**Creative Writing – Mrs. Hadden Assignment week of April 27th- May 1st**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Part 1:** Read the notes about Slam poetry.

**Slam Poetry Notes**

* **Spoken Word (*n.*)**: A form of performance poetry that emerged in the late 1960’s from the Black Arts movement. It owes its heritage most directly to the Beat Poetry of the 1950’s and 1960’s and the Jazz Poetry of the Harlem Renaissance (1920-1940). It calls directly upon the African American Oral Tradition for much of its aesthetic and spiritual power.
* **Slam Poetry (*n.*)**: Spoken word poetry that fits into the aesthetic requirement of poetry slams, most notably, the three-minute time.
* **Poetry Slam (*n.*)**: A competition of spoken word artists in which poets are judged by lay-people in the audience. Audience judges hold up cards scoring the poets from 0.0 to 10.0. Poets must perform their own work and must finish under a three minute time limit.
* **Slammaster (*n.*)**: The Master of Ceremonies at a poetry slam
* **To Kick (*v.*)**: Appropriated from the rap music phrase “to kick a rhyme,” meaning to rap. When used in this documentary, “to kick” means to perform a spoken word poem.
* **Slam Poet (*n.*)**: Someone who writes and performs slam poetry. Like so many of the artists in the spoken word scene, slam poets often consider themselves to be both spoken word artists and social activists.
* **Collective (*n.*)**: A group of spoken word artists.

**Part 2:** Read an example of a slam poem by Taylor Mali.

**“Totally like whatever, you know?”**

In case you hadn't noticed,  
it has somehow become uncool  
to sound like you know what you're talking about?  
Or believe strongly in what you're saying?  
Invisible question marks and parenthetical (you know?)'s  
have been attaching themselves to the ends of our sentences?  
Even when those sentences aren't, like, questions? You know?

Declarative sentences — so-called  
because they used to, like, DECLARE things to be true  
as opposed to other things which were, like, not -  
have been infected by a totally hip  
and tragically cool interrogative tone? You know?  
Like, don't think I'm uncool just because I've noticed this;  
this is just like the word on the street, you know?  
It's like what I've heard?  
I have nothing personally invested in my own opinions, okay?  
I'm just inviting you to join me in my uncertainty?

What has happened to our conviction?  
Where are the limbs out on which we once walked?  
Have they been, like, chopped down  
with the rest of the rain forest?  
Or do we have, like, nothing to say?  
Has society become so, like, totally...  
I mean absolutely... You know?  
That we've just gotten to the point where it's just, like...  
whatever!

And so actually our disarticulation... ness  
is just a clever sort of... thing  
to disguise the fact that we've become  
the most aggressively inarticulate generation  
to come along since...  
you know, a long, long time ago!

I entreat you, I implore you, I exhort you,  
I challenge you: To speak with conviction.  
To say what you believe in a manner that bespeaks  
the determination with which you believe it.  
Because contrary to the wisdom of the bumper sticker,  
it is not enough these days to simply QUESTION AUTHORITY.  
You have to speak with it, too.

**Part 3**: Answer the following questions about the poem.

1. What point is Mali trying to make with his slam poem?
2. What poetic techniques does he use? How does this help him achieve his point?
3. Search for **“Totally like whatever, you know?” by Taylor Mali in YouTube. Watch his performance. Explain at least two things Mali does to make his performance engaging. How is watching Mali different from simply reading his poem?**