

# Allan Wolf

## Presentation Descriptions

### GENERAL AUDIENCE SHOW

Allan performs poetry from memory in the tradition of the Appalachian storytellers. His set is minimal, usually just a simple table and chair. He typically opens with a high-energy introductory poem, followed by a montage of shorter pieces in a wide variety of styles and subjects. Then he'll speak to the audience informally between clusters of poems connected by theme. One moment he will whisper a heart-felt story in verse. The next moment he will transform himself into a hungry Tyrannosaur driving a Volkswagen. He will rattle off a hip-hop piece and segue into a quiet sonnet. Then he'll pick up his guitar to add background to his spoken words, or sing a song about Emily Dickinson or Edgar Allan Poe. And from beginning to end, Wolf gradually reveals the mission he is on, urging audience members to be aware of the poems lurking at their elbows.



### FAMILY AUDIENCE SHOW

Wolf's presentations for families are in the same dynamic style and format as his presentations for general audiences. The greatest difference will be the subject matter and poem selection. While Wolf's general shows may contain mature themes and language, his family shows do not. With nearly a thousand poems committed to memory, Wolf has deep pockets, allowing him to tailor his presentations for each individual audience. Family shows usually contain more participation and call & response. Wolf is aware that family audiences contain future poets, so he makes a point of speaking about the joys of writing and living the poet's life.

### AUTHOR VISITS

Wolf loves to visit with schools, classes, book clubs, and other groups who have read his books. A day of Author Visits tends to be informal although it may include more formalized presentations as well. Wolf will share the story of how he came to write one or more of his books. He'll describe his writing process, answer questions, and sign books. *New Found Land* and *The Blood-Hungry Spleen* both have accompanying Curriculum Guides with study questions, suggested activities, plus information and secrets behind the making of the books.

### WRITING WORKSHOPS

Allan facilitates poetry writing workshops with young people and adults. Activities fall into seven categories: Closed Form; Open Form (Free Verse); Prompts & Jumpstarts; Form (shaping); Revision; Presenting Poems; and How to Live the Poet's Life. Please see "[Allan Wolf's Poetry Writing Workshop Menu of Seven Basic Options](#)" for a more detailed description of each menu item.

## **POETRY PERFORMANCE CLINICS**

### **Active Voice: Experiencing Poetry through Presentation and Drama**

Participants learn what performance poetry is and a few theatre/presentation techniques to help them better understand and appreciate the poems they read. Wolf demonstrates how students can conduct themselves in front of a group of people and find their own personal power and charisma. Participants learn how to transform a poem into a script and how to put on a complete poetry extravaganza of dramatic and “stand-up” verse. Allan can also conduct this session for teachers, including classroom ideas.



## **TEACHER IN-SERVICES and WORKSHOPS**

Allan is available for Teacher Workshops and extended in-services that explore “best practices” in the teaching of poetry. Focus varies and may include performance, writing, reader response, content literacy, using poetry across the curriculum, and community building. Wolf has conducted workshops from 45 minute break-out sessions to week-long in-services. An example syllabus of a 5-day in-service is available on request.

## **KEYNOTE TALKS**

Allan is available to speak to a variety of gatherings. Allan’s “lectures” include lots of poetry recitation and performance. His general themes are the transforming power of language, how we transform history and everyday life into poetry, and how poetry can be found literally everywhere.

## **ARTIST RESIDENCIES**

Allan is available for a limited number of “residencies.” These longer visits allow him to conduct a variety of classes, performances, and activities for individual schools, districts, writers’ groups, or educational institutions.

## **YOUNG AUTHOR CELEBRATIONS**

Allan loves presenting and signing for young author celebrations. Aside from reading and presenting from his own books, he usually shares the story of how he came to realize the power of writing in his life.

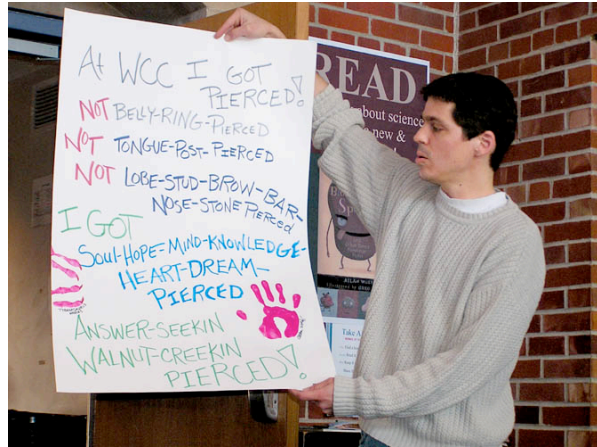
## **LEWIS AND CLARK/HISTORY PRESENTATIONS**

Wolf talks informally to smaller groups about the Lewis and Clark Expedition which is the subject of his young adult verse novel, *New Found Land*. For older kids, adults, and teachers Allan presents a more formal demonstration of how he transforms history into poetry. He presents readings from the novel and shares the artwork and original journal entries that inspired his writing. For teachers, Wolf also presents appropriate reading and writing activities.

## Allan Wolf's Poetry Writing Workshop Menu of Seven Basic Options

### NOTE

These workshop offerings are generally meant for smaller groups focused on writing and are NOT meant to describe what I might do for a large audience or whole-school assembly. Note that there are seven items on the menu below. It is unlikely that I can address them all in a 45-60 minute classroom visit. How many of the different offerings I can get to (and how in-depth I can take each one) will depend on how much time I have with each group of kids, how many visits I have with them, and how old they are.



### CLOSED FORMS

Introduce students to a few of the basic “closed forms” like haiku, limerick, diamante, cinquain, couplet, tercet, acrostic, image montage, etc. I like for the kids to think of these basic forms as “cameras” they can choose from to take poetic “snapshots” of their environment. Because of time constraints, I tend NOT to introduce the longer forms (sonnet, sestina, epic, etc), nor the complicated and obscure forms (double dactyl, clerihew, blank verse, etc).

### OPEN FORM (FREE VERSE)

Definition: Any poem that doesn't have to fit prerequisite matters of form, style, subject, meter or rhyme. In other words, FREE VERSE. I think all kids should become comfortable with free verse. Why? Because it is the form that they will most likely see used by contemporary poets. Because it offers them the most freedom of expression. And because it allows for those surprises and miracles that happen as young poets are allowed to play with their words (just as newborns play with their food).

(Poetry writing workshop description continued on next page)

## **PROMPTS AND JUMPSTARTS**

I have an infinite number of writing prompts and “jump-starts” (shorter prompts) that I can share. Which ones I use will depend upon time constraints as well as upon each group’s age, ability, and desire. Generally speaking the older the kids are, the more complex their prompts will be. I’m happy to send you a list of potential prompts if you wish.

## **FORM**

I can share with the students how to shape their free verse words on the page. We’ll go into matters of line length, readability, play, run on and end-stopped lines.

## **REVISION**

We’ll play with revision. We’ll look for “golden lines” and recreate “salvaged poems.” We’ll hunt down weak words. We’ll use the Barry Lane method of “exploding the moment.” Etc.

## **PRESENTING POEMS**

I’ll discuss, with the kids, the basics of presenting their poems and conducting themselves in front of a group of people. How to use a microphone (if necessary). Etc. If you are interested, I can go into theatrical matters (transforming poems into scripts, staging poems, etc.).

## **HOW TO LIVE THE POET’S LIFE**

This category sort of spills over into all the others. Here I would discuss those matters associated with a traditional “author visit” like: a description of my writing process; the story of that day (April 12, 1975) when I discovered the power of writing in my life; and where to send your poems to get them published. Best of all, I can share the **NINE HABITS OF HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL POETS**.

