

Exploring Contemporary Canadian Voices

the spoken word



Toronto Poetry Slam Team 2007

Krystle Mullin (TPST)



- Mullin's distinct raspy voice may well be taller than she is (she stands only 5'3) but a lack of vertical height hasn't stopped this spoken word artist from reaching unimaginable heights in only one year.
- Toured across Canada as a member of the Toronto Slam Team.
- Implemented a program that integrates spoken word poetry into Ontario high schools.
- Mullin's style and rhythm borrow from folk, hip-hop, and hillbilly sensibilities.



Before Viewing

Krystle Mullin

Before viewing *Ten Cow Wife*:

- Have you ever been in another city or country where you found the customs strange?
- Describe what you observed that was different from what you're used to.



Background

Krystle Mullin

- Mullin refers to a sitcom called “The Facts of Life”, which aired in the seventies and eighties.
- The show was about an all-girl boarding school and every day problems.
- Tutti was one of the girls.
- You can find out more [here](#).



View *Ten Cow Wife*

3 minutes, 20 seconds



After Viewing

Krystle Mullin

After viewing *Ten Cow Wife*:

- What is the point of *Ten Cow Wife*?
- What options does Mullin say a woman has in the state of Virginia?
- How does the story connect with Mullin's themes in the poem?
- Have you noticed any similar situations in Canadian society? Give examples.
- How does she satirize the southerner's ignorance of Canada?



Activities 1

Krystle Mullin

- RESPOND in a journal entry about your experiences in another culture. Or your ideas about the meaning of *Ten Cow Wife*.
- WRITE about a time when you felt like an outsider, in your own family, or town, province or country, or when you travelled somewhere beyond Canada.
- HAVE a debate about whether it's educational to travel to another country to understand different perspectives. One side is for, the other is against.

more activities on next slide...



Activities 2

Krystle Mullin

- WRITE a poem or rant that responds to a radio, TV or internet ad or promotion that interests or annoys you. For example, Tim Horton's promotion for cherry chocolate bloom donuts. Or the same ad repeated over and over. Show your frustration, anger, delight, and other emotions on the page. Perform the piece and demonstrate these emotions in tone of voice and action.
- THINK of a story you've heard that has a clear statement or moral: (e.g., "If you treat your wife like a Ten Cow Wife, she'll be a Ten Cow Wife.") Use this story as a basis for a spoken word piece like Mullin's. Lead a class discussion on the different points of view about this idea. What does the statement mean? What does it suggest about male/female relationships?



Before Viewing

Krystle Mullin

Before viewing *Open Your Eyes*:

- Think up a dare, for yourself or a friend, that would help escape the everyday self and do something different. Think outside of the box. Be wild and crazy with this one. As in the poem: “I dare you to wear a picnic table instead of pants.” Share it with the class.



Background

Krystle Mullin

- This is a team piece, with three performers sharing the stage. In slam poetry, duos, trios, and quartets are allowed, even encouraged, so long as the primary author takes the lead.
- Mullin has offered up her individual spot on stage to share it with White Noise Machine and Amanda Hiebert.



View *Open Your Eyes*

3 minutes, 19 seconds
Mature Content



The image shows a screenshot of a YouTube video player. At the top left is the YouTube logo with the text 'Broadcast Yourself™'. To the right are navigation links for 'Home', 'Videos', and 'Channels'. Below this is the video title: 'Slam Team Piece, Krystle Mullin, Round eyes, @WordsAloud2007, Canada'. The video player itself shows a woman with dark hair and bangs, wearing a patterned top, looking slightly to the right with an open mouth as if speaking. Below the video frame is a standard video control bar with a play button, a progress slider, and a volume icon.

After viewing *Open Your Eyes*:

- What does Krystle's comment mean to you, "We're constantly carrying cardboard cutouts of ourselves."
- How do the poets work together as a team? Look for vocal strategies and non-vocal cues.
- How is the team effective in the development of the idea? How would it be different if only one poet were speaking?



Activities 1

Krystle Mullin

- WRITE about a time when you acted ‘out of your cardboard cutout’ of yourself and were more authentic. How did it feel? Write about the opposite: the ways you feel you act as a ‘cardboard cutout’, ways that you feel are required of you rather than what is actually ‘you’. Compare the feelings involved in the different behaviours.
- WRITE about how you see others acting as ‘cardboard cutouts’ rather than their ‘picnic table’ selves.
- CREATE dares for yourself, a friend or family member to be more than cardboard cutouts. Start with ‘I dare myself (my friend, brother, etc.) to...’. Write for five minutes. Divide into groups of three and share your dares. Write up a new list, combining some dares from each person. Perform them as a trio. Start and end with ‘You, open your eyes.’ Use some of the vocal techniques the team employs (e.g., group scream, background chant, song fragment).



Activities 2

Krystle Mullin

- WRITE a journal entry listing things you've always wanted to do but have never dared. Don't limit yourself to the truth. Be outrageous. Make things up. Turn your list into a poem, skit, story, cartoon or comic strip and share it with the class.
- CREATE a chart of things that you, your community, your country and the world need to 'open their eyes' to. How would you dare these groups to 'open their eyes', or least realize their eyes have been closed? If you choose, use some of the dares in the performance or dares you came up with in the previewing section. Get into groups of three or four to share your ideas and conclusions.



Credits

Videos – Filmed at the 2007 Words Aloud 4 Spoken Word Festival based in Durham, ON. The videos were produced/directed by Liz Zetlin and Myke Dyer.

Words Aloud 4 Festival 2007 – Presented by the Words Aloud Poetry Collective in collaboration with the Durham Art Gallery.

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