



words that burn

Students look at how poetry can be performed and its impact on the listener. After watching different poets perform, they explore ways to bring their own words to life.

challenge

AIMS

- To reflect on their own poetry
- To explore how poets share their poetry through performance
- To practice sharing and performing a poem they've written

HUMAN RIGHTS FOCUS

Freedom of expression and opinion

YOU'LL NEED

Screen, speakers and internet access

A selection of poet performances [amnesty.org.uk/poets](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/poets)

Notebooks or folders of students' poetry from previous sessions

STARTER

Give students time to read and reflect on the poetry they have created in previous sessions. Which poem resonates with them the most?

Ask:

- Was it difficult or easy to select one poem?
- Why do they feel strongly about this poem?
- Would they feel comfortable sharing it with others?

Tell the class that poetry can be both personal and public. Performance poetry is a public and powerful way to get your voice heard and deliver your message.

Explain that, in small groups, they will explore how to perform a poem of their own. Give them time to reflect on the last question: Would they feel comfortable sharing their chosen poem with others? If not, ask them to select another poem they do feel able to read out.

ACTIVITY 1

Watch a selection of performances by poets and spoken word artists at [amnesty.org.uk/poets](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/poets). Students can read the poem handouts first to explore the different effects of reading poetry compared to listening to poetry read by the poet. Ask the class to look at the ways each poet has chosen to perform their poem. Afterwards discuss:

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

ACTIVITY 2

In small groups of two or three, give students time to share their poetry with one another and to practice performing their poems.

- How will they use their body to communicate? For example, make facial expressions and body movements work with the rhythms and emotions of the poem.
- How will they use their voice to convey the message? For example, speed up, slow down, be loud or quiet, pause to convey emotion or tension, and use emphasis on important words.

Ask if anyone is willing to perform their poem for the class. What was it like to watch or perform? How did it make them feel?

EXTENSION

With teacher support, ask students to think about how to showcase their poetry at school. For example: a display of written work, filming and sharing poetry performances, a performance event, a poetry slam event.

RIGHT TO BE

By Amy León

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

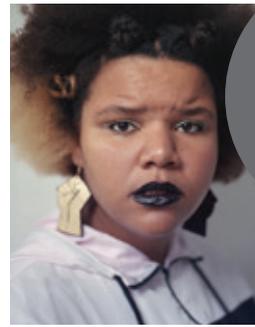
Limbs swaying in the wind
To the sound of crimson
Drowning the sea
Setting my people free

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

Film clips of all the poem handouts are available at [amnesty.org.uk/poets](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/poets)

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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POEMS

AND THAT'S THE THING ABOUT IGNORANCE

By Yrsa Daley-Ward

and that's the thing about ignorance
It can seem a lot like an innocent joke
or
it can look a lot like the law

that's the thing about ignorance
it can feel a lot like oppression
it can feel a lot like fear

and that's the thing about fear
you can feel it around your neck
you can hear it tell you things

that's the thing about words
they can put you out on the street
they can meet you in an alley

they can be sharp things
they can look a lot like blood
they can strike you, knock you down

that's the thing about hands
they can be hands
or they can be fists
you decide

that's the thing about ignorance
it's a choice,
and it's yours
every time.



POEMS

WHAT SCARES YOU

By Patrick Cash

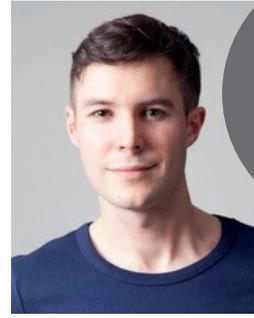
What scares me is the night
A man named Ian Baynham died
He punched to the ground
And kicked in the head
For holding his love's hand

I stood at his vigil
Ten thousand candles alight
I thought to myself:
"It's scary, but maybe
I need to know how to fight"

What scares me is not pop
What scares me is people
Who pretend pop is the world
That there exists nothing
But sex, dance and Rihanna

What scares me is Finland
Sterilising trans people
Russia's law to gag its gays
Tyson Fury's words
Mike Pence and Rees-Mogg

Voices spreading hate
In the genuine belief
That they are doing right
But I'll say this once tonight
If it scares you, we fight



POEMS

THE FAMILY MYSTERY

By Dean Atta

Uncle Dean, sing!
Uncle Dean, dance!
Requests Arinna

Whizzing round the room
Fizz-footing and low-looping
Between the legs of adults

She is holding a doll
of Poppy from the movie Trolls
that sings “Get Back Up Again”

Her sister Andia is almost
Crawling, holding herself
Up on hands and knees

She is jiggling back and forth
With a green teething toy
Clamped between her gums

They are both wearing white
Dresses with black dots
Like two frilly Dalmatians

Matching outfits in different sizes
Bought by grandma, my mum
Who loves to shop for clothes

Sniff sniff, accuses grandma
Sniff sniff, investigates mum
My sister, who checks to see

Who needs their nappy
Changed and I don't confess
That I have farted.



POEMS

THROUGH MY WINDOW

By Valerie Bloom

There's food on the table, a family sits down to eat,
There are crisp roast potatoes, vegetables and meat,
Afterwards there's ice-cream the mother's made for a treat,
That's what I see through my window.

The door opens and the family goes outside,
The children play on the swings and the slide,
The parents watch them, with love and with pride,
That's what I see through my window.

The father dandles the baby on his knee,
The two boys are playing monopoly,
The mother and daughter are watching TV
That's what I see through my window.

The family sits in a circle on the floor,
The father's reading a story they might have heard before,
For the little one is sleeping, you can hear his gentle snore,
That's what I see through my window.

The family's well fed, the baby's not screaming,
It's not cold and damp, the walls are not streaming,
My father is free, "and I'm not day-dreaming",
Whenever I look through my window.



POEMS

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I am a hymn
I refuse to play for a stranger's God,

//

Our words are mirrors shedding skin into glass
so thin they shimmer like strings breaking into
a thousand tints

/

I am the son of a mother who flew
across the oceans
to marry their silence

I am the son of a mother who flew
across the oceans
who needs to learn to speak for a
broken tongue

I am the son of a mother who is the
daughter of a mother
who all pray
that someday
their children will be full on voices

A BABY'S SHOE

By Valerie Bloom

Today I saw a baby's shoe
Drifting on the wave,
And knew another boat had sunk,
And there was none to save.

Today I saw a baby's shoe,
Washed up on the shore,
And knew someone trying to escape
Would not try anymore.

Today I saw a baby's shoe
Abandoned on the sand,
And knew someone else had perished
Without a helping hand.

Today I saw a baby's shoe,
Flotsam on the beach,
And knew that someone else had died,
Freedom just out of reach.

Today I held a baby's shoe,
In sorrow and misery,
I gave up my place on the boat last night
For a mother and her baby.



POEMS

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Make a Difference in a Minute

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Everyone Who Cares by Sarah Crossan

Your Moment by Inja

And That's The Thing About Ignorance by Yrsa Daley-Ward

What Scares You by Patrick Cash

The Family Mystery by Dean Atta

Through My Window by Valerie Bloom

I by Mukahang Limbu

A Baby's Shoe by Valerie Bloom