



## A Starter List of Spoken Word Poetry

*The following is a shortened list of some spoken word - or performance - poetry. Each of these poems can be found on YouTube. We've tried to narrow this list as much as possible, based on content and performance that might best engage people - young and old - in this form of poetry. The key on the right is intended to provide you with some guidance as to which poems are most suitable for your interests or professional needs. Once you watch a couple of these, you may find yourself investigating other related links as well. Enjoy!*

### Male Performers:

Eric D'arby: "Scratch and Dent Dreams" (TH)

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JfTa4B7wQ\\_8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JfTa4B7wQ_8)

Taylor Mali: "Like, You Know" (TH)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCNIBV87wV4&feature=related>

Taylor Mali: "What do teachers make?"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RxsOVK4syxU&NR=1>

Taylor Mali: "Why Falling in Love is Like Owning a Dog"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LcYt7qZhOs>

Geoff Trenchard: "Ode to My Bathroom" (L 1 Sh, 2 F-bombs, TH)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wV1AwovVPs>

Rives: "Deaf Jam" (L 1 F-bomb)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hiZCw3I2Kro&feature=related>

Rives: "Mockingbird" (TH)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipfqKyxm5Hc&feature=Playlist&p=E276D25A3ECDFB28&index=9>

Daniel Beaty: " Knock Knock" (RP)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nktBsl0PYPs&feature=related>

Gemini: "Penny for Your Thoughts"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mn1qxrM1XY0&feature=related>

Gemini: "What Are you Fighting For?" (L 1 F-bomb, RP)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7eZOXmORA0>

Gemini: "Poetic Bloodlines"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YPz9lL0y8sE&feature=related>

Good example to show for...

RP Reluctant Poets

TH Theme

Watch for...

L Language

## Female Performers:

Sarah Kay: "Hands"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pn0zAUVkCgE>

Sarah Kay: "B"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e3Ks1ceHkus>

Sarah Kay: "Hiroshima"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJdQHQ6kbv0&feature=related>

Katie Makkai: "Pretty" (TH expectations we have of girls to look a certain way)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M6wJI37N9C0>

Olivia Gatwood: "Ode to Norma Jean"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pn59TIXN1bw>

Bassey Ikpi: "I Want to Kiss You"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GQ9DRwZIVPo>

Bridgette Gray: "My Letter to Hip Hop" (L some n-words, B-bomb, RP)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfIBAWaneo&feature=related>

Tahani Salah: "Hate"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJArzOTZ8LU&feature=related>

Layla: "Cigarettes"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYxXPQ8nGc0&feature=related>

Jaylene: "Say No to Sex" (TH)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-aQNktsy2uc&feature=related>

## Team Pieces:

Team Ottawa 2009: "AK47"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqct-00-IO0>

Twin Poets: "Dreams are Illegal" (RP)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HAkEAS9vKw8>

Libby Howard, Kyle Sutherland, Jose Guerrero, and Elizabeth Cheever: "Cassette"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OHPH7bcUzJM>

Kinetic Affect: "The Gang Mentality" (L 1 F-bomb, TH anti-war, anti-George Bush)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4A8SYyVs66I&feature=related>

Kinetic Affect: "Without Forgiveness" (TH We can't forgive others without forgiving ourselves.)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gk-Fw6Lqc64&feature=related>

Brian and Erica: "The Day Hip Hop Died" (RP)

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xpL\\_6xb\\_ScQ&NR=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xpL_6xb_ScQ&NR=1)

Chicago's Youth Slam Team: "Lost Count: A Love Story"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVD-HsHoUNM>

Justin Long and Ishmail Islam: "Childhood"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2A7wD5Rew8>

Jesica Blandon and Ka'mone Felix: "Amber Alert"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14r2hFC3J5M>

## **Behind the Scenes:**

Cool mini-documentary/interview with Daniel Beaty (addresses his work and his views on slam poetry):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZZcQRNM8ys&feature=related>

Interview with Taylor Mali (What is Slam?)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vpDE9tkgF4&feature=related>

## **BOOK RESOURCES: (Slam / Spoken Word / Performance Poetry)**

- The Complete Idiot's Guide to Slam Poetry, by Mark Kelly Smith and Joe Kraynak
- The Spoken Word Workbook: Inspiration from Poets Who Teach, edited by Sheri-D Wilson
- Outspoken! How to Improve Writing and Speaking Skills Through Poetry Performance, by Sara Holbrook & Michael Salinger
- The Spoken Word Revolution: Slam Hip Hop And The Poetry Of A New Generation, by Mark Eleveld
- Stage a Poetry Slam, by Marc Kelly Smith and Joe Kraynak
- Take the Mic: The Art of Performance Poetry, Slam and the Spoken Word, by Marc Kelly Smith and Joe Kraynak
- Hewitt's Guide To Slam Poetry And Poetry Slam, by Geof Hewitt
- Hey You! C'mere!: A Poetry Slam, by Elizabeth Swados and Joe Cepeda
- Poetry Slam: The Competitive Art of Performance Poetry, by Gary Glazner
- Hip Hop Speaks to Children With Cd: A Celebration Of Poetry With a Beat, by Nikki Giovanni, Alicia Vergel de Dios and Damian Ward
- Hip Hop Poetry and the Classics, by Alan Sitomer and Michael Cirelli

## **Text Versions of Performance Poems:**

- Mic Check: An Anthology Of Canadian Spoken Word Poetry, by David Silverberg
- SLAM, edited by Cecily Von Ziegesar (Alloy Books)

# “Mockingbird”

## by Rives

Mockingbirds are bad-ass.

Mockingbirds are the MC's of the animal kingdom--  
they listen, and mimic, and remix what they like,  
they rock the mic.

Outside my window every morning  
I can hear them sing  
the sounds of the car alarms  
like they were songs of spring.  
I mean: if you can talk it,  
a mockingbird can squawk it.  
So check it:

I'm gonna catch mockingbirds.  
I'm gonna trap mockingbirds, all across the nation  
and put them gently into mason jars  
like mockingbird Molotov cocktails.  
And as I drive through a neighborhood, say,  
where people gotta lotta  
I'll take a mockingbird I caught in a neighborhood  
where folks ain't got *nada*  
and just let it go, y'know--  
Up goes the bird, out come the words:  
*"Juanito! Juanito! Vente a comer, mi hijo!!"*

I'm gonna be the Johnny Appleseed of sounds.  
Cruising random interstates and city streets,  
rockin' a drop-top Cadillac with a big back seat,  
packing like thirteen brown paper Wal-Mart bags  
full of loaded mockingbirds.  
And I'll get everybody.

I'll get the nitwit on the network news, saying:  
*"We'll be back in a moment with more on the crisis."*  
I'll get some asshole at a watering hole  
asking what *brand* the ice is.  
I'll get that lady at the laundromat  
who always seems to know what being nice is.

I'll get your postman making dinner plans.  
I'll get the last time you lied.  
I'll get: *"Honey, just give me the frickin' T.V. Guide"*  
I'll get a lonely little sentence some real bad judgment in it:  
*"Yeah, I guess you could come inside--  
but only for a minute."*

I'll get an ESL class in Chinatown, learning:  
*"It's raining, it's pouring..."*  
I'll put a mockingbird on a late-night train  
just to get an old man snoring.  
I'll get your ex-lover wishing someone else good morning.

Cuz I'll get everyone's good mornings,  
I don't care how you make 'em:  
*Aloha. Konnichiwa. Shalom. A salaam malaikum.*

Everybody means everybody. It means everybody here,  
And so maybe I'll build a gilded cage,  
and I'll line the bottom with old notebook pages  
and inside it I will place a mockingbird for short explanation Hippy parents

I'll get uptown gurus, downtown teachers  
broke-ass artists, and dealers, and Filipino preachers.  
Leaf blowers, bartenders, boob job doctors,  
hooligans, garbagemen, your local Congressman  
and the spotlight guys in the overhead helicopters.

Everybody gets heard, everybody gets this  
one honest mockingbird  
as a witness.

And I'm on this. I'm on this 'til the whole thing spreads  
with chat rooms and copycats and moms, maybe,  
tucking kids into bed, singing: *"Hush little baby, don't say a word--  
wait for the man with the mockingbirds."*  
And then come the news crews, and the man-on-the-street interviews  
and the letters to the editor--everybody asking:  
*"Just who is responsible for this citywide,  
nationwide, mockingbird cacophony?"*  
And somebody's finally gonna tip the city council  
of Washington D.C. off to me  
and they'll offer me a key to the city,  
a gold-plated, over-sized key to the city,  
and that's all I need, cuz if I get that--I can unlock the air.

I'll listen for what's missing--  
and I'll put it there.