



words that burn

Case studies and films show that we all have the power to stand up for human rights through poetry. As an example, three well-known poets take on Amnesty's Make a Difference in a Minute challenge – to perform a human rights poem in one minute. Challenge your students to do this too.

challenge

AIMS

- To understand we can all stand up for human rights
- To explore how poets stand up for human rights
- To write a poem about a human right or for an individual at risk

HUMAN RIGHTS FOCUS

Taking action for an individual at risk or issue

YOU'LL NEED

PowerPoint, speakers and internet access

Paper and highlighters

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

Film clip

Poems with film clips

You Are Not Powerless (on PowerPoint)

Make a Difference in a Minute introduction

Right To Be by Amy León

Everyone Who Cares by Sarah Crossan

Your Moment by Inja

STARTER

Watch the film *You Are Not Powerless* (slide 2).

- What did you think?
- What is meant by the term 'snowflake'?
- Why might some older generations choose to use a derogatory term to describe the younger generation?
- Do you believe you could make a difference if you wanted to?

Show the students slide 3. What do these people have in common?

Show slide 4. Explain they are activists. They have chosen to stand up for human rights.

Can the class think of a young person who has spoken up and made a difference?

Share these examples.

- At 14, Fahma Mohamed started campaigning against female genital mutilation (FGM) and gender-based violence. She organised a national campaign to raise awareness of FGM in schools. Her online petition to then secretary Michael Gove collected 230,000 signatures and led to training for UK professionals to identify and support girls at risk of the practice.
- Chris Whitehead, 12, wore a skirt to school in protest of rules that did not allow boys to wear shorts in hot weather. Following his demonstration, the school changed their policy.
- Luke Wilcox, 18, started a petition on Change.org to help his school friend Brian White who faced deportation to Zimbabwe. More than 110,000 people signed it to help Brian remain in the UK where he has lived since he was 15. The Home Office reversed their decision to deport him.
- Aged 16, June Eric-Udorie led a successful campaign to keep feminism on the A-level politics syllabus. She continues to work on campaigns to end FGM and child marriage. June recently tweeted: 'You know, I'm just an 18-yr girl and sometimes... I have to remind myself that my little bits of activism matter too.'

ACTIVITY 1

Watch the film *Make a Difference in a Minute* (slide 5).

Ask the class what they know about Amnesty International. Explain it is a movement of ordinary people who have come together to stand up for human rights. See box (over page) for more information.

Explain that many people have stood up for human rights through poetry.

Introduce Amnesty's Make a Difference in a Minute challenge. The rules: You have one minute to perform a poem about a human rights issue.

Three well-known poets have completed it for us: Amy Léon, Sarah Crossan and Inja.

Show slide 6. Watch the films of the poets. Tell the class to look at the way each poet has chosen a different way to perform their poem. Afterwards discuss:

- Did they use facial expression? Gesture? Body language to communicate?
- How do the poets use their voice to convey the message? Consider pace, rhythm, tone, pitch.
- What stood out for you in their performances?
- Did any performances/phrases/words resonate with you?

ACTIVITY 2

Explain the class will now take on the Make a Difference in a Minute challenge. It can be:

- a personal response to a current human rights issue
- an appeal or solidarity poem for an individual who is at risk of abuse.

For an up-to-date human rights issue or case Amnesty is working on, see www.amnesty.org.uk/wordsthatburn

Give students times to read and discuss the Make a Difference in a Minute case sheet.

Students will need to consider the words but also how they will perform the poem, including use of their voice and body language, to make an impact on the audience.

Explain that students will do a free write to get their thoughts out and to come up with ideas for their poem.

A free-write means they are free to write without worrying about structure, rhyme, spelling or grammar. It's liberating – they just need to let their thoughts out.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

- Amnesty is the world's leading human rights organisation, present in more than 150 countries. It has over seven million members and supporters.
- Amnesty campaigns for justice wherever it is denied. It investigates and exposes abuses and supports thousands of individuals and communities whose rights have been abused.
- Supporters take action in many ways, from raising awareness on social media and asking their local council to stand up to hate crime to sending messages of support to political prisoners.
- For each individual an action may be quick and simple – added together they become a powerful force for change.



For this free-write:

- They must write non-stop for three minutes.
- It can be about their own experiences or thoughts about the human rights theme or what they have learnt about an individual case or what change they want to see.
- They can write the first thing that comes into their head. The main thing is to carry on writing for the whole three minutes.

Point out that this is their own work and they won't need to share it.

Afterwards, ask:

- How did it feel to spend three minutes free writing?
- Was it difficult or easy?
- Did they manage to write for the entire time?

Ask them to highlight words or phrases that they like or feel surprised by in their free write.

Now ask students to use their ideas to compose a short poem for the individual or on their theme.

While students are writing, create your own poem on the board or the visualiser to model making choices and editing as you change your mind. Keep revising until it feels done.

Ask if anyone would like to share their poem with their class.

EXTENSION

Ask students to submit their human rights poems as a video clip or written poem to **www.amnesty.org.uk/wordsthatburn**. A selection will be published. Written solidarity or appeal poems will be forwarded to the relevant individual at risk or authority. Poems are subject to terms and conditions found at **www.amnesty.org.uk/wordsthatburn-t&cs**.

RIGHT TO BE

By Amy León

I got the right to be
Got the right to be
Got the right to be me
Unapologetically

Limbs swaying in the wind
To the sound of crimson
Drowning the sea
Setting my people free

Children of the sun
Of the deep atlantic ocean
Our ancestors died
So we could breathe
In the air of freedom

May we raise our voices till
Peace dawns on us
Till the worlds slaves
Are set free
and equality is no longer a dream

Till we can scream
At the top of our lungs
And truly believe

That we got the right to be
Got the right to be
Got the right to be free
Unapologetically



POEMS

'YOUR MOMENT'

By Inja

We all have a chance
A time
A value
A worth
A style
A process
When striving for perfection
we miss the real moment
It's a long road between thought and execution of ideas
Images of beauty engrained in us
Make us forget that spark
Creations big Bang
Overflowing emotion sheer brilliance
Genius in fact
No matter what thought
Or size
Power and knowledge contained
Smiling as if the worlds in your palm
If only momentarily
We can caress
Tie bows
Decorate
Define
Put a cherry on top
But its that moment we strive for
The buzz of blood rushing in excitement
Energy pulsates
We beam
Encapsulated in memories that cement
Perfection can be painful
Lonely
Ending up so far from the moment
You forget the spark
Never forget the spark
That could be you making a difference
Don't miss it



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POEMS

EVERYONE WHO CARES

By Sarah Crossan

It makes me laugh a not-really-that-funny laugh
when people shirk from
words like feminist,
when they do a dirty nappy face
at the mention of it.
“I’m an equalist,” they say.
“Everyone equal.”

Which sort of makes sense
except
equality is what feminists starved for
and
died for.

It wasn’t an equalist,
as far as I know,
who fought for girls to go to school
the right to vote
and marry too,
without being sold like a cow at a market.

So YES – YES –
everyone equal,
everyone who cares
a feminist.



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You Are Not Powerless © Amnesty International

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