

# Fans, poets gather for a Poetry Slam

A high-energy national event brings wordsmiths to the city for edgy rhymes and short bursts of theater.

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"Poetry slams began in Chicago in 1984," reads Bill MacMillan, the evening's "bout manager" and de facto emcee, as he goads a standing-room-only crowd in Madison's Bartell Theatre.

On cue, the audience hollers back: "SO WHAT?"

And that's just the warm-up. When MacMillan, a longtime spoken-word fan from Worcester, Mass., finishes his introduction, what follows is a rollicking night of high-energy, high-stakes, high-volume poetry: a slam, featuring many of the nation's best.

## WEB EXTRA

Video: Watch the slammers make the words flow at the National Poetry Slam.

Go to: [madison.com/wsj](http://madison.com/wsj)

For anyone who relishes impassioned rhyme performed as edgy, compelling, entertaining short bursts of theater — or is simply interested in how much fun a slam can be — this is the week. The National Poetry Slam has come to Madison, bringing with it talent, drama, humor and endless verbal electricity.

The five-day competition has drawn more than 300 poets to the city from as far away as Vancouver, British Columbia; Houston; Orlando, Fla.; Hawaii and even Paris. Preliminary bouts among the 76 teams

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## IF YOU GO

**What:** 22nd annual National Poetry Slam competition

**When:** Through Saturday, Madison competes in its second preliminary round at 10 tonight in Brink Lounge, 701 E. Washington Ave.

**Tickets:** \$5. Twenty-five teams advance to the semifinals at various stages in Overture Center at 8 p.m. Friday. The final four teams perform at 7 p.m. Saturday in Overture Hall.

Semifinal tickets are \$15 and finals tickets cost \$25.

**Information:**  
[nps2008.com/](http://nps2008.com/)  
and [www.overturecenter.com](http://www.overturecenter.com)