

# WORDS THAT BURN



being heard • being me • freedom  
dignity • power • words that burn

A resource to enable young people to  
explore human rights and self-expression  
through poetry.

'Poetry is thoughts that breathe  
and words that burn.'  
THOMAS GRAY



In association with Cheltenham Festivals

# Introduction

Poetry and spoken word are powerful ways to understand and respond to the world, to voice thoughts and ideas, to reach into ourselves and reach out.

Human rights belong to all of us but are frequently denied or abused even in the UK. Poets are often the first to articulate this in a way to make us think and to inspire action. Perhaps this explains why they're often among the first to be silenced by oppressive regimes.

Amnesty International is the world's largest human rights organisation with seven million supporters. We've produced this resource to enable young people to explore human rights through poetry whilst developing their voice and skills as poets.

The resource was inspired by the poetry anthology *Words that Burn* curated by Josephine Hart of The Poetry Hour, which in turn was inspired by the words of Thomas Gray (cover). The essence of these words shaped this resource, which aims to provide the creative oxygen to give young people the confidence to express themselves through poetry, to stand up and make a difference, and to know that their voice matters.

## ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

There are 10 sessions, accompanied by poems and a PowerPoint. In each, students explore work from different poets and develop their own writing style.

Every term a briefing will be provided to enable students to take action on an up-to-date human rights case or issue. Students can write solidarity or protest poems for that issue or person, and Amnesty will forward them on. To access the briefing see [www.amnesty.org.uk/wordsthatburn](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/wordsthatburn)

We suggest reading all the sessions so you can adapt them to suit your class. They can be taught separately but also form a secure unit of work in which students can build their own poetry anthology. We recommend providing each student with a notebook or folder and encouraging them to jot down personal responses, thoughts and creative writing (that teachers do not mark).

The materials have been written for use in Lower Secondary (Year 7 to 9 in England and Wales; Secondary 1 to 2 in Scotland; Year 8 to 10 in Northern Ireland) and Upper Secondary (Year 10 to 11 in England and Wales; Secondary 3 to 4 in Scotland; Year 11 to 12 in Northern Ireland); Further education, Years 12-13 in England and Wales, Years 13-14 in Northern Ireland and Secondary 5-6 in Scotland.

Copyrights and credits for poems and film clips used are added as appendices at the end of this document.

This resource has been produced by Amnesty International UK in cooperation with the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education. We would like to thank Cheltenham Festivals and Barnwood Park Arts College, Cleeve School, Gloucestershire Hospital Education Service and Severn Vale School for piloting this resource, and The Poetry Hour for their support.

'Josephine Hart described poetry as a route map through life. She said "Without poetry, life would have been less bearable, less comprehensible and infinitely less enjoyable". It would be her sincere wish that this Amnesty resource will prove to be first steps on a happier journey through life for many. It has been carefully and lovingly created to help young people understand the world around them through reading, writing and performing poetry. Every poem, every classroom activity, encourages understanding of the beauty of language. Young people's thoughts will breathe and their words will burn.'

**Maurice Saatchi, The Poetry Hour**

**Please note:** this resource asks students to explore human rights themes and their own lives. Some activities may be uncomfortable or upsetting for them, and they may write about personal experiences they have not shared before. Respond to students' reactions, questions and poetry in a way that supports self-expression and debate, and in line with your Safeguarding policy.

# Contents

## **being heard**

In an inspiring documentary, talented spoken-word artists reveal their urge to write. Students explore the right to freedom of expression and create similes and metaphors for freedom after reading a selection of thought-provoking human rights poetry.

## **being me**

On film, Dean Atta shows there are many ways to be a poet. After reading and discussing his poem I Come From, which raises interesting questions about identity, students collaborate to tell their own stories.

## **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.

## **dignity**

Students read poems about equality and discrimination – and can watch performances by the poets bringing their words to life. This will inspire them to write a poem from the perspective of someone who has experience hate crime.

## **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 poems.

## **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 International's Make a Difference in a Minute challenge – to perform a human rights poem in one minute. Challenge your students to do this too.

## **Coming soon**

**change**

**witness**

**speak up**

**respect**



## being heard

People create poetry to express themselves and get their voices heard. In an inspiring documentary, talented spoken-word artists reveal their urge to write. Students explore the right to freedom of expression and create similes and metaphors for freedom after reading a selection of thought-provoking human rights poetry.



# being heard

## AIMS

- To question 'what is poetry?'
- To understand that freedom of expression is a human right
- To explore human rights in poetry and collaborate on a freedom poem

## HUMAN RIGHTS FOCUS

Freedom of expression

## YOU'LL NEED

PowerPoint, speakers and internet access

Flipchart and marker pens

Coloured pens

Post-it notes

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

### Film clip

The Poets Will Be Heard by BBC Radio 1Xtra  
([vimeo.com/136702949](https://vimeo.com/136702949))

### Poems

Gingerbread Man by Joseph Coelho  
Russian Doll by Rachel Rooney  
First They Came by Martin Niemöller  
My Lover Is a Woman by Pat Parker  
Sally Size Zero by Grace Nichols  
Cutbacks by Sarah Crossan  
Song of Myself by Walt Whitman  
Apologia by Oscar Wilde  
Encounter with Freedom by Elsa Wiesel

### Extension

Resource Sheet 1 Encounter with Freedom

## STARTER

Show slide 2. Ask the class to complete this sentence, Poetry is... Scribe their responses. Show the opening 3 minutes 45 seconds of The Poets Will Be Heard documentary by BBC Radio 1 Xtra, which explores the spoken word scene (slide 3).

- What surprised you in the documentary?
- Did it challenge any of your initial responses to poetry?
- Do you want to add words or phrases to the flipchart?
- Do you want to change any of them? Why?

## ACTIVITY 1

Arrange students into groups. Give each group one of the following poems and coloured pens. Select poems as appropriate to your class.

Gingerbread Man by Joseph Coelho  
Russian Doll by Rachel Rooney  
First They Came by Martin Niemöller  
My Lover Is a Woman by Pat Parker  
Sally Size Zero by Grace Nichols  
Cutbacks by Sarah Crossan  
Song of Myself by Walt Whitman  
Apologia by Oscar Wilde

Ask each group to:

- Read their poem.
- Highlight or underline words and phrases that stand out, even if they don't know why.
- Establish its general meaning.

Now ask the groups to discuss:

- What did you notice?
- What do you like/dislike about your poem?
- Is there anything that puzzles you?
- Do you notice any patterns, pace, rhythm?
- Who might be speaking?
- What experiences are they trying to convey?
- Does the poem trigger any feelings in you?
- What parts do you relate to?

Show slide 4. Explain students are now going to perform their poems out loud. They need to think about volume, tone, use of rhythm, position in the room, number of people speaking. Give them time to prepare their performance.

Use their performance to discuss ways poetry can be used as vehicle for self-exploration and self-expression.

## ACTIVITY 2

Show slide 5. Explain that being able to express ourselves freely is an important human right but for some people this right is denied. For instance:

Nadia Anjuman, from Afghanistan, was killed by her husband in 2005 for writing poetry which described the oppression of Afghan women. Jack Mapanje was imprisoned in 1987 by the Malawi government for his poetry.

For more information see: [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com) (search 'Afghan poet dies after beating by husband') and [www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com) (search 'Jack Mapanje free at last').

Show Encounter with Freedom by Elsa Wiesel with an illustration by Choi Jung-In (slide 6), taken from Amnesty International's book *Dreams of Freedom*. Read out the poem to the class.

Hand out post-it notes and ask students to write their own simile or metaphor for freedom, as Elsa Wiesel does in her poem. Model what similes and metaphors are using the poem if necessary.

Stick the post-it notes up. Are there any common images or themes? Can students suggest categories? Invite volunteers to group and order the lines to form a poem.

## EXTENSION

Ask students to write their own poem about freedom and illustrate it. Create a display around the Elsa Wiesel spread (Resource Sheet 1).

## GINGERBREAD MAN

By Joseph Coelho

Billy chased me round the playground  
with hands full of fists.

Billy yelled at me across the football pitch  
with a mouth full of stings.

Billy spat, jibed and cawed  
as I ran away singing...

'You can't catch me, I'm the gingerbread man.'

Billy had red hair.  
I was cruel and called him names.



© Ellie Kurttz

POEMS



## SALLY SIZE ZERO

By Grace Nichols

*Sally Size-Zero*

*Sally Size-Zero*

Where did she go?

Everyone searched high

Everyone searched low

But could find no trace

Of Sally Size-Zero

Once she used to glow

With a spring in her step

And a sway of her torso

Loved a laugh and a latté

At café Nero

To her friends she was a hero

Until she decided to be a size-zero

Sally Size-Zero

Sally Size-Zero

Where did she go?

Her mother shook out

The bed-clothes to find her –

But couldn't glimpse a wisp or a toe

All that rolled out was a great big zero.



POEMS

## RUSSIAN DOLL

By Rachel Rooney

All you see is outside me: my painted smile,  
The rosy-posy shell, the fluttery eyes.  
A butter-won't-melt-in-my-mouth-type me

But inside there's another me, bored till playtime.  
The wasting paper, daytime dreamer.  
A can't-be-bothered-sort-of-me.

And inside me there's another me, full of cheek.  
The quick, slick joker with a poking tongue.  
A class-clown-funny-one-of me

And inside there's another me who's smaller, scared.  
The scurrying, worrying, yes miss whisperer.  
A wouldn't-say-boo-to-a-goosey me

And inside there's another me, all cross and bothered.  
The scowling hot-head, stamping feet.  
A didn't-do-it-blameless me

And inside there's another me, forever jealous  
who never gets enough, compared.  
A grass-is-always-greener me

And deepest down, kept secretly  
a tiny, solid skittle doll.  
The girl that hides inside of me.



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

## (from) MY LOVER IS A WOMAN

By Pat Parker

I.

my lover is a woman  
& when i hold her  
feel her warmth  
    i feel good  
    feel safe

then—i never think of  
my family's voices  
never hear my sisters say  
bulldaggers, queers, funny  
    come see us, but don't  
    bring your friends  
        it's ok with us,  
        but don't tell mama  
        it'd break her heart  
never feel my father  
turn in his grave  
never hear my mother cry  
Lord, what kind of child is this?



© Martha Dunham

POEMS

## CUTBACKS

By Sarah Crossan

It starts with no more nights out at the movie theatre,  
no new clothes or money for restaurants.  
It starts out with regular cutbacks  
that none of us notice all that much.

But  
then it's no money for gas and no money for meat  
and no money for any treats  
or frittering  
except healthcare  
because  
Mom  
won't skimp  
on that.

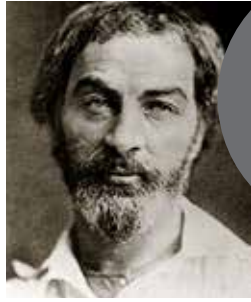


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POEMS

## (from) SONG OF MYSELF (1892 version)

By **Walt Whitman**



POEMS

1

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,  
And what I assume you shall assume,  
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,  
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air,  
Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their parents the same,  
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,  
Hoping to cease not till death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,  
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,  
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,  
Nature without check with original energy.

## APOLOGIA

By **Oscar Wilde**

Is it thy will that I should wax and wane,  
Barter my cloth of gold for hodden grey,  
And at thy pleasure weave that web of pain  
Whose brightest threads are each a wasted day?

Is it thy will That my Soul's House should be a tortured spot  
Wherein, like evil paramours, must dwell  
The quenchless flame, the worm that dieth not?

Nay, if it be thy will I shall endure,  
And sell ambition at the common mart,  
And let dull failure be my vestiture,  
And sorrow dig its grave within my heart.

Perchance it may be better so I have not made my heart a heart of stone,  
Nor starved my boyhood of its goodly feast,  
Nor walked where Beauty is a thing unknown.

Many a man hath done so; sought to fence  
In straitened bonds the soul that should be free,  
Trodden the dusty road of common sense,  
While all the forest sang of liberty,

Not marking how the spotted hawk in flight  
Passed on wide pinion through the lofty air,  
To where the steep untrodden mountain height  
Caught the last tresses of the Sun God's hair.

Or how the little flower he trod upon,  
The daisy, that white-feathered shield of gold,  
Followed with wistful eyes the wandering sun  
Content if once its leaves were aureoled.

But surely it is something to have been  
The best beloved for a little while,  
To have walked hand in hand with Love, and seen  
His purple wings flit once across thy smile.

Ay! though the gorgèd asp of passion feed  
On my boy's heart, yet have I burst the bars,  
Stood face to face with Beauty, known indeed  
The Love which moves the Sun and all the stars!



POEMS

## ENCOUNTER WITH FREEDOM

By Elsa Wiesel

Like an enormous wave  
that lies down over my heart.  
Like the stunning beauty of the wind over the pines.  
Like an immense, vital heartbeat.  
Like the moon and the river trapped by love.  
Like all the dreams in the space of the eyes.  
Like a fistful of infinite light.  
That is the way I love freedom!



CC Patty P

POEMS





Like an enormous wave  
that lies down over my heart.  
Like the stunning beauty of the wind over the pines.  
Like an immense, vital heartbeat.  
Like the moon and the river trapped by love.  
Like all the dreams in the space of the eyes.  
Like a fistful of infinite light.  
That is the way I love freedom!

ELSA WIEZELL

Choi Jung-In

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## COPYRIGHTS AND CREDITS

### Film

The Poets Will be Heard, BBC Radio 1Xtra, part of their 'Words First' season, 2015.

### Poems

Gingerbread Man from Werewolf Club Rules by Joseph Coelho © Frances Lincoln Ltd, 2014.

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Russian Doll from The Language of Cat by Rachel Rooney © Frances Lincoln Ltd, 2011.

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My Lover Is a Woman by Pat Parker © Anastasia Dunham-Parker-Brady [www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/my-lover-woman](http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/my-lover-woman)

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Apologia by Oscar Wilde

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Nash. Illustration © Choi Jung-In from Dreams of Freedom by Amnesty International, Frances Lincoln Children's Books, 2015.



## being me

On film, Dean Atta shows there are many ways to be a poet. After reading and discussing his poem *I Come From*, which raises interesting questions about identity, students collaborate to tell their own stories.



# being me

## AIMS

- To understand that we all have human rights
- To read and discuss poems about identity
- To celebrate and write about our identities

## HUMAN RIGHTS FOCUS

Freedom of expression and identity

## YOU'LL NEED

PowerPoint, speakers and internet access

Highlighter pens

Strips of paper, sheets of paper, sticky tack

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

### Film clip

How To Be A Poet by Dean Atta (on PowerPoint)

### Poem

I Come From by Dean Atta (one per student)

### Extension

Song of Myself by Walt Whitman

## STARTER

Discuss who poets are.

- Can you name any? • What image comes to mind when you think of a poet?
- Are you a poet? (The answer is yes!)

Watch How To Be A Poet by Dean Atta (slide 2).

- Why should poets be free to express themselves?
- What do you think about poets and poetry now?

## ACTIVITY 1

Ask students to read I Come From by Dean Atta. Encourage them to highlight or circle words and phrases that stand out as important or powerful, even if they don't know why, and to note down thoughts or questions.

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 does the poem tell us about the poet?
- What experiences is he trying to convey?
- How have the different parts of Dean's life contributed to who he is?
- Do you get a sense of the person he is?
- Does it trigger any feelings in you?
- Do you relate to anything in the poem?

Ask the class to think about what has shaped who they are. This could be a special memory, person, relationship, place, object, food, music, sport, fear, desire or formative experience – things that have played a part in their growing. You can model or encourage mind mapping for support if necessary.

On a strip of paper, ask each student to write 'I come from...', and complete the sentence (slide 3).

Divide the class into groups of four. Ask them to organise their strips of paper into the verse of a poem, adding extra strips if needed. This creates a collaborative poem which embodies and values who they all are as individuals. Stick the strips onto a piece of paper.

As a class, ask groups to read out their poem. Stick them on the board and discuss a sequence to create a class poem.

- Does it work?
- Why?
- What feeling does it leave the class with?

## ACTIVITY 2

Ask students to write their own 'I Come From' poems. Model or encourage mind mapping for support if necessary.

While students are writing, create your own poem on the board or using a visualiser so that they can see you being a poet too. Show that crossing out, editing and rewriting is part of the writing.

Ask how the students felt writing about themselves and their identity. Share your experience. Did it feel safe or create a sense of vulnerability?

Look again at your poem and Dean Atta's poem. Can you identify any human rights being enjoyed and denied in them? How does this make you feel?

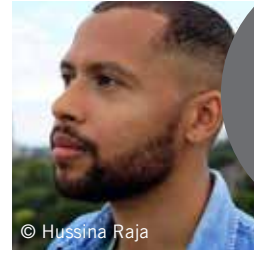
Hand out notebooks/folders for students to keep their poetry in.

## EXTENSION

Ask students to read Song of Myself by Walt Whitman, then write a short poem starting with Walt's first line 'I celebrate myself, and sing myself'. The poem should use the first person and the present tense and celebrate who they are.

## I COME FROM

By Dean Atta



POEMS

I come from shepherd's pie and Sunday roast  
Jerk chicken and stuffed vine leaves  
I come from travelling through my taste buds but loving where I live

I come from a home that some would call broken  
I come from D.I.Y. that never got done  
I come from waiting by the phone for him to call

I come from waving the white flag to loneliness  
I come from the rainbow flag and the union jack  
I come from a British passport and an ever-ready suitcase

I come from jet fuel and fresh coconut water  
I come from crossing oceans to find myself  
I come from deep issues and shallow solutions

I come from a limited vocabulary but an unrestricted imagination  
I come from a decent education and a marvellous mother  
I come from being given permission to dream but choosing to wake up instead

I come from wherever I lay my head  
I come from unanswered questions and unread books  
Unnoticed effort and undelivered apologies and thanks

I come from who I trust and who I have left  
I come from last year and last year and I don't notice how I've changed  
I come from looking in the mirror and looking online to find myself

I come from stories, myths, legends and folk tales  
I come from lullabies and pop songs, Hip Hop and poetry  
I come from griots, grandmothers and her-story tellers

I come from published words and strangers' smiles  
I come from my own pen but I see people torn apart like paper  
Each a story or poem that never made it into a book.



## (from) SONG OF MYSELF (1892 version)

By **Walt Whitman**

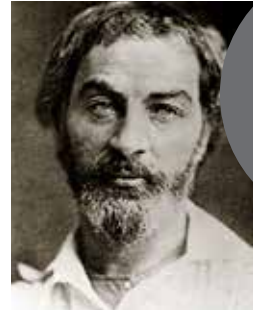
1

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,  
And what I assume you shall assume,  
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,  
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air,  
Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their parents the same,  
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,  
Hoping to cease not till death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,  
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,  
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,  
Nature without check with original energy.  
Her mother shook out  
The bed-clothes to find her –  
But couldn't glimpse a wisp or a toe  
All that rolled out was a great big zero.



POEMS



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### **Film**

How To Be A Poet by Dean Atta © Raise the Bar, 2016.

### **Poems**

I Come From by Dean Atta © Dean Atta.

Song of Myself by Walt Whitman



# 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](https://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](http://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](http://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.



## 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](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/universal)

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. On the left side, there is a light gray shaded area that tapers towards the bottom. The rest of the page is white and contains no text or other markings.



**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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© Marcus Bleasdale for Human Rights Watch

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. On the left side, there is a light gray shaded area that tapers towards the bottom. The rest of the page is white with evenly spaced horizontal lines.



This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. On the left side, there is a light gray shaded area that tapers towards the bottom. The rest of the page is white and contains no text or other markings.

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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](http://www.thehypertexts.com)) on educational pages about the Holocaust and Nakba.



# dignity

Students read poems about equality and discrimination – and can watch performances by the poets bringing their words to life. This will inspire them to write a poem from the perspective of someone who has experienced hate crime.



# dignity

## AIMS

- To understand social justice issues and human rights in the UK
- To read poems which speak powerfully on equality and discrimination
- To create a poem from the perspective of someone who has experienced hate crime

## HUMAN RIGHTS FOCUS

Right to equality, dignity and safety

## YOU'LL NEED

PowerPoint, speakers and internet access

Scrap paper (one per student, to scrunch up and throw)

Computer or mobile device with speakers (one per group)

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

Resource Sheet 1 Universal Declaration of Human Rights summary version  
(one per group)

Resource Sheet 2 Hate crime in the UK case studies (one case study per student)

## Film clip

Jan's story (on PowerPoint)

## Poems

Take Up Space by Vanessa Kisuule (Women's rights)

A Gay Poem by Keith Jarrett (LGBTI rights)

Foreign by Hollie McNish (Xenophobia)

Being British by Deanna Rodger (Racism)

Bedecked by Victoria Redel (Gender)

Back in the Playground Blues by Adrian Mitchell (Children's rights)

This is not a humanizing poem by Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan (Islamophobia)

Poems with Disabilities by Jim Ferris (Disability)

Glasgow Snow by Jackie Kay (Refugee rights)

Dwellings by Sarah Crossan (Social and economic rights)

I Am A Man by Jay Hulme (Trans rights)

## STARTER

Explain to the class that they are about to undertake a short experiment in social justice.

- The classroom represents a country.
- Each of them represent a citizen in the country.
- Each of them wants to thrive in life.

Ask what we need to thrive in life (eg education, healthcare, housing, employment). Give each student a scrap piece of paper and instruct them to scrunch it into a ball. Explain that the ball represents opportunity. Place a recycling bin at the front of the room. Students must each remain seated and try to throw their ball in the bin. Explain that to access the opportunities discussed their ball must land in the bin.

- Did everyone manage to get their ball in the bin?
- Did anyone feel disadvantaged because of where they were sitting?
- Did anyone complain about the disadvantages faced by some? Where were they sitting?
- How does this reflect the reality outside of the classroom? In the UK? In the world?
- Do you think everyone should have equal access to opportunities?
- What opportunities should be protected by law?

## ACTIVITY 1

Watch the film Jan's story (slide 2). **Teacher note** Jan suffered from multiple sclerosis and used the Human Rights Act in the UK to secure a better quality of life for herself.

Show slide 3. Explain human rights are universal and that many people in the UK enjoy most of their rights – yet violations do still take place here.

Arrange students into groups. Give each group one of the following poems and explain that each one addresses a human rights theme.

Students can watch powerful performances by most of the poets bringing their words to life.

[Take Up Space by Vanessa Kisuule \(Women's Rights\)](#) (YouTube, search 'Take up Space exclusive')

[A Gay Poem by Keith Jarrett \(LGBTI Rights\)](#) (YouTube, search 'A Gay Poem TSC')

[Foreign by Hollie McNish \(Xenophobia\)](#) (YouTube, search 'Foreign Hollie')

[Being British by Deanna Rodger \(Racism\)](#) (YouTube, search 'Deanna Tilt Spokenwd')

[Back in the Playground Blues by Adrian Mitchell \(Children's rights\)](#) (YouTube, search 'Back in the Playground Blues')

[This is not a humanizing poem by Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan \(Islamaphobia\)](#) (YouTube, search 'This is not a humanising poem Roundhouse')

[Glasgow Snow by Jackie Kay \(Refugee rights\)](#) (YouTube, search 'Jackie Kay stop destitution')

[Dwellings by Sarah Crossan \(Social and economic rights\)](#) ([www.clpe.org.uk/files/sarah-crossan-dwellings](http://www.clpe.org.uk/files/sarah-crossan-dwellings))

[I Am A Man by Jay Hulme \(Trans Rights\)](#) (YouTube, search 'Jay Hulme SLAMBassadors the poetry society')

Now ask the group to discuss:

- What did you notice?
- What did you like/dislike?
- Is there anything that puzzles you?
- Did you notice any patterns? Pace? Rhythm?
- Who might be speaking?
- What experiences are they trying to convey?
- Does it trigger any feelings in you?
- Do you relate to anything in the poem?
- Did it make a difference seeing the poet perform their own words? How? Why?

Hand out Research Sheet 1 Universal Declaration of Human Rights summary version to each group, and ask them to identify human rights articles violated in their poem.

Explain that in 1948, in the wake of World War II, world leaders created the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which declares we are all equal. It contains 30 articles that set out the rights every human should have. They include our freedom of religion and belief, our right to be treated fairly and without discrimination, and our right to have a family and spend time with whoever we choose.

## ACTIVITY 2

Ask the class:

- Who should be responsible for protecting our human rights?
- What can we do if our rights are not being upheld?
- What protects our rights in the UK?

Hand out Resource Sheet 2 Hate crime in the UK case studies. Please check suitability for your class. Explain that each student will write a poem in the first person from the perspective of the person in the case.

Encourage students to pick out words and phrases from the case sheet to use or adapt. Show slide 4. Use mind-maps or post-it notes to imagine:

- 1 What that person is feeling
- 2 What they are thinking
- 3 What the person wants to happen next

Poems should be three stanzas addressing the above.

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 students to add poems to their notebook/folder.

### **EXTENSION**

Explain the art and rise of performance poetry. In groups, ask students to make a short film of themselves reading or performing their poem.

## TAKE UP SPACE

By Vanessa Kisuule

Take up space  
Don't wait for permission or approval  
Don't let ghostly question marks  
Haunt the ends of your sentences  
You don't always have to be the one  
Laughing at the jokes  
You can make them, too  
And not just about sex or diets or tampons  
You are not the wing tip tick on a quota list  
A fleeting footnote on the final page  
A decorative nod to 'equality' on the stage  
Push at the brackets choking your voice  
Your potential cannot be pressed  
Between thumb and forefinger anymore  
Take up space  
Wear pink skirts or black Doc Martens  
Know that souls can dance unchecked  
Beneath the fortress of a burka  
As well as baggy t-shirts and ripped jeans  
Shave your legs or don't  
Smile from ear to ear or don't  
Liberation has no dress code  
Etiquette or secret dialect  
Give yourself the space to be fickle  
To fumble with your faith, to fail  
To fluff up your lines and make things up  
Your shabby, slipped stitch mistakes  
Make you miraculous  
A goddess of spit and sweat  
Stumbling in a pit of phoenix ashes  
Take up space  
Believe the compliments you are given  
Give yourself the benefit of the doubt  
Don't doubt the benefits  
Of being the brightest shade of you  
On the spectrum  
You  
You with the slouching shoulders prone to shrugs  
And the throat full of half formed whispers  
You are indispensable  
Celebrate the women you share life, love, liquor  
Or the occasional tube journey with



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POEMS

Exchange small smiles like a secret handshake  
 We are walking pillars of defiance  
 In every exhale of breath  
 And assured step of foot towards threshold  
 Run your tongue along the swords  
 Of the women who fought before us  
 Wear the legacy like a pair of box fresh trainers  
 Lean in close  
 Rest your head on each other's shoulders  
 The journey has been long  
 But now you can  
 Take up space  
 In any way you choose  
 Maybe you will knock patiently at the door  
 Or flex your knuckles  
 Before karate kicking it down  
 It does not matter  
 As long as you know that you  
 Don't belong outside  
 In the chill of indifference and fear  
 Don't wear your body  
 As if this sacred package of skin  
 And nerves and blood rush restlessnes  
 Were an accident, a graceless misstep of fate or fortune  
 When you hold yourself with joy and purpose  
 No misguided man can ever  
 Make a wounded elegy of your flesh  
 Step into the room  
 When asked for your name  
 Pronounce it with all the music  
 You can squeeze from its syllables  
 Don't shrink yourself  
 Like a slither of self loathing soap  
 When you walk down the street  
 Don't cower in anticipation of cat calls and stares  
 It is they who should skulk  
 And slouch and shrivel in shame  
 Not you  
 You go ahead  
 And take up some more space  
 Laugh for longer and louder  
 Than what's deemed appropriate  
 Let your cackles rise up into the sky  
 Like a chorus of homesick angels  
 When your favourite song comes on  
 Don't be fearful of an empty dance floor

Unzip the stillness with your teeth  
Let rip the punk rock in your gut  
The hunger of your castanet hips  
Eat with relish  
Chase at every stray crumb with your fork  
Lick the icing off each prong  
With ironic porn star gusto  
The revolution starts small  
At your dining table  
The newsagents  
The Friday night club queue  
Your mirror reflection  
Take up space  
Love beyond the confines of your arm span  
Learn wider than the textbooks on your shelves  
So as the world oils the hinges of its doors for us  
We can take our rightful place  
Behind the steering wheel of the future  
And finally, rightfully, gloriously  
Take up space



## POEMS

## A GAY POEM

By Keith Jarrett

They asked me if I had a gay poem  
So I said "Straight up, no!  
"My words don't deviate between straight lines  
My poems don't mince their words  
Or bend  
Or make queer little observations"

They asked me if I had a gay poem  
So I answered honestly  
That, no, I didn't have any gay poetry  
And even if, unthinkable, I did  
What would it say about me?

I mean, even presenting the question  
Puts me in a precarious position  
And how would I even begin to broach the subject  
With my own creation?

Like... "Excuse me, poem, are you gay?  
Have you grown up contrarily to what I wanted you to say?  
I most certainly didn't write you that way  
Was it something I said, something I did that turned you?  
Maybe I should have peppered your verses  
With sport, girls and beer  
Maybe as your author I deserted you...  
Or did another writer turn you queer?"

Ok, let's say, hypothetically, that this poem is gay  
Maybe it's just a confused poem that needs straightening out  
Maybe I could insert verses from Leviticus  
Speak over it in tongues  
Douse it in holy water  
Recite it the Qu'ran  
Give it a beat, beat, beat  
Boom box blasting out in the street  
"Batty poem fi dead, batty poem fi dead  
Rip up chi chi poem inna shred"

They asked me if I had a gay poem  
And I answered "No"  
But the truth is I didn't know  
Until one of my very own poems stepped up



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POEMS



And tapped me on the shoulder  
 It said, "Look here Dad/Author  
 I'm now that much bolder  
 And I'm not confused  
 And not alternative  
 And even though the words I choose to marry with  
 Make me different  
 It don't make me any less eloquent

"I don't need to be overly elegant  
 So maybe that's why I stepped under your gaydar  
 But why are you so afraid to embrace it?  
 Face it! It's just another part of me  
 You can't erase it

"The more you try to label me with your twisted synonyms  
 The more you say you hate the sinner  
 And despise the sin  
 The more you try to clip my words  
 And stifle my expression  
 The more I know it's you, not me,  
 Whose morality should be called into question"

They asked me to read out a poem  
 They said, "Choose one of your strongest  
 One of your best  
 Choose a poem that don't stand for any foolishness"  
 And they asked me if I had a gay poem...  
 So I said  
 Yes.



© Paul Newbon

## FOREIGN

By **Hollie McNish**

I find it strange when people complain about foreign people in the UK so much  
and ignore all the foreign stuff that we use.  
I find it strange the way we treat foreign people and families so differently than the  
way we  
treat foreign money or products or food,  
Let foreign ships sail to our shores filled with things we can take  
But turn them away if the foreign people who make them want to come too.  
I find it strange we're ok with chewing on foreign food  
Chinese carry out bags and Indian too,  
kebabs and pizzerias and foreign tropical fruit juice.  
We're ok with eating foreign sugar cane sugary treats,  
Munching on foreign cocoa bean chocolaty sweets,  
Complaining between every bite about the foreign folk down our street.  
We're ok with wearing foreign clothes,  
Stuff we love to buy cheap because foreign wages are so low,  
Our whole household comes from Shanghai and Tokyo and I know,  
that we're ok with driving foreign cars, so fast,  
filling up our buses with foreign petrol piped from their parts,  
foreign heating gas extracted by digging up their plants,  
watching foreign TVs as we sit on our starts complaining to each other about the  
foreigners in  
our kid's class.  
We're ok with going on holiday to a foreign beach,  
lying in foreign sunshine,  
swimming in foreign seas,  
sipping sangrias and Cuban cocktails much as we please.  
We're ok with using foreign places to get away from UK rainy days,  
watching programmes on TV showing British families as brave,  
buying cheaper foreign properties and showing what they save,  
we're buying up entire Polish villages for English resorts and greasy spoon beach  
breaks,  
complaining in Spain there's no ketchup with the chips and covering Ibiza's shores  
with booze  
and teenage sick as we complain about the foreigners that come to us to work and  
live.  
We're ok with buying foreign goods we love to from abroad, then dumping all our  
rubbish on  
foreign people's shores,

filling foreign landfills over-spilling with our household cans complaining about the  
 foreign  
 people with accents we can't understand  
 and how our British culture is being killed by the foreign man  
 and all the foreign families  
 While we keep eating our Ugandan chocolate treats,  
 Keep watching our Chinese TV, our Korean MP3, our Taiwanese DVD,  
 posing in our Indonesian jeans,  
 going on holiday in our Spanish seas,  
 biting down on our scones and jam and cream,  
 sipping at what we proudly call our English Breakfast tea, forgetting as we sip that  
 those are  
 Indian leaves, made from Indian seeds, shipped across in ships that sail from  
 Indian seas.  
 So please, do not tell me foreign people are a burden to our economy, I feel it's  
 time we sipped  
 a little bit of our hypocrisy and thought about how differently we treat the  
 nationality of  
 Foreign money, products, goods and food to  
 Foreign people and their families.

## BEING BRITISH

By Deanna Rodger

I always get asked,  
'Where do you come from?'  
My repeated reply is  
'London.'

The town that sheltered a mother fleeing from war-torn land,  
baby in belly given chance to be a man,  
a city of prosperity.  
She sought jobs allowing her to keep her dignity, independently  
living in a state,  
not off it.  
Her benefit,  
one son,  
a bright boy of renewable energy.  
He knew all he'd ever be  
was a product of the city that changed his destiny.'

'OK,'  
they say,  
'but what country?'  
I breathe deeply,

swallowing sarcastic syllables, and exhale,  
'Great Britain.  
The island  
throned in seas that channelled safety.  
She carried men to defend  
countrysides scattered with towns full of factories.  
The curator of colonies  
voiced view to keep view,  
exploit used to heavily recruit  
natural warlikes  
to fight aggressively,  
with strength and bravery.  
Fifty-two thousand casualties,  
Ghurkhas' support  
over two world wars.  
Nearly half a million fought for  
Great Britain.'  
I'm teasing them,

because although it's not a lie  
I know it's not the desired response



POEMS

and so am not surprised when they reply,  
'Where are your parents from?'

See, I can't hide pigment skin within words,  
whether fact or fiction.  
So I tell them  
I'm a product of miscegenation.  
That my parents' parents are from Jamaica and Scotland.  
Raised in England,  
they found love and made life in London  
to birth and breed a British girl.

So while I'm an addict for hard food,  
I fiend for the smell of 'eggs an' ba'on' in the morning,  
I'm a sucker for a cuppa  
and I'll batter a fish and chips in less than fifteen minutes.  
I was raised by the church and educated by EastEnders.  
Friday nights of teenage life were spent going on drink benders.  
I can't pretend, 'cause  
all I know is GB  
and I suppose on paper I could quite possibly read as  
an ideal recruit in the BNP,  
wear my balaclava too high so my eyes can't see  
the route of my journey to the RWB,  
ticket's the qualifications on my CRB,  
five for hate crimes would get me VIP.

But a face-to-face interview  
would refuse my application  
on the grounds that those I walk on are not my birthright nation,  
profile is proof of racial integration,  
defies the silent slogan of skin-based segregation  
and as the tick box of White/Caribbean is crossed  
my rights are wrong and I should politely get lost.

Pack bags,  
try to find where I belong.  
But before I'm forced to leave  
I'll leave thoughts to ponder on.  
Where do you, your parents  
And your ancestors come from.



## POEMS

### BEDECKED

By **Victoria Redel**

Tell me it's wrong the scarlet nails my son sports or the toy store rings he clusters  
four jewels to each finger.

He's bedecked. I see the other mothers looking at the star choker, the rhinestone  
strand he fastens over a sock.

Sometimes I help him find sparkle clip-ons when he says sticker earrings  
look too fake.

Tell me I should teach him it's wrong to love the glitter that a boy's only a boy  
who'd love a truck with a remote that revs,  
battery slamming into corners or Hot Wheels loop-de-looping off tracks  
into the tub.

Then tell me it's fine—really—maybe even a good thing—a boy who's got some girl  
to him,  
and I'm right for the days he wears a pink shirt on the seesaw in the park.

Tell me what you need to tell me but keep far away from my son who still loves  
a beautiful thing not for what it means—  
this way or that—but for the way facets set off prisms and prisms spin up  
everywhere  
and from his own jeweled body he's cast rainbows—made every shining true color.

Now try to tell me—man or woman—your heart was ever once that brave.



## BACK IN THE PLAYGROUND BLUES

By **Adrian Mitchell**

I dreamed I was back in the playground, I was about four feet high  
Yes I dreamed I was back in the playground, standing about four feet high  
Well the playground was three miles long and the playground was five miles wide

It was broken black tarmac with a high wire fence all around  
Broken black dusty tarmac with a high fence running all around  
And it had a special name to it, they called it The Killing Ground

Got a mother and a father they're one thousand years away  
The rulers of the Killing Ground are coming out to play  
Everybody thinking: 'Who they going to play with today?'

Well you get it for being Jewish  
And you get it for being black  
You get it for being chicken  
And you get it for fighting back  
You get it for being big and fat  
Get it for being small  
Oh those who get it get it and get it  
For any damn thing at all

Sometimes they take a beetle, tear off its six legs one by one  
Beetle on its black back, rocking in the lunchtime sun  
But a beetle can't beg for mercy, a beetle's not half the fun

I heard a deep voice talking, it had that iceberg sound  
'It prepares them for Life' - but I have never found  
Any place in my life worse than The Killing Ground.

## THIS IS NOT A HUMANIZING POEM

By Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan

Some poems force you to write them  
the way sirens force their way through window panes in the night  
and you can't shut out the news even when you try

"write a humanising poem"  
my pen and paper goad me  
show them how *wrong* their preconceptions are

Be relatable,  
write something upbeat for a change, crack a smile  
tell them how you also cry at the end of Toy Story 3  
and you're just as capable of bantering about the weather in the post office queue  
like everyone, you have no idea how to make the perfect amount of pasta, still.

Feed them stories of stoic humour,  
make a reference to childhood,  
tell an anecdote about being frugal  
mention the X factor

Be domestic,  
successful  
add layers

Tell them you know brown boys who cry  
about the sides of Asad's, Amir's and Hassan's they don't know  
the complex inner worlds of Summayyah's and Ayesha's  
tell them comedies, as well as tragedies  
how full of *life* we are  
how full of *love*

But no

I put my pen down  
I will not let this poem force me to write it  
because it is not the poem I want to write  
It is the poem I have been reduced to

Reduced to proving my life is human because it is relatable  
valuable because it is recognisable  
but good GCSEs, family and childhood memories are not the only things that count  
as a life,  
*living* is.



© Suhaiymah  
Manzoor-Khan

POEMS



So this will not be a 'Muslims *are* like us' poem  
I refuse to be respectable

Instead

Love us when we're lazy

Love us when we're poor

Love us in our back-to-backs, council estates, depressed, unwashed and weeping,

Love us high as kites, unemployed, joy-riding, time-wasting, failing at school,

Love us filthy, without the right colour passports, without the right sounding English,

Love us silent, unapologizing, shopping in Poundland,  
skiving off school, homeless, unsure, sometimes violent

Love us when we aren't athletes, when we don't bake cakes

when we don't offer our homes, or free taxi rides after the event,

When we're wretched, suicidal, naked and contributing *nothing*

Love us then

Because if you need me to prove my humanity

I'm not the one that's not human.

When my mother texts me *too* after BBC news alerts

'Are you safe? Let me know you're home okay?'

She means safe from the incident, yes,  
but also safe from the after-affects

So sometimes I wonder

which days of the week might I count as liberal

and which moments of forehead to the ground am I conservative?

I wonder if when you buy bombs

there's a clear difference between the deadly ones that kill

and the heroic ones that scatter democracy?

I wonder if it should rather be 'guilty, until proven innocent'?

how come we *kill* in the name of saving lives?

how come we illegally detain in the name of maintaining the law

I put my pen away

I can't write it

I can't write

I won't write it

Is this radical?

Am I radical?

Cos there is nowhere else left to exist now.

## POEMS WITH DISABILITIES

By Jim Ferris

I'm sorry – this space is reserved  
for poems with disabilities. I know  
it's one of the best spaces in the book,  
but the Poems with Disabilities Act  
requires us to make all reasonable  
accommodations for poems that aren't  
normal. There is a nice space just  
a few pages over – in fact (don't  
tell anyone) I think it's better  
than this one, I myself prefer it.  
Actually I don't see any of those  
poems right now myself, but you never know  
when one might show up, so we have to keep  
this space open. You can't always tell  
just from looking at them, either. Sometimes  
they'll look just like a regular poem  
when they roll in... you're reading along  
and suddenly everything  
changes, the world tilts  
a little, angle of vision  
jumps, your entrails aren't  
where you left them. You  
remember your aunt died  
of cancer at just your age  
and maybe yesterday's twinge means  
something after all. Your sloppy,  
fragile heart beats  
a little faster  
and then you know.  
You just know:  
the poem  
is right  
where it  
belongs.



© Lisa Steichmann

POEMS

## GLASGOW SNOW

By Jackie Kay

You were found in the snow in Glasgow  
Outside the entrance to Central Station.  
Your journey took you from an Ethiopian prison  
To the forests in France where luck and chance  
Showed you not all white men are like the men  
In *Roots* - a film you watched once.  
The people smugglers didn't treat you like Kizzy  
Or Kunta Kinte, brought you food and water by day,  
Offered you shelter in a tent, and it was sanctuary.  
And you breathed deep the forest air, freely.

But when you were sent here, Glasgow,  
In the dead winter: below zero, no place to go,  
You rode the buses to keep warm: *X4M, Toryglen,*  
*Castlemilk, Croftfoot, Carbrain, Easterhouse,*  
*Moodiesburn, Red Road Flats, Springburn,*  
No public fund, no benefit, no home, no sanctum,  
No haven, no safe port, no support,  
No safety net, no sanctuary, no nothing.  
Until a girl found you in the snow, frozen,  
And took you under her wing, singing.

Oh... would that the Home Office show  
The kindness of that stranger in the winter snow!  
Would they grant you asylum, sanctum,  
For your twenty-seventh birthday?  
On March 8th, two thousand and thirteen,  
You could become, not another figure, sum, unseen,  
Another woman sent home to danger, dumb, afraid,  
At the mercy of strangers, no crib, no bed,  
All worry: next meal, getting fed, fetching up dead.  
And at last, this winter, you might lay down your sweet head.



© Denise Elise

POEMS

## DWELLINGS

By Sarah Crossan

Mama rented a room  
In Coventry.

This is where we'll live  
Until we find Tata:  
One room on the fourth floor  
Of a crumbling building  
That reminds me of history class,  
Reminds me of black and white photographs  
Of bombed  
out  
villages.

There is a white kitchen in the room,  
In the corner,  
And one big bed,  
Lumpy in the middle  
Like a cold pierogi  
For Mama and me to share.  
'It's just one room,' I say,  
When what I mean is  
*We can't live her.*  
'It's called a studio,'  
Mama tells me,  
As though a word  
Can change the truth.

Mama stands by the dirty window  
With her back to me  
Looking out at the droning traffic,  
The Coventry Ring Road.

Then she marches to the kitchen and  
Plugs in the small electric kettle.  
She boils the water  
Twice,  
And makes two mugs of tea.  
One for her,  
One for me.  
'Like home,' she says,  
Supping the tea,  
Staring into its blackness.



© Rolf Marriott

POEMS

Mama found the perfect home for  
A cast-off laundry bag.  
Yes.  
But not a home for us.



POEMS

## I AM A MAN

By Jay Hulme

I am a man.  
A touch too short  
In children's clothes,  
Rows of yellow teeth  
Open like doors into nowhere  
To correct a pronoun - or twenty,  
Plenty of mistakes are accidents.  
Plenty are not.

I hold my head bowed  
In public places,  
Feeling so strongly  
The gaps and the spaces  
Where parts of my body should be,  
For though the man within  
Belongs here,  
He belongs in fear  
Of the actions of others.

Brothers,  
I stand in fear of you -  
Of the fists you hold beside you.  
Of the fists you hold inside you.  
Of your pistol lips,  
Issuing words like pistol whips,  
Swear words crack  
And the pretence slips,  
And I am always falling.  
One syllable at a time.

The line is always the same:  
I'm not a man  
They say.  
I tell a lie  
They say.  
I'm a freak  
They say.  
I should die  
They say.

Words.  
They never quite leave you.  
My life is traced in scar tissue,



© Claire Moon

POEMS

Along the paths these shrapnel syllables  
Have scorched into my history.  
The symmetry of my skin  
Is broken by the past within  
And I cannot begin to name

The cause of every wound.  
But here is birth,  
And here is worth,  
And here is fear,  
And fault, and earth,  
And here is girls' PE class,  
And gendered groups,  
And bras, and pants,  
And shirts with scoops  
For necklines.

And here are my fault lines,  
First times, rewinds,  
Here are long hairdos,  
And women's loos,  
And how to choose  
A knife or noose.

And here is self-hatred.  
I created a hedonistic horror show  
Out of my own torso.  
Tore my skin into cobwebs  
To capture my demons,  
Bloodied fists in fights  
About rules and regulations,  
And tried to hide  
The scars upon my skin.

I was born to never win,  
To never sin,  
To quietly sit  
And never sing.  
Never express myself,  
Never search for wealth,  
Never care for health.

I was born to be a blank canvas  
For my parent's failed dreams,  
And it seems to me that I

Failed in that duty,  
And the beauty of it all  
Is I don't care anymore.

My fists forget my own face.  
When, out of place,  
I erase my morals  
In a fight for morality.  
The shattered skin of me  
Is draped on every shaking tree,  
Like the breaths I take,  
Breaking when no-one can see me.

I left my family.  
In the shadow of that skin,  
In the shadow of the person  
That could never let them in,  
In the shadow of the person  
They could never see the truth within,  
I left them shouting.

Pitchforks raised to chase away  
The man I have become.  
I left them, on a hurricane Tuesday.  
When the weather broke against me  
Like the wrath of a God  
Others told me existed.

I left my family without hesitation,  
Without breaking my stride,  
Without breaking my pride,  
Without looking back,  
Because the lack of regret on their faces  
Would have written my gravestone.

I walked alone  
Into the alleyways of life,  
Knife tucked into my jacket  
To fight for my future,  
Palms pressed bloody  
Over scar and suture,  
Wishing my mind was as easy to fix  
As my skin.

Sometimes I think of a world of lies,  
Of family, and brevity,



Of lightness, and of levity;  
A world where I can stand as me  
Unburdened by this mask you see,  
It sends me down to purgatory  
And hides my shining soul.

But whenever it breaks,  
Is less than whole,  
I fix it.  
For it hides more than me,  
You see,  
It hides a bullet shot  
The moment I was born,  
Worn smooth  
From years of probing.  
It says,  
A word  
That has never been  
My name.

## 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](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/universal)

## HATE CRIMES IN THE UK CASE STUDIES

### **Bijan**

Bijan Ebrahimi was an Iranian refugee who had learning difficulties and a physical disability. Despite being a quiet man who loved his garden and his tabby cat, he was abused and harassed for years by neighbours. He decided to take photographs of the young people who harassed him outside his flat, hoping the evidence would convince the local council to move him to a safer location. One of his neighbours mistakenly thought that Bijan was taking pictures of his daughter, and forced his way into Bijan's flat and threatened Bijan. Terrified, Bijan dialled 999 and reported physically and racial abuse. The call was flagged as a hate crime and an incident requiring an immediate response.

By the time the police arrived, an angry mob of around 15 people had gathered. The police wrongfully detained Bijan for breach of the peace whilst the crowd cheered and chanted 'paedophile'. Upon release, Bijan contacted the police on numerous occasions by telephone and email, stating that his life was in danger. In the hour after his final call to the police, his neighbour and another accomplice, attacked and killed Bijan.

Despite constant interactions with the police in the six years leading up to his death, Bijan was regarded as a 'pest', 'idiot' and a 'pain in the ass' and this clearly led to the police force failing to protect someone who was extremely vulnerable. Similarly, although the neighbour pleaded guilty to murder, the prosecution found no evidence of hostility towards Bijan's disability when the offence was committed.

## **Cathleen**

Ever since Cathleen Lauder transitioned from a man to a woman, verbal abuse, intimidation and unwanted physical contact became a part of everyday life. Due to concern about how the police would respond and lack of proof, she never reported abuse.

However, a friend bought her a mobile phone so she could record hate crimes when they happened. In April 2015, Cathleen was on a bus in Edinburgh when two men and a woman started calling her names, singing offensive songs and making rude gestures at her. Scared that the abuse could escalate, Cathleen began recording on her phone. She reported it to the police as soon as possible. The Crown Office and the Procurator Fiscal decided to prosecute one of the perpetrators. A court date was set for December 2015 and Cathleen welcomed the opportunity to receive justice. It was a shock to find the court hearing cancelled because the evidence had been lost. She had to wait another eight months for her case to be heard, bringing trauma and frustration. Cathleen is convinced that 'Historically the police and other authorities have been prejudiced towards LGBT people and this has prevented LGBT people from reporting'.

Since the court case, Police Scotland have set up a network of LGBTI liaison officers trained by the Equality Network, a Scottish LGBTI charity. It will be important to monitor how this improves the confidence of LGBTI people in the police.

### **Hanane**

In October 2015, Hanane Yakoubi, who was 34 weeks pregnant, was travelling on a bus in London with her two-year-old child and two friends. Another passenger began harassing Hanane and her friends for not speaking English.

For five minutes, a woman continuously abused Hanane and her friends, calling them 'sand rats' and, accusing them of supporting ISIS and hiding bombs in their clothing. The woman told Hanane that she didn't like Hanane and her people because they were 'rude' and had no manners, and said that they should go back to their own country. The woman then declared: 'You're lucky I don't kick you in the uterus and you'll never have a baby again'.

No one on the bus intervened, but one passenger filmed the attack on a mobile phone and uploaded it to Facebook, where it went viral. After the offender saw the footage, she handed herself in to police. After pleading guilty to causing racially aggravated distress she was sentenced to 16 weeks in prison, suspended for 18 months, and 60 weeks of unpaid work.

### **Monique (not her real name)**

Monique and her children, originally from Ghana, had lived in the UK for approximately 10 years and had settled in well in the West Midlands. The children learned English quickly and their immediate neighbours were welcoming. Monique found a job working at a local school and was happy that she was living in the UK to provide a better life for her family.

Things began to change in the weeks before the EU referendum in June 2016. The children experienced racism at school, and were told by other children that they would be kicked out of the country. The bullying had a huge impact on their emotional wellbeing – they became quieter and less confident at school and at home.

The situation temporarily improved when the school intervened with a local hate crime partnership taking disciplinary action and delivering workshops about bullying and its impact to several classes.

However, once the EU referendum result was revealed the family suffered further hate crime. For the first time since coming to the UK, Monique experienced racist abuse and was sworn at in public. On one occasion, she was spat at and told to go 'back home where you belong, we don't want you here anymore'. Monique began to lose faith in the friendships that she had developed over the years. She grew increasingly anxious, stopped going out on her own and lost her job because her physical health had gotten worse.

The racist abuse that Monique and her family experienced cannot be separated from the toxic political climate that was created in the weeks leading up to the EU referendum. By encouraging fear and hatred for political gain, some politicians failed Monique and thousands of Brexit related hate-crime victims.

After initially trying to ignore the abuse, Monique decided to report the incidents to the police. She felt she was dismissed by officers because she had not reported the incidents at the time in which they happened. Monique continued to report hate crimes as and when she experienced them but, again, she was disappointed by the response she received. The police failed in their duty because they did not take Monique's statement or investigate due to lack of witnesses. They didn't even try to collect any evidence such as CCTV footage. Because of her victimisation and her experience with the police, Monique has been left feeling isolated, unwanted and worthless.

## Paul

In January 2015, Paul Finlay-Dickinson lost his long-term partner Maurice to cancer. In the 18 months leading up to Maurice's death, the couple were regularly subjected to homophobic abuse, their house was vandalised and faeces was pushed through their front door. The torment continued when a memorial card announcing Paul's death was posted to the house and opened by Maurice who was terminally ill at this stage. Even the rainbow flag that Maurice had wanted draped on his coffin was defaced with faeces.

After Maurice died, Paul was unable to fully grieve his death because he was being harassed with unrelenting homophobic attacks and threatened by local youths. No longer feeling safe, Paul was getting ready to move into a new house, which he thought would bring an end to his long-term harassment. However, before Paul could move in to the property a group of young people smashed the windows and daubed 'pedo' beside the front door. Paul was too afraid to move in. 'I am being attacked because of my sexual orientation', he said. 'I cannot take much more'.

Homophobia is still widespread in Northern Ireland and gay rights campaigners have expressed concern that politicians and faith community leaders continue to reinforce prejudiced attitudes towards gay people. Some political and religious leaders in Northern Ireland have regularly referred to same sex relationships and to gay people as 'sinful', 'evil', an 'abomination' and 'intrinsically disordered'. This discourse has helped to create a climate in which homophobic hostility is considered acceptable and legitimate.

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Note from Adrian Mitchell: 'Educational Health Warning. None of these poems or any other work by Adrian Mitchell is to be used in connection with any examination or test whatsoever. But I'm glad if people who like them read them aloud, sing them, dance them or act them in schools. And even happier if they choose to learn any of them by heart.'

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## 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



© Radat Laamari

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

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



## 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](http://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](http://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](http://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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POEMS

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Make a Difference in a Minute

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