SPARKed
SPARK in Education

EDUCATOR GUIDE

Story Theme: Telling Stories
Subject: Marc Bamuthi Joseph
Discipline: Theatre/Music

Marc Bamuthi Joseph with his son.
Still image from SPARK story, January 2004.

EPISODE THEME

Telling Stories

SUBJECT

Theatre/Music

GRADE RANGES

K-12 & Post-secondary

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Theatre/Music
Social Science
Language Arts

OBJECTIVE

To introduce students to the history and culture of Hip-Hop through the performance works of Marc Bamuthi Joseph, which combine spoken word, music, and dance.

STORY SYNOPSIS

Marc Bamuthi Joseph is a modern day griot (African storyteller) that tells his original stories through a combination of acting, spoken word, movement and rap. A four-time national Poetry Slam winner, Bamuthi got his start on Broadway at the age of 9. Spark follows along as he develops his first full-length solo theatrical work, Word Becomes Flesh, a meditation on his new role as a single father.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

To introduce students to the concept of Hip-Hop theater as a vehicle for creative expression
To introduce students to the idea of modern day storytelling traditions
To introduce students to the art of spoken word
To inspire students to find creative outlets for self-expression

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Individual student writings and research
Individual and group exercises
Group discussion
Teacher facilitated investigation and discussion
Experiences of live or recorded theatre performance

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

TV & VCR with SPARK story "The Power of Words" about Marc Bamuthi Joseph on DVD or VHS (available at www.kqed.org/spark)
Computer with Internet access, navigation software, speakers and a sound card, and color printer
Audio playback device such as a radio, tape deck, and/or CD player

MATERIALS NEEDED

Paper & pencils
Access to libraries with up-to-date collections of periodicals, books, and research papers
Recordings of Marc Bamuthi Joseph or other artists

INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED

Linguistic – syntax, phonology, semantics, pragmatics
Interpersonal – awareness of others' feelings, emotions, goals, motivations
Intrapersonal – awareness of one's own feelings, emotions, goals, motivations
Bodily-Kinesthetic – the ability to use one's mind to control one's bodily movements
Musical – the ability to read, understand, and compose musical pitches, tones, and rhythms

See more information on Multiple Intelligences at www.kqed.org/spark/education.

CONTENT OVERVIEW

Marc Bamuthi Joseph is one of an outstanding emerging class of Hip-Hop artists who combine art forms in theatrical works, including theater, West African dance, tap dance, spoken word, poetry, and live music to stretch the bounds of traditional Hip-Hop to create a new forum for expressive performance art. His works challenge audiences of all ages to re-evaluate the relationship between spoken language, body language, and the body politic. From his earliest beginnings, Bamuthi was a performer, working on commercials at the age of 5, moving to the Broadway stage by age nine, and participating in a television series when he was twelve and thirteen. By twenty-one, Bamuthi found himself in San Francisco, entering the arena of spoken word and performance poetry, first in poetry slams, then as a playwright. Bamuthi has already received four spoken word poetry awards and was featured on Russell Simmons' Def Poetry Jam in 2003.
In the SPARK episode, we watch Bamuthi as he prepares for his first solo theatrical work based on his experience of becoming a father. "Word Becomes Flesh" is a highly personal piece that is a performed series of letters from a single unwed father to his unborn son. We watch as Bamuthi translates the words from the page to the stage, mythologizing his very personal experience through creative expression that combines spoken word with movement, visual art, and music.

Bamuthi is also the current artistic director for the Living Word Project and program director for Youth Speaks, a San Francisco-based non-profit dedicated to helping young people find their "voice" through a variety of programs, events, competitions and collaborative experiences in creative writing and spoken word. Through this medium, he leads students through a process of examining their world and the issues that are important to them, and turning their perspectives into meaningful expression that can facilitate social transformation and change. Bamuthi also finds personal inspiration for his own

art in the students, their voices providing a multitude of perspectives on current subjects with which he too struggles. His mission to be an agent for social change fuels much of his work, taking him far beyond the need for recognition into the realm of spiritual, transformative, and personal expression.

Marc Bamuthi Joseph performing. Still image from SPARK story, January 2004.

THE BIG PICTURE

HIP-HOP, RAP AND HIP-HOP THEATER
The Hip-Hop movement emerged in the early 1970s among mainly poor, urban, disenfranchised Black youth seeking accessible means to express themselves. Throughout the 1960s, people were experimenting with spoken word set to jazz rhythms and instrumentation and there are certainly antecedents to the movement (such as the dance move "Good Foot" named after the song by James Brown). However, the art form truly developed through disc jockeys (or DJ's), most notably DJ Kool Herc, who introduced a new style of disc jockeying that involved reciting improvised rhymes over dub versions of reggae tracks.

Then in 1977, a young DJ by the name of Grandmaster Flash began sampling – taking a record, scratching it (moving the record back and forth with the needle down), and then mixing it with another record on a second turntable played at the same time, resulting in a new beat, or rhythm. This was the beginning of a new sound for young artists. The movement was untitled until musician Afrika Bambaataa started calling it "Hip Hop."

There are several artistic mediums called "elements," that characterize and express Hip-Hop culture: emceeing (also known as rapping), deejaying (spinning records and sampling on the turntable), writing (aerosol paint graffiti art), and several dance forms, sometimes called B-Boying/B-Girling which include breaking, up-rocking, popping, and locking. There are also other elements of vocal percussion, also called beat boxing, as well a particular fashion style.

Throughout the 1980s, musical groups began to explore political and social issues, using the music as a way to express frustrations and attitudes, usually about the oppression of the black community in the US and Europe, but also world issues, such as Apartheid in Africa. The movement was propelled throughout mainstream American society by the music of groups such as Run DMC and Public Enemy, artists whose records and videos brought the messages of the music, style, and political views to the broader public's attention.

In the late 1980s, a new theme emerged that markedly changed the Hip-Hop sound and image. Given the term "gangsta rap," this new form of rap grew out of and expressed life in the ghetto, including the culture of drug dealing and violent crime that often comes with it. Artists such as Ice Cube and Snoop Doggy Dogg became renowned not only for their musical and performing talents, but also for their criminal records.

Since the early 1990s, new transformations have been taking place in which many new artists are taking the basic principles and elements of Hip-Hop and incorporating them into works of theater, musicals, and dance compositions. Generally, for a new work to be considered "Hip-Hop Theater," it must contain one or more of the four fundamental elements of Hip-

Hop. This new hybrid form has provided new opportunities for the storytellers of this generation to address issues of social change, racism, cultural displacement, violence and oppression, including Hip-Hop elements, gospel music, modern dance, rhyme, spoken word, funk and African rhythms and more. The result is fresh and energized and, perhaps most important, dynamically adaptable.

RESOURCES – TEXTS & ARTICLES

Angelsey, Zoe. Listen Up! New York: One World/Ballantine, 1999.

Bonair-Agard, Roger, et al. Burning Down the House: Selected Poems from the Nuyorican Poets Cafe's National Poetry Slam Champions. Brooklyn, NY: Soft Skull Press, 2000.

Eleveld, Mark, ed., The Spoken Word Revolution: Slam, Hip Hop & the Poetry of a New Generation. New York: Sourcebooks Trade, 2003.

Fricke, Jim. Yes Yes Y'All: The Experience Music Project Oral History of Hip-Hop's First Decade. DaCapo Press, 2002. - Based on the "Hip-Hop Nation" exhibit at Seattle's Experience Music Project and the project's ongoing Oral History Program, this history of the beginnings of Hip-Hop in 1970s New York City is a lavishly illustrated and lovingly compiled homage to the many artists who contributed to the birth of what soon became and remains today, more than 25 years later a worldwide cultural institution.

George, Nelson. Hip Hop America. Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 2000.

Glazner, Gary Mex, ed., Poetry Slam: The Competitive Art of Performance Poetry. San Francisco: Manic D Press, 2000.

Lommel, Cookie. History of Rap Music. Chelsea House Publishers. Macdougall, Alan S. and Barbara G. Dan. New York: Eden Press, 2000.

Reed, Ishmael, ed. From Totems to Hip-Hop: A Multicultural Anthology of Poetry Across the

Americas, 1900-2002. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2002.

Reyes Rivera, Louis and Tony Medina, eds. Bum Rush the Page: A Def Poetry Jam. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001.

Stratton, Richard and Kim Wozencraft, eds. Slam. New York: Grove Press, 1998.

Swados, Elizabeth. Hey You! C'Mere: A Poetry Slam. New York: Art Asylum, 2002.

Titus, Andrew, ed. Poetry Slam: Speaking Poetry, the Alien Language of Choice. Frederickton, NB: Broken Jaw Press, 1999.

Von Ziegesar, Cecily, ed. Slam. New York: Penguin Books, 2000.

RESOURCES – WEB SITES

Marc Bamuthi's Web site - http://www.thespokenworld.com

Speakers & Artists – Web site for the organization, including a biography of Bamuthi and links to related topics and artists - http://www.speakersandartists.org/People/MarcBamuthiJoseph.html

New York City Hip Hop Theater Festival – Official Web site for the NYCHHTF, which began in 2000. - http://www.hiphoptheaterfest.com/home.html

SlamBox - A flash animated spoken word project of Mad Lab Creative. - http://www.madlabcreative.com/series/flash/e_01_slambox_nav.html

Poetic License – A multi-media project concerned with the emergence of poetry as a powerful form of expression amongst teenagers. The site offers curricular materials as well. - http://www.itvs.org/poeticlicense

Poetic Dream – Web site of photographer David Huang, who documents the Bay Area and national slam poetry scene, including links to other poetry websites and those of individual performers. - http://www.poeticdream.com

Poetry Television – Web site of Isaias Rodriguez, who has documented the Bay Area Poetry Slam scene on film, including an excerpt from Bamuthi's Word Becomes Flesh DVD, also available on the site. - http://www.poetrytelevision.com

Speak Out - Institute for Democratic Education and Culture - A national non-profit that promotes progressive speakers and artists on campuses and in communities. - http://www.speakoutnow.org

Historical Voices – An organization dedicated to creating a national, searchable online database of spoken word resources from the 20th century; includes links, research, and a teacher lesson plan – http://www.historicalvoices.org

History & Politics Out Loud – A component of Historical Voices, offering a database of politically significant audio materials for teachers, youth, and the general public. - http://www.hpol.org

National Gallery of the Spoken Word – A Michigan State University program dedicated to preserving American spoken word recordings vital to the country, from Alexander Graham Bell's first recording to Supreme Court decisions to important political speeches, all organized in galleries, most immediately accessible by listening audio programs. - http://www.ngsw.org

AUDIO RESOURCES

Marc Bamuthi Joseph. Spoken word CD, "Seeking"

Marc Bamuthi Joseph also featured on the CD "185 Progress Drive." Alternative Tentacles Records, 2000. With Assata Shakur, Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Bob Marley, Michael Franti, I was Born with Two Tongues, and other Hip-Hop and spoken word artists.

Arrested Development. "The Best of Arrested Development," Collectables, 2004.

De-U Records. - For something a little different, these CD's are educational tools that combine subjects like

the alphabet song, the multiplication tables, science, and geography with hip-hop beats. They are the new generation's answer to the School House Rock short animations of the 1970s. See the CD Baby Web site for specific information and listening samples. - http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/deurecs3

Carlos Mena. "Hip-Hop Meditations." Casamena, 2003. - Oakland based artist Carlos Mena will be the opening act for Arrested Development's tour in summer 2004. This is an interesting and powerful Hip-Hop album with positive messages and a great groove. - http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/carlosmena

10BassT. "Do You Know the Way?" Casamena, 1996.

BAY AREA FIELD TRIPS

For a complete guide to spoken word resources, as well as a list of Spoken Word venues and on-going events in the Bay Area, see the Youth Speaks Educator Guide at http://www.kqed.org/spark/artists-orgs/youthspeak.jsp.

Berkeley Slam
A spoken word event organization meeting at the Starry Plough in Berkeley, including competitive events, spoken word advocacy, and performances. - http://www.daniland.com/slam

California Poets in the Schools (CPITS)
415/221-4201
877/274-8764 (Toll free)
San Francisco-based non-profit organization placing professional poets in the schools to teach young people.
http://www.cpits.org

La Peña Cultural Center
3105 Shattuck Ave.
Berkeley, CA
A respected cultural center that has a long tradition of presenting spoken word performances. - http://www.lapena.org

The Luggage Store
1007 Market Street (Near 6th)
San Francisco 94103
415/255-5971

A gallery, performance venue, and meeting place offering programs dedicated to broadening social and aesthetic networks, encouraging the flow of images and ideas between different cultural and economic communities.
http://www.luggagestoregallery.org

Studio Z
314 11th Street (@ Folsom Str.)
San Francisco
A local performance venue that combines traditional theatre with multi-media and digital technology

Youth Speaks
2169 Folsom Street
San Francisco
A spoken word organization offering workshops and events, school and after school programs, Teen Slams, and other spoken word programs.
415/255.9035
http://ww.youthspeaks.org

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Forum
701 Mission Street (@ 3rd St)
San Francisco
A Bay Area contemporary arts center offering visual arts, performing arts and film and media exhibitions.
415.978.ARTS (2787)
http://www.yerbabuenaarts.org

SECTION III – VOCABULARY

Also refer to the "Theater Vocabulary" available on the Spark Web site at http://www.kqed.org/spark/education.

Beat-Boxing
A term used in Rap and Hip-Hop for making rhythms and sounds with your mouth. Beat-boxers create their own unique rhythms using clicking, humming, popping, slapping, high hat and low hat sounds, imitating a drum

Discourse
A verbal exchange or conversation; also the verbal expression in a speech or in writing

Dissect
To take apart or separate for anatomical study, or to examine, analyze or criticize in minute detail

Enable
To supply the knowledge, means, or opportunity to be or do something

Fictionalize
To turn an otherwise real or non-fictional narrative into a fictional or not real narrative

Griot
An oral historian traditionally from West Africa, griots are responsible for maintaining an historical record of ancestors, events, and notable people in their communities and then sharing them through stories, songs, and music

Hip-Hop Theater
A form of creative expression that combines different art forms such as hip-hop, rap, dance and movement, visual arts, and spoken word

Mandela, Nelson
South African civil rights leader and former president of the African National Congress, Mandela was imprisoned from 1962 to 1990 for expressing his opinions and leading black South Africans in the fight to end Apartheid. Upon his release he was inaugurated as the first

democratically elected State President of South Africa on 10 May 1994, and he governed until June 1999

Media Attention
The active pursuit and subsequent presentation of the facts surrounding an individual's personal life or professional career, by newspapers, radio and television stations, based on that individual's potential for public notoriety

Mythology
A fictional story or traditional narrative often based on historical events about heroes, ancestors, or supernatural beings that reveal human behavior and natural phenomena by its symbolism

Narrative
A story, description or account of an event or experience, either fictional or non-fictional

Perspective
A subjective evaluation or point of view

Playwright
One who writes plays; a dramatist

Poetry
A form of writing that formulates a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience in language chosen and arranged to create emotional response through meaning, sound, and rhythm

Slam
A poetry or spoken word competition or event

Rap
Rap is a vocal style halfway between spoken and sung poetry, always in rhymes and resting on strongly syncopated rhythms. Rap and hip-hop are used interchangeably today

Solo theatrical work
A dramatic theatrical piece presented by a single
individual

Spoken word
The art of using literary art forms that are spoken,
such poetry and rap

SECTION IV – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

Creative Expression – Using Personal Experience
Using personal experiences or events as a starting point (such as a sad or happy moment, how it feels to have a brother or a sister, a relationship with a grandparent, the experience of being an only child), ask students to work in pairs and share the event or experience with their partner.

Encourage them to write journal entries, describing how they feel/felt and what changed in their life when the event happened or because that person in is their life. The journal entry can be in the form of a drawing, a poem, song, or descriptive piece. It can also be a combination of these different forms of expression.

Building upon the previous exercise, have students fictionalize or exaggerate the experience so that the event becomes larger than life, or no longer just about themselves. For instance, instead of, "When my baby brother was born, he cried all night and I couldn't sleep." Consider, "When the baby was born, he cried so loud that all the clouds in the sky blew away." Encourage students to think of metaphors for their events or experiences.

Then challenge students to develop their ideas into a short story or essay. For students who would like to, facilitate an opportunity for them to share their work with the class.

Mythologizing Personal Experience
Myths and legends are a core part of virtually every world tradition. In many myths, archetypal characters representing good against evil battle one another, forming stories that carry messages of moral, religious, or historical importance. The stories always reflect the uniqueness of the culture that created it.

In the SPARK story about Marc Bamuthi Joseph, he explains that he mythologizes his personal

experience to create solo performance pieces. In some cases, Bamuthi takes his own character and experience and turns himself into a modern day archetype, such as the piece about the unwed, single Black father preparing for the birth of his child. This contemporary storytelling is expressed through words, movement, music, and allegory. Bamuthi also changes the point of view in the story (shifting from 1st person to 3rd person and back again) while still expressing a personal struggle as the main character confronts his feelings and the reality that will soon be his.

RELATED STANDARDS
THEATRE
Grades 9-12 Proficient & Advanced
1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION
Comprehension and Analysis of the Elements of Theatre
1.2 Document observations and perceptions of production elements, noting mood, pacing, and use of space through class discussion and reflective writing.

CONNECTIONS, RELATIONS & APPLICATIONS
5.1 Describe how skills acquired in theatre may be applied to other content areas and careers.

RELATED STANDARDS
LANGUAGE ARTS
Grades 9- & 10
2.0 Literary Response and Analysis
Structural Features of Literature
3.1 Articulate the relationship between the expressed purposes and the characteristics of different forms of dramatic literature (e.g., comedy, tragedy, drama, dramatic monologue).
Literary Criticism
3.11 Evaluate the aesthetic qualities of style, including the impact of diction and figurative language on tone, mood, and theme, using the terminology of literary criticism. (Aesthetic approach)

Embark on a special unit of study to explore taking personal stories to the stage. Work with students to develop common themes that reflect the issues that are important to them and how those issues have affected their lives. Who are their heroes and respected figures? What battles between good and evil are being fought today?

Discuss and use examples to illustrate the different ways in which poets and spoken word artists use imagery, personification, figures of speech, and sound to express emotion. Experiment with different presentations of poetry, prose, stories and essays, combining elements of other art forms into the presentation.

Have students "mythologize" some of their experiences into a longer story that will be developed and presented on stage, with movement, visual art, music, or other technology.

If students would enjoy it, assemble a selection of spoken word pieces to create a poetry slam. Using the different presentations of poetry, prose, stories and essays, they have experimented with, as well as work by other writers, challenge students to transform their classroom into a coffeehouse-type environment in which to present their poetry. Draw on extracts from the SPARK story on Marc Bamuthi Joseph and Youth Speaks to demonstrate to students the power of clear communication skills, emotive intonation, and energy in delivery.

After each student has had a chance to read, encourage classmates to comment upon the delivery, focusing on what worked and didn't work, and avoiding blatant value judgments of "good" and "bad." Offer students the opportunity to read their work a second time after receiving feedback.

Creating and Talking about Dance and Movement
As a class, observe a dance piece, or listen to a piece of music, or view a work of art. Collectively come up with descriptive words about the piece that express first reactions, emotions, memories, or images that the piece conjures up.
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Move on to create simple dance movements and shapes that relate to a personal experience, such as feeling happy, angry, sad, surprised, frustrated,

intrigued, etc. Then have students respond to different stimuli, such as music, words, sounds and visual images with movements they create. Afterwards, ask students to talk about how their movements related to the music and expressed their ideas and emotions.

All art forms share certain vocabulary and concepts that are expressed in different ways through the specific mediums. Engage students in a discussion of how dance and movement relates to other art subjects and employs that vocabulary, such as positive and negative space, shape, line, repetition, rhyme, rhythm, character. Then challenge students to create movements that express these specific ideas.

RELATED STANDARDS
MUSIC
Grade 8
5.0 CONNECTIONS, RELATIONSHIPS, APPLICATIONS
Connections and Applications
5.1 Compare in two or more arts forms how the characteristic materials of each art (sound in music, visual stimuli in visual arts, movement in dance, human relationships in theatre) can be used to transform similar events, scenes, emotions, or ideas into works of art.

Grades 9-12, Proficient
4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING
Derive Meaning
4.3 Explain how people in a particular culture use and respond to specific musical works from that culture.
4.4 Describe the means used to create images or evoke feelings and emotions in musical works from various cultures.

RELATED STANDARDS
DANCE
Grades 9-12, Proficient
Comprehension and Analysis of Dance Elements
1.4 Demonstrate clarity of intent while applying kinesthetic principles for all dance elements.
Development of Dance Vocabulary
1.5 Apply knowledge of dance vocabulary to distinguish how movement looks physically in space, time, and force/energy).
5.0 CONNECTIONS, RELATIONSHIPS, APPLICATIONS
Connections and Applications Across Disciplines
    5.1 Demonstrate effective use of technology for recording, analyzing, and creating dances.

SPARKLERS:

✳ Although each art form has its own processes for developing new works, there are many parallels between the art forms. Talk about the choreographic process (creating dances) and its relationship to writing. What ideas or processes are shared? Consider the basic elements of brainstorming, exploring and developing ideas, putting ideas into a form, sequencing, etc, but then challenge students to find more.

✳ In non-verbal art forms, telling stories takes different forms, for instance when a visual artist creates a work that tells a story it is called *narrative painting*. Choose a story and discuss the ideas in the story. Think about expressing these ideas in non-verbal form. Create a visual artwork, musical piece, or dance performance that expresses the same story as the selected spoken or written story.

Exploring Audience Response(s).

Play the SPARK episode on Marc Bamuthi Joseph and initiate a discussion about audience – how do audiences "read" this form of expressive performance art that combines spoken word with movement, visual art, and music? What factors inform enjoyment and understanding of this creative expression?

Ask students to work in small groups to discuss the factors that shape their responses to art, using Marc Bamuthi Joseph as the focus for their thinking.

Invite students to begin by articulating their personal response to the work. They should then identify the factors that influence their "reading" of his performance. Ensure that students consider age, ethnicity, gender, social class, etc. in their exploration of how they approach an art form. For example, is Hip Hop universally appealing? To whom does it speak?

Broaden the discussion to explore notions of "taste" in artwork. How much is taste a product of cultural context or familiarity with cultural referents? Do we need to understand or identify with an aspect of creative expression to enjoy it? Do we all understand the work in the same way? Do we need to?

RELATED STANDARDS
LANGUAGE ARTS
Grade 3
LISTENING AND SPEAKING
1.4 Identify the musical elements of literary language (e.g., rhymes, repeated sounds, instances of onomatopoeia).

Grade 5
LISTENING AND SPEAKING
1.4 Select a focus, organizational structure, and point of view for an oral presentation.
1.6 Engage the audience with appropriate verbal cues, facial expressions, and gestures.
2.1 Deliver narrative presentations: Establish a situation, plot, point of view, and setting with descriptive words and phrases. Show, rather than tell, the listener what happens.

Grades 11 & 12
READING
3.3. Analyze the ways in which irony, tone, mood, the author's style, and the "sound" of language achieve specific rhetorical or aesthetic purposes or both. Analyze ways in which poets use imagery, personification, figures of speech, and sounds to evoke readers' emotions.
2.5 Recite poems, selections from speeches, or dramatic soliloquies with attention to performance details to achieve clarity, force, and aesthetic effect and to demonstrate an understanding of the meaning.

For more information about SPARK and its educational content, including the Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the Web site at http://www.kqed.org/spark/education.

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For more information about the California Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the CA Dept. of Education at http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/index.asp.