EDUCATOR STUDY GUIDE
LOUDER THAN A BOMB

RUNTIME
99 MINUTES

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
USA

RATING
NOT RATED

GRADES
6 & UP

THE FILMMAKERS

GREG JACOBS served as VP/Chief Creative Officer at Towers Productions, where he oversaw the content of more than two hundred documentaries on five different networks, including award-winning shows and series for A&E, History, Discovery, The Weather Channel, and CNN.

JON SISKEL was executive producer and co-creator of the series Fake Out, which ran for two seasons on Court TV. He has also produced shows for the A&E series American Justice, Investigative Reports, and Biography, and his work has been shown on The Travel Channel, Discovery, and History.

ABOUT THE FILM

Louder Than a Bomb is a film about passion, competition, teamwork, and trust. It’s about the joy of being young, and the pain of growing up. It’s about speaking out, making noise, and finding your voice.

First time I made my father cry was the first time he heard me perform poetry.

- Lamar

Every year, more than 600 teenagers from over sixty Chicago area schools gather for the world’s largest youth poetry slam, a competition known as “Louder Than a Bomb.” Founded in 2001, Louder Than a Bomb is the only event of its kind in the country—a youth poetry slam built from the beginning around teams. Rather than emphasize individual poets and performances, the structure of Louder Than a Bomb demands that kids work collaboratively with their peers, presenting, critiquing, and rewriting their pieces. To succeed, teams have to create an environment of mutual trust and support. For many kids, being a part of such an environment—in an academic context — is life-changing.

KEY THEMES

FAMILY
SELF-EXPRESSION
VIOLENCE
STEREOTYPES
COLLABORATION
GROWING UP
PERSISTENCE
PRE-SCREENING DISCUSSION

» Why do people choose art as a way to express themselves? How many of you create art? Have you created any art that tells your story?

» Do you believe art has the power to transform lives? Can you provide some examples where it has done so? What art forms move you the most?

» Describe an educational event, experience, or teacher that motivated you and got you excited about school. Explain the details or elements that made it so memorable and impactful.

» Explain what “family” means to you. Analyze the characteristics of a supportive family.

» Do you belong to a group or community that is often stereotyped? Do people automatically assume something about you or someone you know by the way you look, speak, where you live, etc.? What is the history behind this stereotype? What can you do to help correct the misconceptions?

» Share experiences from your life where you have collaborated or interacted with someone that comes from an entirely different community than your own. What did you learn? How did you feel?

KEY TERMS, CONCEPTS, AND ISSUES

Gun Violence in Chicago—In 2014, there were 460 homicides in Chicago. A person was shot every 3 hours. A person was murdered every 19 hours.

Stereotype—To believe unfairly that all people or things with a particular characteristic are the same.

History of Slam Poetry—In 1985 a construction worker and poet named Marc Smith (Slam Papi) started a poetry reading series at a Chicago jazz club, looking for a way to breathe life into the open mic poetry format. The series’ emphasis on performance laid the groundwork for a poetry style and performance which would eventually spread across the world.

Catharsis—The act or process of releasing a strong emotion (such as pity or fear) especially by expressing it in an art form.
DECONSTRUCTING THE STORY

» What does the title of the film mean: Louder Than A Bomb?

» What is the filmmakers’ purpose (to inform, entertain, express an opinion, persuade) in making this film?

» Describe the four main characters (Adam, Lamar, Nate, and Nova) in the documentary? Compare and contrast their similarities and their differences. Which character do you relate to most and why?

» Do the characters evolve or change over the course of the movie? If so, how did they develop?

» What did you learn about Chicago from this documentary?

» What is your favorite poem and performance from the film and why? What issues does it address?

» What does this story teach us about winning and losing in competition?

» What kind of emotions does the film evoke? Cite particular scenes that elicit these emotions.

MAKING THE FILM

» Describe the film’s story in three acts? What happens in the beginning, middle, and end? Is it a successful narrative structure?

» From whose perspective is this story told? How could the story have changed if it had been told from a different perspective?

» What do the filmmakers capture on video (b-roll) that allow you to better understand the background of each of the main characters? B-roll is the extra footage captured to enrich the story you’re telling.

» The filmmakers use many interviews with the young artists to tell their story. What is your favorite interview? Can you recall a memorable sound bite? What was the setting of the interview?

» Explain how the filmmakers were trying to make you feel with this film. How did the filmmakers accomplish this? Examples: music, interviews, cinematography, story structure, editing, etc.

» This film shares very intimate and personal stories from multiple teenagers. What type of ethical issues do you think the filmmakers faced when shooting and editing this film? What scenes support your thinking?
CRITICAL RESPONSE

» Which poet did you most identify with and why? Each of the four slam poet teams came from different Chicago schools and neighborhoods. Based on your personal experience, what team would you most belong on and why?

» What stereotypes were presented in the film, either associated with the characters or the schools and neighborhoods they came from? Are these stereotypes fair and justified, why or why not?

» Adam’s reasons for writing poetry are different from Nova’s. Describe why each of them are motivated to write.

» Slam poets often times address challenging or controversial issues in their writing. Describe some of the memorable issues that the young poets tackled in their performances. Is this art form an effective way to initiate conversation about societal problems? Why or why not? If you were to craft a slam poem today, what issues would you address and why?

» If it is true that, “The point is not the points. The point is the poetry,” then what is the benefit in holding a competition? Are there any downsides?

» How do you define family? What non-traditional families are you a part of?

» What is standing in the way between you and your passion? Are you more inspired after seeing this film to make time in your life for something you care deeply about?

ACTIVITIES

» Share additional award-winning spoken word performance videos by teenagers on the YouTube channel Brave New Voices hosted by the Youth Speaks organization. Continue to discuss and analyze the cultural and societal issues that teens raise in their poems and how they resonate with the students watching.

» Making Art: Louder Than a Bomb features four main poets from four different schools, backgrounds, experiences, and life goals, and their poetry reflects this. Relisten to the following poems. Nova: 10:03–12:00 (Her Father) and 51:33–54:44 (Her Brother), Adam: 21:39 – 24:39 (Poet Breathe Now) and 1:03:30–1:05:58 (His Grandmother), Nate: 57:37–1:00:00 (His Nephew) and 1:33:58–1:36:42 (Called Look), Lamar: 1:15:14–1:18:20 (Called Shooter). Which of these poems do you most relate to? In your portfolio, create a magazine collage that visually represents your interpretation of your favorite poem. Title your collage at the top and reference the poet who inspired your art.

» Making Media: Slam poetry has a history of bringing people together: find a piece of slam poetry with a universal message (something people in your group or class all identify with). Divide the poem into sections (such as 20-second segments) and interpret it visually using either video footage, photography, or stop motion animation). String the poem back together overlaid with the visuals in video editing software to create a short film.

I think the primary function of slam is to give kids a voice who may not necessarily have had it before.

-Adam
## MORE INFORMATION

### TO READ

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<th>Film’s official website</th>
<th><a href="http://www.louderthanabombfilm.com/">www.louderthanabombfilm.com/</a></th>
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<tr>
<td>Home of Louder Than a Bomb competition</td>
<td>youngchicagoauthors.org/blog/</td>
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<td>History and philosophy of the founder of slam poetry</td>
<td><a href="http://www.slampapi.com/new_site/background.htm">www.slampapi.com/new_site/background.htm</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>History of slam poetry</td>
<td>en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poetry_slam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facebook page of local slam organization</td>
<td><a href="http://www.facebook.com/WasatchWordsmiths/">www.facebook.com/WasatchWordsmiths/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Help for organizing poetry slams</td>
<td>youthspeaks.org/bravenewvoices/</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Spoken Word Revolution: slam, hip-hop &amp; the poetry of a new generation</td>
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### TO WATCH

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<th>Official YouTube channel of Poetry Slam, Inc.</th>
<th><a href="http://www.youtube.com/user/thisispoetryslaminc/feed">www.youtube.com/user/thisispoetryslaminc/feed</a></th>
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<tr>
<td>Official YouTube channel of Brave New Voices (a national youth poetry slam competition)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.youtube.com/user/YOUTHSPEAKS">www.youtube.com/user/YOUTHSPEAKS</a></td>
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### FILM NEWS AND UPDATES

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<tr>
<th>Official website of Nate Marshall</th>
<th><a href="http://www.natemarshallpoetry.com/">www.natemarshallpoetry.com/</a></th>
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<tr>
<td>Adam Gottlieb’s poetry blog</td>
<td>peoplearepoets.blogspot.com/</td>
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### TAKE ACTION!

| How to write a slam poem | ed.ted.com/lessons/become-a-slam-poet-in-five-steps-gayle-danley |

“Spoken word is a really big relief for me... My life just kind of seemed to fit when I started writing.”

- Nova
RELEVANT UTAH AND NATIONAL CURRICULUM STANDARDS

Due to Study Guide space constraints, the following standards only include main “Anchor” and “Strand” Standards. For a complete list of detailed supporting Sub-standards and Objectives, please visit the website: utahfilmcenter.org/filmspark.

UTAH FINE ARTS CORE STANDARDS—SECONDARY MEDIA ARTS

Anchor Standards (grades 7–8)

Respond—Students will perceive and analyze artistic work and process. They will interpret intent and meaning, and apply criteria to evaluate artistic work and process.

Connect—Students will synthesize and relate knowledge from personal and collaborative experience to make and receive art. They will relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

Anchor Standards (grades 9–12)

There are three “Levels” and Anchor Standards of “Respond” and “Connect” are identical throughout each Level, but with differing sub-standards by ability.

LEVEL ONE

Respond—Students will understand, evaluate, and articulate how works of art convey meaning for the observer as well as the creator.

Connect—Student will relate artistic skills, ideas, and work with personal meaning and external context.

UTAH CORE STATE STANDARDS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS—SECONDARY

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening

1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

3. Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

UTAH STANDARDS FOR LIBRARY MEDIA—SECONDARY

Strand II Literacy: Information and Research

Students need the lifelong skills of selecting information from a wide variety of sources, assessing its worth, and applying newfound knowledge to problems, preparing them for learning, doing, and problem solving in college, career and throughout life. Teacher librarians will instruct students in a multi-step research process that is adaptable. As students gain research skills, they develop self-confidence in solving information problems in an environment where information resources and technologies have become increasingly complex.

Standard 4—Students will engage with and extract information.

Strand III Literacy: Media Engagement

In order to make informed decisions, students must successfully discern and interpret the messages surrounding them in media. Teacher librarians, in collaboration with classroom teachers, can integrate these skills into curricular units throughout a wide range of core and elective subjects.

Standard 1—Students will demonstrate that media literacy is a life skill integral to modern citizenship and informed decision-making.

NATIONAL FILM STUDY STANDARDS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL BY THE FILM FOUNDATION

Standard 1.0–Film Language

Standard 2.0–Historical and Cultural Contexts

Standard 3.0–Production and Creative Expression

Standard 4.0–Viewers’ Response and Aesthetic Valuing

Standard 5.0–Cross-Curricular Connections
ABOUT UTAH FILM CENTER

Utah Film Center inspires and engages diverse audiences to initiate conversation and community building through curated film exhibition, educational programs, and artist support. **Utah Film Center Education** programs introduce students and teachers to the power of film as an instructional resource. Programming is dedicated to enhancing teaching practice and students’ media literacy through screenings and discussions, professional development workshops, and classroom presentations that increase student engagement and achievement while also supporting curriculum requirements.

All Utah Film Center Education programs are made possible by the generous support of community sponsors.