



PRESTWICK HOUSE

# Activity Pack

## SLAM!

BY WALTER DEAN MYERS



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Item No. 201427

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Pre-Reading

### Character Traits

**Objective:** Evaluating character traits to determine which are necessary for success in life

#### Activity

*Slam!* is the story of a seventeen-year-old high school student living in Harlem who dreams of one day playing basketball for the NBA. He is a wonderful basketball player, but despite his talents, he is not the best basketball player in Harlem. What qualities, other than basketball skills, do you think he might develop in himself that may help with his game and also help him to further himself in life?

Working in small groups, discuss the following summary of the article *The Psychology of the Winner* by Herbert M. Greenberg, Ph.D.

List the qualities of a winner discussed in the article on the **Qualities of a Winner Chart**. Then, add to this chart any other qualities the group thinks are important to success in life. The group should find at least 20 – 25 qualities.

Finally, select the top ten qualities your group considers to be the most important. In a short phrase or sentence, list these ten qualities on the **Profile of a Winner Chart**.

After reading the story, we will come back to this chart to evaluate the extent to which the protagonist in the book meets or exceeds the qualities on the chart.

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapters 1 – 4****Vocabulary/Language**

**Objectives:** Translating slang words and phrases into Standard English  
Using vocabulary words from the text

**Activity**

There are many slang words and phrases in this novel. Based on your own experience and on the context clues in the text, translate the following list of slang words into Standard English. The first one is done for you as an example.

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapters 1 – 4****Style****Objective:** Recognizing metaphors and similes in the text**Activity**

One aspect of a writer's style is his or her use of figurative language, including similes.

On the following **Simile Chart** find an example of a simile on the page number indicated. For each example you find, write the simile on the chart and indicate the two things that are being compared.

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapters 5 – 7****Vocabulary**

**Objectives:** Defining basketball terms and phrases found in the text  
Researching the meanings of additional basketball terms to enhance the reader's understanding of the basketball scenes in the story

**Activity**

Walter Dean Myers is renowned for the wonderful, exciting descriptions he writes of basketball action. To fully appreciate these scenes, the reader must understand many basketball terms and phrases.

Complete the following **Basketball Terms and Phrases Chart** by writing definitions for each basketball term or phrase on the chart. Feel free to include in the definition any insight your group can provide about these terms from their own knowledge and experience. The page number where the term or phrase is used in the story is provided for you, so you can use context clues to help write the definitions.

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapters 5 – 7****Theme/Characterization**

**Objectives:**     Evaluating how well the protagonist handles peer pressure  
                         Identifying incidents in the text to support theme

**Activity**

One of the thematic concepts in this novel is the impact of peer pressure on Slam's life. Working in small groups, discuss each of the following incidents. Note on the **Peer Pressure Chart** how Slam reacts to each incident, how the group believes he should have reacted to the peer pressure, and some advice the group has for Slam on how to handle any similar situations in the future. Remember that not all peer pressure results in a negative outcome; sometimes peer pressure will help a person to do the right thing. The first one is done for you as an example.

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapters 8 – 11****Theme/Characterization**

**Objectives:**     Identifying similarities and differences between the protagonist and the other characters in the text  
                         Establishing theme  
                         Writing thematic concepts

**Activity**

Most critics agree that Slam! is a coming-of-age story. In a coming-of-age novel, the main character grows, matures, or comes to understand the world in adult terms. One technique authors use to illustrate this is to contrast the protagonist with other characters in the story. Through this contrast, the reader understands that the protagonist is maturing.

Complete the following **Contrasting Characters Worksheet**. First, list the ways the two characters are similar. Then, list some ways the characters are different. Finally, state the ways these similarities and differences help to illustrate Slam's growing maturity or understanding of the world.

The first one is done for you as a guide.

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapters 8 – 11

### Style

**Objective:** Recognizing how the author uses concrete descriptions in the text to convey abstract ideas

#### Activity

Sometimes an author uses a concrete description to help convey to the reader an abstract idea, such as the feelings of the character or a thematic concept.

Slam is thinking about basketball in the following example:

I thought about the game. The feel of the ball in my hands was still there. I don't tell a lot of people but I like the little pebbles on the ball, the way they feel against my fingertips. Once I told Mtisha that the way the ball felt, the pebbles and the roundness where the seams are, almost felt like a woman to me. She said I must be hanging out with some hard-butt women. (Pgs. 75 – 76)

- The **Concrete Image** in this example is the basketball Slam is describing.
- The **Abstract Idea** that is being illustrated is Slam's love for the game of basketball.

In small groups, discuss the answers to the questions on the next page. Then, note the **concrete image** that is being described and the **abstract idea** that this description helps to convey. Finally, based on the group answers to these questions, write a statement summarizing the meaning of the description in the passage.



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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapters 12 – 16****Theme/Characterization**

**Objectives:**     Identifying incidents in the text to illustrate theme  
                         Understanding that thematic concepts sometimes overlap  
                         Recognizing that character traits are revealed by the decisions the character makes

**Activity**

Cite one incident from chapters twelve through sixteen to illustrate each of the following thematic concepts. Remember that themes can overlap so that one incident can illustrate more than one theme. You must cite a different incident for each thematic concept, however. You may summarize the incident or note a significant quotation from the text. Then briefly note the reason(s) why the incident illustrates the theme.

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapters 17 – 21****Vocabulary****Objective:** Interpreting the meaning of slang terms from the text**Activity**

Complete the attached crossword puzzle of slang terms used in this story. Read the quotation from the story. Then think of a word with the same meaning to replace the slang term underlined in the clue. The correct word in the crossword puzzle has the same meaning, but is not a slang term. The page number for the clue is included so you can look it up if you need more context clues to understand the meaning of the slang terms.

**Example:**

**The clue is:** “You got a sweet game for high school,” he said. That made me feel good. And when we got back on the court I really busted it.

**Some words that might fit are:** hustled, hurried, ran, sprinted, charged, etc.