



freedom

A photo from World War II inspired a famous poem, *The Boy With His Hands Up* by Yala Korwin. By reading poetry written in response to injustice, students explore how language can be used to make a courageous stand. After looking at human rights law, students write a poem in response to a photograph capturing a human rights violation.

freedom

AIMS

- To understand what human rights are and how they can be violated
- To explore poetry representing human rights violations
- To write poetry in response to a human rights image

HUMAN RIGHTS FOCUS

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and human rights violations

YOU'LL NEED

PowerPoint, speakers and internet access

Resource Sheet 1 Universal Declaration of Human Rights summary version

Resource Sheet 2 Human rights images

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

Film clip

Everybody – We are all born free (vimeo.com/11048227)

Poems

The Little Boy With His Hands Up by Yala Korwin

Extension

First They Came by Martin Niemöller

First They Came For The Muslims by Michael R Burch

STARTER

Show the image of the little boy with his hands up during the evacuation of a Jewish ghetto, World War II (slide 2).

- What can you see in the photo?
- What do you think is happening?
- What surprises you?
- What do you think the boy was feeling?
- What human rights do you think are being taken away?
- When might this photo have been taken?
- What questions do you have about the photo?

Now read *The Little Boy with His Hands Up* by Yala Korwin.

- Who is the poet speaking to?
- Why did she choose to write poetry in response to seeing this photo?

Reveal Yala was born in Poland and was interned in a concentration camp in Germany during World War II. It is one of the most remembered poems of the Holocaust.

How does the poem compare to the observations and questions you had when you first saw the photo?

Emphasise that often photos have a deeper story to tell and can prompt an emotional response that we can explore through writing poetry. Knowing about the lives of poets can help you understand their poems in a more meaningful way.

ACTIVITY 1

Show slide 3. Explain to the class that they will explore the document that underpins human rights law. This document is called the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

The UDHR was established in 1948 and written by 50 member states of the United Nations. It contains 30 articles of the human rights that every human being is entitled to. On the slide, Eleanor Roosevelt, an American politician, diplomat and activist, holds this document, which she helped to draft.

- Has anyone heard of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?
- Who has read it?
- Why was it written in 1948? (End of World War II)
- Why was it important that so many different countries contributed to the UDHR?

Through the discussion draw out some of the underpinning principles of human rights. Human rights are:

- universal (they belong to all of us);
- inalienable (they cannot be taken away from us);
- interdependent and indivisible (governments should not be able to pick and choose which are respected).

Ask younger students to watch *Everybody – We are all born free* (vimeo.com/11048227). For older students, choose one of the films from www.amnesty.org.uk/seven-short-videos-to-introduce-human-rights

Divide the class into pairs. Give each pair a copy of Resource Sheet 1 Universal Declaration of Human Rights summary version and allocate them one of the human rights articles.

In pairs, ask students to draw a picture of a person or people enjoying or being denied their human rights. You could use Amnesty's Right Up Your Street illustration (slide 4) for inspiration: www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/activity-right-your-street

Pairs should pass their drawing to another pair. Ask students to write a line describing what is happening in the drawing they have been given. Explain that it is going to form one line of a poem.

Collate the lines in the order of the articles into a class poem. The pictures and poems could be used for a display.

You could use drama rather than drawings if you have more time.

ACTIVITY 2

Remind students of the image that inspired Yala Korwin's poem (slide 5).

Give pairs an image from Resource Sheet 2. Ask them to discuss and label what they can see in the picture including:

- the body language of the person or people
- their facial expressions
- surroundings
- any questions they have about the event or people
- what catches their attention in the photograph
- what human rights are being taken away.

Now ask each student to write a three-stanza poem using the second person 'You'. Ask students to follow this pattern (slide 6).

Stanza 1 Describe the body language and facial expression of the person/one of the people.

Stanza 2 Describe the surroundings and what other people are doing.

Stanza 3 Ask the person questions about who they are, what is happening, how it came about and how they feel about it.

To help, tell students to imagine themselves walking next to the person and sharing their experiences.

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.

Discuss how it felt to address the person in the picture. Did it have any effect on their attitudes towards what was happening?

Make a display with the poems and pictures but ensure the students have a copy for their notebook/folder.

EXTENSION

Ask students to read *First They Came*, and *First They Came For The Muslims*. Discuss discrimination they have witnessed in their community and in the news. If they were to re-write this poem, who would they include?

THE LITTLE BOY WITH HIS HANDS UP

By Yala Korwin

Your open palms raised in the air
like two white doves
frame your meager face,
your face contorted with fear,
grown old with knowledge beyond your years.
Not yet ten. Eight? Seven?
Not yet compelled to mark
with a blue star on white badge
your Jewishness.

No need to brand the very young.
They will meekly follow their mothers.

You are standing apart
Against the flock of women and their brood
With blank, resigned stares.
All the torments of this harassed crowd
Are written on your face.
In your dark eyes – a vision of horror.
You have seen Death already
On the ghetto streets, haven't you?
Do you recognize it in the emblems
Of the SS-man facing you with his camera?

Like a lost lamb you are standing
Apart and forlorn beholding your own fate.

Where is your mother, little boy?
Is she the woman glancing over her shoulder
At the gunmen at the bunker's entrance?
Is it she who lovingly, though in haste,
Buttoned your coat, straightened your cap,
Pulled up your socks?
Is it her dreams of you, her dreams
Of a future Einstein, a Spinoza,
Another Heine or Halévy
They will murder soon?
Or are you orphaned already?
But even if you still have a mother,
She won't be allowed to comfort you
In her arms.



POEMS

Her tired arms loaded with useless bundles
Must remain up in submission.

Alone you will march
Among other lonely wretches
Toward your martyrdom.

Your image will remain with us
And grow and grow
To immense proportions,
To haunt the callous world,
To accuse it, with ever stronger voice,
In the name of the million youngsters
Who lie, pitiful rag-dolls,
Their eyes forever closed.



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

FIRST THEY CAME FOR THE MUSLIMS

By **Michael R Burch**

First they came for the Muslims
and I did not speak out
because I was not a Muslim.

Then they came for the homosexuals
and I did not speak out
because I was not a homosexual.

Then they came for the feminists
and I did not speak out
because I was not a feminist.

Now when will they come for me
because I was too busy or too apathetic
to defend my sisters and brothers?



UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS SUMMARY VERSION

1 We are born free and equal, and should treat others in the same way.

2 We have all these rights in the Declaration, no matter who we are, where we're from or what we believe in.

3 We have the right to life, and to be free and feel safe.

4 Nobody has any right to make us a slave. We cannot make anyone else our slave.

5 Nobody has any right to hurt, torture or humiliate us.

6 Everyone has the right to be protected by the law.

7 The law is the same for everyone. It must treat us all fairly.

8 We can all ask for the law to help us when we are not treated fairly.

9 Nobody has the right to put us in prison, or to send us away from our country, without good reasons.

10 If we are accused of breaking the law, we have the right to a fair and public trial.

11 Nobody should be blamed for doing something until it has been proved that they did it.

12 Nobody has the right to enter our home, open our letters or bother us or our families without a good reason.

13 We all have the right to go where we want to in our own country and to travel abroad as we wish.

14 If someone hurts us, we have the right to go to another country and ask for protection.

15 We all have the right to belong to a country.

16 When we are legally old enough, we have the right to marry and have a family.

17 Everyone has the right to own things or share them.

18 We all have the right to our own thoughts and to believe in any religion.

19 We can all think what we like, say what we think and share ideas and information with other people.

20 We all have the right to meet our friends and work together in peace to defend our rights. It is wrong to force someone to belong to a group.

21 We all have the right to take part in the government of our country. Every grown up should be allowed to vote to choose their own leaders.

22 The place where we live should help us to develop and to make the most of all the advantages (culture, work, social welfare) on offer. Music, art, craft and sport are for everyone to enjoy.

23 Every grown up has the right to a job, to a fair wages and to join a trade union.

24 We all have the right to rest and free time.

25 We all have the right to a decent living standard, including enough food, clothing, housing and medical help if we are ill. Mothers and children and people who are old, out of work or disabled have the right to be cared for.

26 We all have the right to education.

27 We have the right to share in our community's arts and sciences, and any good they do.

28 There must be peace and order to protect these rights and freedoms, and we can enjoy them in our country and all over the world.

29 We have a duty to other people, and we should protect their rights and freedoms.

30 Nobody can take away these rights and freedoms from us.

This version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been simplified by Amnesty International UK and is especially useful for younger people. Download a full version at www.amnesty.org.uk/universal



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BALLET PROTEST Two ballerinas dance in protest of repression of free speech in Russia. The 2014 protest took place as a petition signed by 200,000 people was delivered to the offices of Russian President Vladimir Putin calling on him to repeal repressive laws restricting the right to freedom of expression, assembly and association.

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Film clip

Everybody – We are all born free © Amnesty International

Poems

The Little Boy With His Hands Up by Yala Korwin © Yala Korwin

First They Came by Martin Niemöller © Martin Niemöller

First They Came for the Muslims by Michael R Burch, inspired by the famous Holocaust poem by Martin Niemöller. It was first published online by The HyperTexts (www.thehypertexts.com) on educational pages about the Holocaust and Nakba.