compare them. Most if not all will not be voices of young people. How would your group write about the area? How would they convey to someone in the future or someone not from that area what it was like to live there? The results could be brought together as an exhibition in the library or online. They could create short films based on the texts and post up on [groupthing.org](http://groupthing.org).

### **Why I love this song**

Ask young people to write 150 words or less on why you love your favourite piece of music/song. It could be because of its style or its lyrics or how it fits into your own life. Read extracts from music journalism, or look at books such as Nick Hornby's *33 Songs* to get an idea of how you can use this format to convey a lot more than "I like it. It's good".

### **You are...**

Write short poems about people you love or hate by likening them to a range of items e.g.

- A colour
- A day of the week
- A game
- An item of furniture
- A weather condition
- A holiday destination
- An item of clothing
- A food

Warm up by playing it as a guessing game about celebrities

### **Acrostics**

Take a word or a name (the name of your group/best friend/boyfriend/little sister) and use each letter of the word or name to start a new line of a poem. It could just be words or whole sentences e.g.

- Energetic
- Delightful
- Ingenious
- Effervescent

## **Poetry groups**

Looking at individual poems or whole collections can be used as an extra activity for a book group, or as a different group altogether. Poetry has the advantage of being compressed and fairly quick to read but has plenty of content to be discussed.

There is the fantastic online poetry archive [www.poetryarchive.org](http://www.poetryarchive.org). Here you can actually hear poets (both living and deceased) reading their own work. This gives an opportunity to compare how a poem appears on the page and how it is brought to life by speaking. Follow the guidance on how best to ensure a good listening experience for the group. Listening to something without visuals requires a relaxed atmosphere and a comfortable setting. The archive gives the opportunity to discover new poets and decide how best to perform your own favourites.

Bringing in a professional poet can enable young people to find their voice. Let them decide the style and content, and the invited poet will help them to express themselves through poetry. If an appropriate venue can be found this could become a live event. This is also a way into consulting with young people about issues that are relevant to them. A live performance about their experience to councillors or others is worth a thousand questionnaires. You/they could:

- Read the book, then listen to the poet reading his/her poems and explore how the poet's reading changed participants' perception, understanding and enjoyment of the work.
- Listen first and read later.
- Find out whether people prefer to listen first or read first. Does this vary depending on the poem or poet? Or on the reader?
- Run a Poetry Archive slam with reading group members voting for their favourite reading on the site (live poets vs dead poets?).
- Do a virtual poetry trail – see where the Archive takes you and what new poems and poets you discover.
- Get young people from your teenage reading groups to choose their favourite poems from the Student section of the site and write their own – make a display in the teenage section of the library and on groupthing.org.
- Do 'why I like poetry' bites. Get enthusiastic members of the group to write short, pithy statements on A6 postcards about why they like and read poetry and use these in your displays.
- You can potentially do a session using the Poetry Archive site with the group prior to going to see the poet at an event/reading.

## Events groups

Putting on events is a sure way to get young people involved and there have been some very successful examples from libraries in recent years. Making reading/books part of the event is sometimes been trickier, with the exception of author visits.

Shout Youth Theatre group put on a performance 'Racy tile' for young people at Corby Library. The play specifically addressed low literacy and after the play a discussion took place that allowed the young people to voice their own concerns.

## Themed events

Two recent examples are the Twilight event from High Wycombe HeadSpace, and the James Bond event from Plymouth HeadSpace. Both use a well-known series of books, which also allow for dressing up. In the case of the James Bond event, this led to full tuxedos (rent free from a local hire shop) that invited media coverage and a lot of involvement from the young people. Built around the events were other activities such as quizzes, music, and competitions.

Lyric writing workshops and bands playing in the library have also been a success, most notably the *Get It Loud in Libraries* initiative in Lancaster. This reaches out to 14-25 year olds who are excited by music but not necessarily books. Using staff knowledge, many now well-known bands have played in Lancashire Libraries. With young people accessing digital music for free, the live experience has never been more popular. Local bands are always desperate for a place to play. Give your young people the role of talent scouts and set them the task of bringing the best bands in your area to the library. Run a lyric workshop during the day and then film the results in the evening and upload it on to [groupthing.org](http://groupthing.org).

## Poetry Slams

A slam is the competitive art of performance poetry. Participants (single performers or groups) perform their original work and are judged by members of the audience. Typically, the host selects the judges, who are instructed to give numerical scores (between 0 and 10) based on the poet's content and performance. The audience's job is to keep the mood supportive, energetic and encouraging to all participants.

### Rules – performers/poets

- Each poem must be an original piece performed by the participant/group
- Poems can be on any subject and in any style
- No props, no costumes, no musical instruments, no pre-recorded music
- Performances are timed and should not exceed 3 minutes – timing starts when the performance or sound begins
- Heckling or disrupting of another performer's performance results in disqualification

### Rules – judges

- Five judges are selected at random from the audience (no experience needed). Pulling names out of a hat is a good way to pick
- The judges must be fair and not to mark their mates higher!
- Judges are asked to award equal marks for both poem and performance
- Each judge is given a set of score cards from 1 to 10

### Preparation

- Book and contract a poet who has had experience of running slams and who will be the host for the evening
- Book a suitable venue and a PA system
- The local media should be interested in this. Let them know about it, get a photographer and journalist to come along and join the fun. Contact your local radio station to see if they'll have the winner/s performing their poem live in the studio – this could be part of the prize for the winner
- You may want to give your slam a theme around which the poems are written – make sure that potential participants know this
- Get your teenage reading groups/local secondary school/local youth club involved and interested – sign up participants before the event
- You may want to run a 'rap 'n' rhyme' workshop prior to the slam to get those creative juices flowing
- Prepare your score cards (1 – 10) - you will need five sets of them
- Prepare certificates for everyone taking part – as everyone who enters the slam is a winner – and decide on a prize for the winner/s
- Make a note of who has signed up to take part
- Get in refreshments

### Instructions

Slams are usually organized over three rounds. A poet/group may enter the same piece in all three rounds, but it's usually better if they write and perform different pieces each time. If you have a relatively small number of slam participants, you may need only one round to find your winner.

### **Round one**

Each participant/group performs for 3 minutes.

After each performance the judges are asked to hold up their chosen scores so that the audience can see them. The high and low scores are dropped, and the middle three are added together, giving the poet a total score of between 3 –30. The top third of poets/groups go through to the next round

### **Round two**

The process is repeated in Round two, with the top third going through the final round.

### **Round three**

Repeat the process again to find your winner.

### **At the end of the slam**

- Give the winner/s their prize
- Post a video of the winning performance on [groupthing.org](http://groupthing.org)
- Thank everyone for coming and for taking part
- Pay your poet and take them back to the train station