



being heard

People create poetry to express themselves and get their voices heard. In an inspiring documentary, talented spoken-word artists reveal their urge to write. Students explore the right to freedom of expression and create similes and metaphors for freedom after reading a selection of thought-provoking human rights poetry.



being heard

AIMS

- To question 'what is poetry?'
- To understand that freedom of expression is a human right
- To explore human rights in poetry and collaborate on a freedom poem

HUMAN RIGHTS FOCUS

Freedom of expression

YOU'LL NEED

PowerPoint, speakers and internet access

Flipchart and marker pens

Coloured pens

Post-it notes

Notebooks or folders (for students to keep their poetry in)

Film clip

The Poets Will Be Heard by BBC Radio 1Xtra
(vimeo.com/136702949)

Poems

Gingerbread Man by Joseph Coelho
Russian Doll by Rachel Rooney
First They Came by Martin Niemöller
My Lover Is a Woman by Pat Parker
Sally Size Zero by Grace Nichols
Cutbacks by Sarah Crossan
Song of Myself by Walt Whitman
Apologia by Oscar Wilde
Encounter with Freedom by Elsa Wiezell

Extension

Resource Sheet 1 Encounter with Freedom

STARTER

Show slide 2. Ask the class to complete this sentence, Poetry is... Scribe their responses. Show the opening 3 minutes 45 seconds of The Poets Will Be Heard documentary by BBC Radio 1 Xtra, which explores the spoken word scene (slide 3).

- What surprised you in the documentary?
- Did it challenge any of your initial responses to poetry?
- Do you want to add words or phrases to the flipchart?
- Do you want to change any of them? Why?

ACTIVITY 1

Arrange students into groups. Give each group one of the following poems and coloured pens. Select poems as appropriate to your class.

Gingerbread Man by Joseph Coelho
Russian Doll by Rachel Rooney
First They Came by Martin Niemöller
My Lover Is a Woman by Pat Parker
Sally Size Zero by Grace Nichols
Cutbacks by Sarah Crossan
Song of Myself by Walt Whitman
Apologia by Oscar Wilde

Ask each group to:

- Read their poem.
- Highlight or underline words and phrases that stand out, even if they don't know why.
- Establish its general meaning.

Now ask the groups to discuss:

- What did you notice?
- What do you like/dislike about your poem?
- Is there anything that puzzles you?
- Do you notice any patterns, pace, rhythm?
- Who might be speaking?
- What experiences are they trying to convey?
- Does the poem trigger any feelings in you?
- What parts do you relate to?

Show slide 4. Explain students are now going to perform their poems out loud. They need to think about volume, tone, use of rhythm, position in the room, number of people speaking. Give them time to prepare their performance.

Use their performance to discuss ways poetry can be used as vehicle for self-exploration and self-expression.

ACTIVITY 2

Show slide 5. Explain that being able to express ourselves freely is an important human right but for some people this right is denied. For instance:

Nadia Anjuman, from Afghanistan, was killed by her husband in 2005 for writing poetry which described the oppression of Afghan women. Jack Mapanje was imprisoned in 1987 by the Malawi government for his poetry.

For more information see: www.nytimes.com (search 'Afghan poet dies after beating by husband') and www.theguardian.com (search 'Jack Mapanje free at last').

Show Encounter with Freedom by Elsa Wiesel with an illustration by Choi Jung-In (slide 6), taken from Amnesty International's book *Dreams of Freedom*. Read out the poem to the class.

Hand out post-it notes and ask students to write their own simile or metaphor for freedom, as Elsa Wiesel does in her poem. Model what similes and metaphors are using the poem if necessary.

Stick the post-it notes up. Are there any common images or themes? Can students suggest categories? Invite volunteers to group and order the lines to form a poem.

EXTENSION

Ask students to write their own poem about freedom and illustrate it. Create a display around the Elsa Wiesel spread (Resource Sheet 1).

GINGERBREAD MAN

By Joseph Coelho

Billy chased me round the playground
with hands full of fists.

Billy yelled at me across the football pitch
with a mouth full of stings.

Billy spat, jibed and cawed
as I ran away singing...

'You can't catch me, I'm the gingerbread man.'

Billy had red hair.
I was cruel and called him names.



© Ellie Kurtz

POEMS

SALLY SIZE ZERO

By Grace Nichols

Sally Size-Zero

Sally Size-Zero

Where did she go?

Everyone searched high

Everyone searched low

But could find no trace

Of Sally Size-Zero

Once she used to glow

With a spring in her step

And a sway of her torso

Loved a laugh and a latté

At café Nero

To her friends she was a hero

Until she decided to be a size-zero

Sally Size-Zero

Sally Size-Zero

Where did she go?

Her mother shook out

The bed-clothes to find her –

But couldn't glimpse a wisp or a toe

All that rolled out was a great big zero.



POEMS

RUSSIAN DOLL

By Rachel Rooney

All you see is outside me: my painted smile,
The rosy-posy shell, the fluttery eyes.
A butter-won't-melt-in-my-mouth-type me

But inside there's another me, bored till playtime.
The wasting paper, daytime dreamer.
A can't-be-bothered-sort-of-me.

And inside me there's another me, full of cheek.
The quick, slick joker with a poking tongue.
A class-clown-funny-one-of me

And inside there's another me who's smaller, scared.
The scurrying, worrying, yes miss whisperer.
A wouldn't-say-boo-to-a-goosey me

And inside there's another me, all cross and bothered.
The scowling hot-head, stamping feet.
A didn't-do-it-blameless me

And inside there's another me, forever jealous
who never gets enough, compared.
A grass-is-always-greener me

And deepest down, kept secretly
a tiny, solid skittle doll.
The girl that hides inside of me.



POEMS

FIRST THEY CAME

By **Martin Niemöller**

First they came for the Communists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Communist
Then they came for the Socialists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Socialist
Then they came for the trade unionists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a trade unionist
Then they came for the Jews
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Jew
Then they came for me
And there was no one left
To speak out for me.



POEMS

(from) MY LOVER IS A WOMAN

By Pat Parker

I.

my lover is a woman
& when i hold her
feel her warmth
 i feel good
 feel safe

then—i never think of
my family's voices
never hear my sisters say
bulldaggers, queers, funny
 come see us, but don't
 bring your friends
 it's ok with us,
 but don't tell mama
 it'd break her heart
never feel my father
turn in his grave
never hear my mother cry
Lord, what kind of child is this?



© Martha Dunham

POEMS

CUTBACKS

By Sarah Crossan

It starts with no more nights out at the movie theatre,
no new clothes or money for restaurants.
It starts out with regular cutbacks
that none of us notice all that much.

But
then it's no money for gas and no money for meat
and no money for any treats
or frittering
except healthcare
because
Mom
won't skimp
on that.



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POEMS

(from) SONG OF MYSELF (1892 version)

By **Walt Whitman**

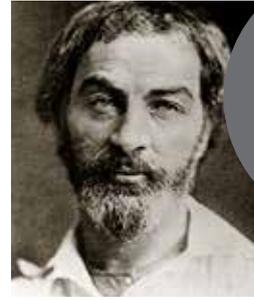
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I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air,
Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their parents the same,
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,
Hoping to cease not till death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,
Nature without check with original energy.



POEMS

APOLOGIA

By Oscar Wilde

Is it thy will that I should wax and wane,
Barter my cloth of gold for hodden grey,
And at thy pleasure weave that web of pain
Whose brightest threads are each a wasted day?

Is it thy will That my Soul's House should be a tortured spot
Wherein, like evil paramours, must dwell
The quenchless flame, the worm that dieth not?

Nay, if it be thy will I shall endure,
And sell ambition at the common mart,
And let dull failure be my vestiture,
And sorrow dig its grave within my heart.

Perchance it may be better so I have not made my heart a heart of stone,
Nor starved my boyhood of its goodly feast,
Nor walked where Beauty is a thing unknown.

Many a man hath done so; sought to fence
In straitened bonds the soul that should be free,
Trodden the dusty road of common sense,
While all the forest sang of liberty,

Not marking how the spotted hawk in flight
Passed on wide pinion through the lofty air,
To where the steep untrodden mountain height
Caught the last tresses of the Sun God's hair.

Or how the little flower he trod upon,
The daisy, that white-feathered shield of gold,
Followed with wistful eyes the wandering sun
Content if once its leaves were aureoled.

But surely it is something to have been
The best beloved for a little while,
To have walked hand in hand with Love, and seen
His purple wings flit once across thy smile.

Ay! though the gorgèd asp of passion feed
On my boy's heart, yet have I burst the bars,
Stood face to face with Beauty, known indeed
The Love which moves the Sun and all the stars!

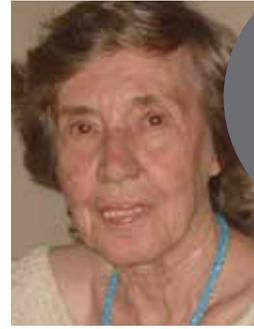


POEMS

ENCOUNTER WITH FREEDOM

By Elsa Wiezell

Like an enormous wave
that lies down over my heart.
Like the stunning beauty of the wind over the pines.
Like an immense, vital heartbeat.
Like the moon and the river trapped by love.
Like all the dreams in the space of the eyes.
Like a fistful of infinite light.
That is the way I love freedom!



CC Patty P

POEMS

RESOURCE
SHEET 1
EXTENSION



Like an enormous wave
that lies down over my heart.
Like the stunning beauty of the wind over the pines.
Like an immense, vital heartbeat.
Like the moon and the river trapped by love.
Like all the dreams in the space of the eyes.
Like a fistful of infinite light.
That is the way I love freedom!

ELSA WIEZELL

Choi Jung-In

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Film

The Poets Will be Heard, BBC Radio 1Xtra, part of their 'Words First' season, 2015.

Poems

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