



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 Black/White by Amyra 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 Amyra 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 Amyra 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 Amyra 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 **Amyra 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

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 Amyra León © Amyra León, from Here I Stand, Walker, 2016.

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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 Film BBC Cymru Wales on

YouTube. Darling by Amyra León © Amyra León, from Here I Stand, Walker, 2016.