



## power

Throughout history, words and poetry have been used to challenge, protest and inspire change. Students watch Inja perform his poem Freedom and explore poems about race and privilege before creating their own protest poetry.

# power

## AIMS

- To understand that equality is a human right
- To analyse poems that address power and privilege in relation to race
- To write protest poems

## HUMAN RIGHTS FOCUS

Equality and discrimination, defending human rights

## YOU'LL NEED

PowerPoint, speakers and internet access

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

## Poems and films

Freedom by Inja. Film at [www.amnesty.org.uk/wordsthatburn](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/wordsthatburn)  
Black/White by Amy León (one per student)  
Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night by Dylan Thomas (one per student). Film by BBC Cymru Wales at YouTube (Search 'Dylan Thomas season BBC')

## Extension

Darling by Amy León (one per student)

## STARTER

Share the poem Freedom by Inja and watch him perform his words (slide 2).

Discuss with students:

- Tell me about this poem
- How did you feel as you watched Inja read it?
- What made you feel that way? Think about language and performance.

**Teacher note** Freedom is roughly based on the story of Olaudah Equiano and Thomas Clarkson who campaigned against the slave trade and were pivotal in the eventual Slave Trade Act abolishing it in the UK in 1807. The poem mixes historical facts with Inja's own history and personal experiences in Cambridge and the UK.

## ACTIVITY 1

Explain that the class will now consider how poetry can be used to stand up for people's rights and challenge power and privilege.

Show slide 3. Give students a copy of Black/White by American poet Amy León.

Allow time for students to discuss their thoughts, before asking:

- Tell me about this poem
- What do you like/dislike?
- Is there anything that puzzles you?
- Do you notice any patterns? Pace? Rhythm?
- What experiences is she trying to convey?
- Does it trigger any feelings in you?
- Do you relate to anything in the poem?

For further discussion, ask:

- Do you recognise the discrimination and privilege described in Black/White?
- Have you experienced the discrimination she describes, or seen and heard about it?
- This poem reflects an American experience of racism. Do you think it's different in the UK?
- Having read the last lines of Black/White, who do you think should talk? What should they say and to who?

In pairs, ask one person to read Black/White but replace the words 'boy' and 'man' with 'girl' and 'woman'. Does anything change?

If you were to write your version of this powerful poem, who would you contrast?

Now ask the students to write two stanzas side by side to contrast experiences.

## ACTIVITY 2

Show images of protests using the words of Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night by Dylan Thomas (slides 4-6) and play the film clip where Welsh actors perform the poem.

**Teacher note** Explaining the protest photos:

**Slide 4** This photo comes from Bhopal, India, where thousands died in a chemical accident in 1984. Many continue to suffer. Victims are still campaigning to secure compensation and justice from the company, and painted this slogan as part of their fight.

**Slide 5 and 6** Many people invoked the words of Dylan Thomas on placards carried at the Women's Marches that took place around the world in January 2017.

Explain how words and poetry can rally people to protest and make change. In the above cases, Dylan Thomas's words have been used to inspire the marginalised to fight for justice.

Ask students to write down what makes them angry and what they would like to change on a post-it note. Stick all their ideas on the board or wall. Do any themes emerge?

Ask them to write a protest poem around one of those themes. It should start with Inja's phrase 'Just imagine'.

Students should add their poem to their notebook/folder.

## EXTENSION

Share Darling by Amy León and re-read Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night by Dylan Thomas. Ask students to write a poem addressing someone defending their rights. It should give them courage and show solidarity.

## FREEDOM

By Inja

Some live for freedom,  
some die for freedom  
Some fight for freedom,  
some lie for freedom  
Some cry for freedom,  
some try for freedom  
Some say that we ain't free  
till the whole world's free

Some walk for freedom,  
some ride for freedom  
Some run for freedom,  
some hide for freedom  
Some spy for freedom,  
some write for freedom  
Some say that we ain't free  
till the whole world's free

Just imagine being a kid  
Chilling at home with your sis in the crib  
Next thing, kidnappers break in  
capture you both  
so you'll never see your kin

Separate you, then ship you abroad  
to a place that's an unknown shore  
Then you're sold at a price  
Someone owns your life  
And you'll never see freedom no more

Then a captain buys  
and you sail with the tide  
seeing the whole world wide  
Given a wage that's minimum,  
not high  
But enough to buy your freedom  
in time

On that day when you've got funds  
Your name's yours for the right sum  
It's Equiano by the setting of the sun  
Once papers signed your freedom comes, then



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POEMS

Go from slave to author,  
to protestor in one semester  
Plant the seed to get slavery ended  
and go against the grain of freedom's ember

From essays to decades as activist  
These grounds here produced the catalyst  
To trading in slaves as an active wish  
To demolishing the routes cos they had to give

Cos they had to give  
Once word spread  
Of how were slaves treated  
the trade would end  
Cos the work of men  
that worked to defend  
Those exported  
exploited and bent

All started here in Cambridge  
That's why I'm proud,  
but still trouble breeds  
One street down  
I was chased by three  
for the colour of my skin  
like I can't be free

But I can be free  
just like all of us  
these are real life stories  
pave the way  
Enthralled in history  
to this day  
there's many out there  
that are still enslaved

Do you fight for them  
or just work for you?  
Do you care at all  
or just care for you?  
Do you use their ways  
to keep slavery true?  
Whether mind over body  
or in anything you do?

I know who I am  
 You know bout you?  
 No identity crisis here to view  
 I know my past  
 these parts are used  
 I'm part of a parcel  
 that defends truth  
 And these truths are free  
 like we all should be  
 Whether woman, man, child,  
 all human beings

To the people fighting  
 I hope one day that  
 I can help you all to be free

Some live for freedom,  
 some die for freedom  
 Some fight for freedom,  
 some lie for freedom  
 Some cry for freedom,  
 some try for freedom  
 Some say that we ain't free  
 till the whole world's free

Some walk for freedom,  
 some ride for freedom  
 Some run for freedom,  
 some hide from freedom  
 Some spy for freedom,  
 some write for freedom  
 Some say that we ain't free  
 till the whole world's free



## BLACK/WHITE

By Amy León

Black boy born with  
Loose noose round his neck  
Black man will die with one

Black boy loves to read

Black boy likes sports

Black boy is told  
Sports will be his only path  
To success

Black boy is told  
He will be incarcerated  
In his lifetime

Black boy is told  
To be quiet  
Keep hands at side  
Keep voice low  
Look 'civilized'

Black boy is threat

Black man is overqualified  
Black man doesn't get  
interviewed

Black man in suit  
Is portrayed as  
Black boy playing dress-up

Black boy  
Makes the news

Black boy  
Gets shot at 17

White boy born with  
Halo round his head  
White man will die with one

White boy loves to read

White boy likes sports

White boy has options

White boy is told  
He will get away with  
Everything

White boy is told  
To have fun  
Remember his lunch  
Brush his teeth  
Be home by nine

White boy is child

White man is under-qualified  
White man starts on Monday

White man in suit  
Is portrayed as  
White man in suit

White man  
Reports it

White boy  
Learned to shoot at 15



Black boy  
May or may not live  
To see university

Black man will not  
Know how to talk about this  
With his son.

White boy  
May or may not  
Take a gap year

White man will  
Never have to.



POEMS

## DO NOT GO GENTLE INTO THAT GOOD NIGHT

By **Dylan Thomas**

Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,  
Because their words had forked no lightning they  
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright  
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,  
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,  
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight  
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,  
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.  
Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.



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POEMS

## DARLING

By Amy León

Darling,  
They will ask of you silence  
They will expect of you rage  
They will give you no time to make a mistake  
They will have no explanation  
And every excuse  
They will do everything they can  
To destroy you  
But you  
Must. Not. Let. Them.

Darling,  
They will tell you about your skin  
They will tell you about your bones  
They will even tell you about your marrow  
But they will never know your name.

Darling,  
Give them a good reason  
To know your name  
You are a miracle  
A survivor of yesterday's bloodshed  
A reason to believe in change  
Stars and planets collide with the thought of you  
Time stops to welcome you  
You are made of light.

Darling,  
They will fear you because of this  
And that is OK  
Do not be scared  
This world will give you anything  
If you fight for it  
So fight  
Fight with your mind  
Fight with your words  
Fight with everything you've got



EXTENSION

They expect nothing of you but surrender  
So stun them.

Darling,  
Stun them with your intelligence  
Shock them with your well of passion and ability to love  
Terrify them with your grace and forgiveness  
And watch  
As they make space for you  
At the very table you created.



**EXTENSION**

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Black/White by Amy León © Amy León, from Here I Stand, Walker, 2016. First published by Walker Books Ltd in Here I Stand.

Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night by Dylan Thomas © The Trustees for the Copyrights of Dylan Thomas, published in The Collected Poems of Dylan Thomas: The Centenary Edition (Weidenfeld & Nicolson), [www.discoverdylanthomas.com](http://www.discoverdylanthomas.com) Film BBC Cymru Wales on YouTube.

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