



# Amnesty International

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## RESOURCE SHEET 5a

### Selection of poems

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#### Freedom

by Langston Hughes

Freedom will not come  
Today, this year  
Not ever  
Through compromise and fear.

I have as much right  
As the other fellow has  
To stand  
On my own two feet  
And own the land.

I tire so of hearing people say,  
*Let things take their course.*  
*Tomorrow is another day.*  
I do not need my freedom when I'm dead.  
I can not live on tomorrow's bread.

Freedom  
Is a strong seed  
Planted  
In a great need.  
I live here, too  
I want freedom  
Just as you.

© Langston Hughes (*The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, Alfred A Knopf Inc, 1994)



# Amnesty International

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## RESOURCE SHEET 5b

### Selection of poems

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#### **The True Prison**

by Ken Saro-Wiwa

It is not the leaking roof  
Nor the singing mosquitoes  
In the damp, wretched cell.  
It is not the clank of the key  
As the warder locks you in.  
It is not the measly rations  
Unfit for man or beast  
Nor yet the emptiness of day  
Dipping into the blankness of night  
It is not  
It is not  
It is not  
It is the lies that have been drummed  
Into your ears for one generation  
It is the security agent running amok  
Executing callous calamitous orders  
In exchange for a wretched meal a day  
The magistrate writing in her book  
Punishment she knows is undeserved  
The moral ineptitude  
Mental decrepitude  
Lending dictatorship spurious legitimacy  
Cowardice asked as obedience.

Lurking in our denigrated souls  
It is fear damping trousers  
We dare not wash off our urine  
It is this  
It is this  
It is this  
Dear friend, turns our free world  
Into a dreary prison.

© *The True Prison*, extracted from *A Month and a Day & Letters*  
by Ken Saro-Wiwa, (Ayebia, 2005). Published with the kind  
permission of Ayebia Clarke Publishing Limited.



# Amnesty International

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## RESOURCE SHEET 5c

### Selection of poems

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#### **If all the world were paper**

by Joseph Coelho

If all the world were paper  
I would fold up my gran and take her  
everywhere I go.  
I would laminate my baby sister in bubble  
wrap  
and lay her to sleep in unbound fairy-tale  
book pages  
and should she get scared:  
Rip every fear,  
Shred every scream,  
Tear every tear.

If all the world were paper  
I would re-bind my grandfather,  
smooth out the dog-ears to all his stories,  
place his younger days in a zoetrope  
and flush the harrowing chapters  
down an ink-gurgling well.

If all the world were paper,  
kind deeds would be post-it notes  
that stuck to the doer in ever growing  
trails,  
so we would always remember,  
friends would come with perforated lines  
so you could keep their best bits with you  
at all times.

If all the world were paper,  
Christmas wrapping foil and birthday  
cards  
would follow you to school.

If all the world were paper  
dreams would be Braille  
so we could read them whilst we slept,  
nightmares would be shopping lists  
because shopping lists are so easy to forget.

If all the world were paper  
arguments would rustle before they started  
and could be put right with a little tape.

If all the world were paper  
we could paperclip families together,  
draw smiles on all the sad faces,  
rub out the tears,  
cover our homes in Tipex and start all over again.

All the world is not paper  
but whilst we can imagine it were  
we can recycle the rough times  
knowing we will never – ever fold.



## RESOURCE SHEET 5d

### Selection of poems

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#### **Child Labour**

by Paul Lyalls

Where the school bell does not ring  
no play time for little hands that ache and sting.  
Where trainer soles are burned on the spirit of children's souls.  
and mobile phones do not return unanswered calls.  
A conveyor belt of Laptops replace a mother's lap  
Can you believe the price of that?  
Where the work begins as the sun rises  
and when the sunsets there are no surprises.  
Little hands attaching computer chips is not a childhood moment.  
Before you buy, listen carefully to your purchase,  
does it come with a child's cry, and is it worth this?

© Paul Lyalls



## RESOURCE SHEET 5e

### Selection of poems

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#### **The Story of a City**

by Samih al-Qasim

Translated from the Arabic by Abdullah al-Udhari

A blue city

Dreamt of tourists

Shopping day after day.

A dark city

Hates tourists

Scanning cafés with rifles.

© Samih al-Qasim (Saqi Books 1984)



# Amnesty International

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## RESOURCE SHEET 5f

### Selection of poems

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#### **People Equal**

by James Berry

Some people shoot up tall.  
Some hardly leave the ground at all  
Yet people equal. Equal.

One voice is a non-sugar tomato  
Another is sweet mango.  
Yet people equal. Equal.

Some people rush to the front.  
Other people feel they can't.  
Yet people equal. Equal.

Blow hard on some people they fall.  
Hammer others you meet a wall.  
Yet people equal. Equal.

One person will sit on a star.  
Others never get that far.  
Yet people equal. Equal.

Some people never take off with their show.  
Others are always on the go.  
Yet people equal. Equal.

© James Berry (*The Story I Am In: Selected Poems*, Bloodaxe Books, 2011.  
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