



# OUR STORIES

Creative Writing & Performance Poetry

# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Our Stories creative writing and performance poetry programme. This is an initiative of the National Literacy Trust Hub in Bradford. This resource pack has been developed following the first year of the Literacy Hub's work in schools and offers a wide range of stand alone poetry activities for the classroom. The programme is enhanced through our many partners such as Bradford Museums and Galleries, Bradford Council's Music and Arts Service and the Bradford Literature Festival, who have all contributed by offering a range of opportunities for your pupils to engage with creative writing and performance poetry.

The photographs which are included in this pack are of local poets whose work is rich for exploration in the classroom. This includes contemporary poets and performance word artists whose work has grabbed the attention of some of our reluctant writers in schools. Teaching poetry is not so much about showing pupils how to be 'good at' poetry, but encouraging them towards a curiosity about poems and how they work, a willingness to play with language and a desire to discover and define their individual poetry style.

These photographs and poems offer pupils a creative way into the poet's imagined world. In doing so, they can connect with language and engage with literacy on their own terms. The magic of poetry in the classroom is that it is often the pupils who struggle that, with the right support, can blossom in writing.

To support this journey for our most reluctant writers we will be providing schools with a class visit from one of our poets, and a two-hour workshop from our music tutor, Beccy Owens, to engage pupils in recording and performing their own work. Bradford Museums and Galleries are offering the use of their interesting spaces to provide stimulus for writing and enhance the learning experience outside class. We are fortunate to have our very own literature festival in Bradford which offers a schools programme during May every year. This will help to provide further opportunities to showcase pupils work and engage in opportunities for performance.

The activities in this pack have been written by poet and schools practitioner, **Francesca Beard**. Francesca has written the activities and lesson plans in a simple format which allows easy replication in the classroom and rich content that enables the most reluctant pupils to engage in creative writing and performance poetry. The activities can work with poems that you love or the poems that you think will best engage your pupils. The photographs in this pack and the activities are intended as much for your enjoyment of poetry and exploration in the classroom as your pupils. We look forward to working with you on delivering this programme and further developing this offer for schools to support the engagement and improved attainment of our reluctant writers.

Imran Hafeez  
Manager of the National Literacy Trust Hub in Bradford

National Literacy Trust Hubs are designed to create long-term change in communities across the UK where low levels of literacy are entrenched, intergenerational and seriously impacting on people's lives. Our approach aims to tackle intergenerational low literacy by mobilising schools, engaging and supporting public services, businesses, communities and cultural, faith and voluntary groups in action. The campaign focuses on improving literacy and literacy levels in the local area.

The National Literacy Trust Hub in Bradford launched the Bradford Literacy Campaign in October 2014 and is one of three Hubs in the UK. The Middlesbrough Hub launched in January 2013 and the Peterborough Hub launched in November 2014.

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## LINKS TO FURTHER ACTIVITY

### The Poetry Society

A poetry organisation that delivers workshops, training and resources to support the delivery of poetry in schools.  
[www.poetrysociety.org.uk/education](http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/education)

### Poetry Line

A publisher of children's poems online, with featured poets' work, as well as resources and lesson plans for teachers and poetry competitions for pupils.  
[www.poetryline.org.uk/](http://www.poetryline.org.uk/)

# POETRY IN KEY STAGE 2 & 3

With poetry centre stage in the curriculum there is no better time to get stuck into creative poetry writing. The playful activities in this resource pack all respond to literacy and English requirements across Years 6 to 8.

## Reading and writing

- Encouraging poetry reading for pleasure
- Vocabulary development
- Discussing how poets use language and the impact on the reader
- Writing ideas down at speed
- Learning poetry by heart
- Developing initial ideas, drawing on reading and research
- Assessing the effectiveness of pupils' own and others' writing

## Spoken language

- Preparing poems to read aloud
- Performing compositions, using appropriate intonation, volume and movement

## Activities in this pack encourage pupils to:

- Value their own 'voice'
- Appreciate connections between visual representation and the written word
- Gain confidence to voice their own thoughts and communicate their own experiences
- Use drawing and visual imagery as a springboard for creative inspiration
- Collaborate with each other in creative activity
- Explore the building blocks of story
- 'Read' a portrait – exploring metaphor and making connections
- Use drawing and photography to inform written work
- Gain confidence in understanding how to use narrative in their writing
- Appreciate the value of poetry and language
- Explore connections between their creativity, identity and representation



# POETRY TIPS TO THE WISE...

**An ice-breaker game or a physical warm-up works well in signalling that poetry writing is not an academic exercise. Call and response games that focus on teamwork and speaking and listening help the class to be a supportive audience when it comes to performances.**

Brainstorming a poem is different to mapping an essay or factual piece. Poetry brainstorming is about not thinking too hard and trusting that you already know what you need for your poem. Poetry brainstorming is about welcoming the obvious ideas as well as the weird and off-the-wall ones.

A blank sheet can be intimidating. Using images and photographs as a starting point can raise pupils' curiosity and elicit vocabulary and dialogue towards poetry writing. Using visual prompts for discussion like this offers an inclusive approach that supports the abilities of all pupils, including those with EAL (English as an Additional Language) and SEN (Special Educational Needs).

Quick-fire sketching activities can help inspire ideas and act as a 'frame' for their written work, e.g. pupils draw round their hands or feet, draw self-portraits and write poems in and around the shapes.

When pupils are preparing for performance, get them to rehearse in pairs, paying particular attention to voice projection, articulation, timing and rhythm, mood, facial expression and gesture.

Ask the listeners to think about what the sound and the sense of the poem is doing in certain lines and encourage them to discuss together how best to get that across with the performance.

Fidgety students can harness nervous energy by developing the unconscious movement into a choreographed gesture they can repeat. This does not have to be related to the action but can be a way of marking the rhythm. This is a trick that many professional performers use.

Write your own poems from these activities and perform your work in front of your pupils in all its messy glory. It may be scary but they will see that this is an acceptable, admirable, necessary risk to take.

When it comes to sharing work, the more inclusive and supportive the atmosphere the better. It's not possible to be too kind and encouraging - performing your work is a terrifying thing, even for seasoned professionals. In general, the more confident performers are, the better they will perform.

# POETRY STARTERS

## Call and Response Rhythm Game

Standing in a circle, each person creates a short, simple rhythm by clapping, clicking, stamping and/or percussive vocal sound that the others repeat back, as closely as possible.

The group creates a simple four-bar beat (e.g. clap clap stamp stamp.) Going round the group, each person inserts their name into the beat.

## Silly Stress Name Game

Standing in a circle, each person says their name in a strange way, simply by putting the stress on a different syllable or, if their name is one syllable, drawing it out in a tonal way.

You can add actions to this and explore how in poetry, language is stressed and intonation is key to creating meaning.

## Magic Circle Game

Standing in a circle, the class creates a portal to a magical dimension – one by one, each person reaches into the circle and pulls out an object, declaring ‘I’m taking out penguins/diamonds/traffic lights/dragons...’. Far from being competitive, this is a collaborative improvisation with no pauses between each object and no commentary.

## Self-Portrait

Challenge pupils to the following sketch activities and after each drawing ask them to think of words they can associate with the version of themselves:

- sketch a self-portrait in 60 seconds
- in 40 seconds with their non-writing hand
- in 40 seconds in one continuous line without taking the pencil off the page

How would you describe the person in each sketch? What does each self-portrait say about the pupil? Which self-portrait do they prefer and why? Generate a word bank that describes the portraits and move the pupils into writing their self-portrait without using their first or family name. This could use a riddle form – or any simple form – haiku, limerick, kenning, clerihew or rap. Using an acrostic, for example, it could spell out Who Am I? Print out the pieces for the class to read them aloud and guess whose is whose.

## Free write

The most established and competent poets swear by free writes. An example of this would be to place objects through the classroom e.g. a leaf, an orange, a spoon, and challenge pupils to describe the object in a free write. They should write for five minutes without thinking and without stopping. If they get stuck, they just write ‘and and and...’ until the thought flows again. At the end of the free write, ask them to look back over their work and read out a phrase each. Write these phrases down on the board as they read them out. Ask them to combine as many of the phrases as possible into a new piece of writing – it can take any form.

OR

Ask them to use the phrase they shared as the title of a new piece.



# LESSON PLAN 1

## A list poem

### Using playful imagination to explore the surreal... (60 minutes)

#### Preparation:

##### You will need:

- Blank A4 paper
- Pens or pencils
- Two containers



#### Group activity: 20 minutes

Pupils fold one sheet of blank A4 paper into quarters and number each quarter 1 to 4. Number 1 will be the top left, number 2 as the top right, number 3 as the lower left and number 4 as the lower right.

Pupils will need to write in each quarter:

- |                   |               |
|-------------------|---------------|
| 1) Noun or object | 2) Definition |
| 3) Abstract noun  | 4) Definition |

Examples to model:

- |   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1) Poem   |                       |
| 2) A human construct, usually involving words, that bends language to get beyond it |                       |
| 3) Love   | 4) A positive emotion |

or....

- |           |                      |
|-----------|----------------------|
| 1) Carrot | 2) A root vegetable  |
| 3) Space  | 4) We all live in it |

Tip: Don't use dictionaries. Give your class permission not to worry about using the correct definition. Encourage them to choose things from their own experience and be as precise as possible in the description.

When everyone has done this, each person tears their paper into four pieces, being careful to keep the odd numbers separate from the even. All the even numbers go into container A, all the odd into container B.

A volunteer takes one random piece of paper from container A and another from container B and reads out the 'new' definition.

e.g. A carrot is a positive emotion.

#### Discussion: 10 minutes

Pupils pull out more 'new' definitions to read together. Sometimes you might have the correct definition paired with its word and this is surprisingly disappointing. In discussion, talk about why some of the combinations work better and are more interesting than others – this is getting to the heart of poetry!

#### Individual writing exercise – list poem: 15 minutes

Pupils each choose an object or concept from container A to make a list poem using their own poetic definitions for the word. Encourage them to mix things up by using some 'correct' definitions and some imaginative, poetic or just plain silly ones.

e.g. Poetry

*Poetry is a girl or a guy talking into a microphone.*

*Poetry is an ancient art form.*

*Poetry can be heard all over the world.*

*Poetry cannot be folded up, put in a box and stored.*

*Poetry is a game of football and you're in goal.*

*Poetry is rhythm, rhyme, space and time.*

*Poetry is a yawn as big as the ocean.*

*Poetry is a love letter from an alien.*

#### Sharing: 15 minutes

Volunteers read their list poems aloud, with the class as active listeners ready to comment and appreciate.

#### Take it further!

Build a class poetic dictionary: pupils provide the poetic definitions for words beginning with the letters they are assigned. Illustrate the activity as a board display or as part of an ICT project to be printed up as a class book.

# LESSON PLAN 2

## Analysing structure

### ...and discovering your own techniques... (60 minutes)

#### Preparation:

Use the Bradford Literacy Campaign microsite ([www.ourstories.org.uk](http://www.ourstories.org.uk)) to download and listen to poets featured in this resource. You can also go to [www.poetryarchive.org](http://www.poetryarchive.org) to search for other poems.

Choose a variety of poetic forms e.g. limericks, haiku, rap or ballads with repeating choruses. This will give the class an opportunity to talk about rhyming patterns and rhythmic structure.

#### You will need:

- Selection of printed poems – one per A4 page in large font (six included in this pack)
- A timer
- Class set of scissors and glue
- Large pieces of sugar paper

#### Before you start:

- Cut up each poem line by line and then shuffle the lines
- Divide the class into 5 to 6 groups and distribute a shuffled poem to each group

#### Group exercise: 20 minutes

Give the class a time challenge to reassemble the poems in the way that they think makes most sense. The object of this game is to think about editing, about the active role of the reader and about how a poem's literal meaning can be obscure. Pupils will experience the poem through the filter of their own associations and therefore own their individual interpretations of a piece.

#### Sharing and discussion: 15 minutes

Ask each group to read out the poems and explain what they are about. Either play a recording of the actual poem or read the poem to the class.

#### Group writing exercise: 15 minutes

Give each group a large piece of sugar paper, scissors and glue. Challenge each group to make a new poem from the words of the original poems.

#### Sharing: 10 minutes

Groups learn the poems and read them aloud, with the class as active listeners ready to comment and appreciate.

#### Take it further!

Each pupil takes any one line from the poems explored, and this forms the title for a new poem. If they want, they can use more than one line, including lines from other pieces, but the original poems act as prompts for their own work.

# LESSON PLAN 3

## Reading a photograph

#### Preparation:

##### You will need:

- [www.ourstories.org.uk](http://www.ourstories.org.uk)
- [www.poetryarchive.org](http://www.poetryarchive.org)
- Paper and pens/pencils



Hafeez Johar, 1973

#### Group exercise: 20 minutes

Working with a partner, pupils explore the photographs of poets (included in this resource and available at [www.ourstories.org.uk](http://www.ourstories.org.uk)) and choose one to explore.

*(Additional poets, their poems, photographs and recordings can be explored through the poetry archive).*

They talk through the following prompts in preparation for sharing their findings with the class:

- Look closely at the image scanning it from top to bottom, left to right.
- What is the most obvious thing about the portrait?
- Is there a tiny detail that others might miss?
- What is in the corners of the image?
- What do you notice about the mood and colour?
- Where is the poet looking and what are they doing?
- What might their personality be like? How can you tell?
- What do you think their poetry might be like and why?

#### Sharing and discussion: 20 minutes

Pupils now explore the online archives and listen and read poems by their chosen poet.

- Is there a connection between the poet's personality in the photograph and what you know about the poems they write?
- How well do you think the photographer knew the poetry of the poet?
- How do you think the poet would have felt about their photograph?
- What might you have done differently to represent the poet?
- What question would you like to ask this poet?

#### Sharing: 20 minutes

Pupils share their photograph, a poem from the poet and their findings with the class.



Kristy Taylor  
Photograph by Emily Connor

# IDENTITY POEMS

(Across a series of lessons/days)

This section explores identity, persona and can also be used as a series of standalone activities. Identity poems can be seen as a medium for virtual time travel as poets can track their lives by looking back at poems written in the past to see what they were thinking and feeling. Each individual pupil is a leading authority on their own experiences and each poem becomes one of a kind.

## Preparation:

You will need:

- Paper and pens/pencils
- Large sugar paper
- A timer



## Activity 1:

A fun population demographic with the class:

*Hands up if –  
You were born in e.g. Sheffield / Preston  
You were born in England  
Both parents were born in Sheffield / Preston  
Both grandparents were born in Sheffield / Preston  
You speak more than one language  
You know the meaning of your name  
You are scared of spiders  
You remember your dreams*

In pairs, pupils interview each other for three minutes before swapping over. Challenge them to find out something surprising. The interviewers each report back to the class something unexpected they have discovered about their partner.

## Activity 2:

Ask each student to write a poem in the form of a five-line riddle about the person they interviewed to create a written poem portrait, for example:

*He has brown eyes and black hair.  
He has a sister in Year 2 who drives him crazy.  
He supports Manchester City but has never been to see them play.  
He can manual on his BMX.  
When he was four, he wanted to grow up to be a dragon.  
Who is he?*

Volunteers share some of these poems with the class.

## Activity 3:

Tell the class that you are going to give them a guided five-minute free write (see tips on p.5 to explain).

Guided free write sample starters:

*What is the story behind your name?  
Where does your family come from?  
Describe your favourite meal in as much detail as possible. Where do you eat this and who with?  
What makes you angry?  
What makes you laugh?  
What could you not live without?  
Where do you feel most safe?  
Favourite object?*

## Activity 4:

Using the free write from Activity 3 as raw ingredients, each pupil writes a five to 10 line poem about him/herself in the same riddle form that they used with their classmates.

## Activity 5:

Pupils bring in a photograph of a family member. They swap with a partner and are asked to 'read the photograph' using the prompts in Lesson Plan 3 (p.9). What words describe the person in the image? What hopes and dreams might they have? Pupils make a word list of the mood, colour, setting, smell, feel of the things in the photo, and write a poem about the person in the image.

Partners then share their poems and swap thoughts on how well they captured the family member. Were their ideas and poems close? What did the photograph not tell you about the person?

With new information shared about the family member in the photograph, pupils make new sketches of the person.

## Activity 6:

A guided identity free write:

*What is the earliest memory you have?  
Where does it happen? Outside or inside? Is it hot or cold?  
What smells are there? Is there food?  
What colours are there? What are you wearing? Holding?  
What sounds can you hear? Are you moving?*

Ask each pupil to make an accompanying prose poem to their identity free write using the structure 'And... And... And...' inserting the objects and sensations from their earliest memory plus objects and verbs from their riddle poem.

For example:

*And the dark grass and the curved sky and and and the blue cup and the white butterfly and the shhh of cars and hot of petrol and the left hand back and the orange dog and the long road...*

N.B. These identity free writes work by the reader filling in the gaps in between. This piece needs mystery to make it work.



The following activities are ICT-based requiring research online or in the library or to be supported by homework. Each pupil will need access to the internet and a printer.

## Activity 7:

Pupils research a poet from the archives (see preparation on p.9) to explore forms of poetry, e.g. hip-hop poetry, comic poetry, ranting poetry, prose poetry, diaspora poetry. Ask them to present their research in the style of the poet or poetry genre.

## Activity 8:

Ask pupils to research a poet from one of the photographs in this pack. In pairs or as individuals they must collect 5–10 of their favourite lines from that poet. Ask them to make a collage image of the poet using their lines of poetry.

## Activity 9: Secret Stanza

Each pupil pulls the name of a classmate from a hat. Pupils then research poems from poets featured in the archives in order to choose a poem for their classmate.

Once the poems have been gifted to each pupil in the class, the Secret Stanza gifters reveal who they are and why they chose their poem – whether they looked for something they thought the other person would like or whether they chose a poem they themselves enjoyed.

Everyone sits in a circle to the right of the person who gave them their poem gift. Going round the circle, pupils select and read out their favourite line of the poem they were given to create a new choral piece.

# SPACES FOR SHARING

## Museums, galleries and literacy

**Local museums and galleries are fantastic places to inspire literacy-based activities both in and out of school. With collections ranging from Natural Sciences, Social and Industrial History, Archaeology and Arts, there's plenty to inspire and excite children and young people to wonder, talk and question. Encouraging children to share ideas and experiences whether with peers or parents is at the heart of supporting literacy activities at Bradford Museums and Galleries.**

### The Art and Science of Noticing

What do you notice when you look round a museum or art gallery?

What interests you and why?

Could you draw it if I teach you some drawing skills?

Would you like to talk to a partner or the class about it?

Could you write down the answers/ideas to some questions about it?

Can we arrange and edit those answers into a poem? Share your poem?

These questions are central to an innovative child-led methodology developed by Bradford Museums and Galleries Learning Team called the 'Art and Science of Noticing' (ASN), which starts with drawing and ends with poetry writing and inspiring pupils to find out more.

It is a move away from traditional museum and gallery learning experiences which direct children what to look at; instead ASN gives children the freedom to use their own natural curiosity to connect with collections.

It is accessible literacy; children are absorbed in drawing their chosen 'noticing' and then excited to share with others verbally. This excitement is then captured in writing, with children answering prompts, individually or in pairs, such as "if you could ask your favourite thing a question what would it be?" or 'think of an adjective to describe what you have drawn'. Language and vocabulary is richer as children have been personally connected to objects and artwork and the outcome is as powerful if you can only write a few words than if you can write a few lines, plus both teachers and children think the process is pretty great too ...

\*It promotes enquiry and curiosity, conversation and questions: "Pupils have the chance to explore and develop questioning and thinking skills in a real context." Bowling Park Primary Deputy Headteacher

\*It is engaging and accessible to a range of learning levels: "We have a child on the behaviour chart who has shown us that he can concentrate." Hollingwood Primary year 6 teacher

\* Drawing can promote language use and literacy "The variety of materials and things that the children had not seen before can inspire them." Year 6 teacher

"I've learnt how to concentrate on my drawing." Male, Year 5

"I was interested in the hidden things." Female, Year 5

"When you see real art and colours its amazing." Male, year 6 pupil

You are a special thing for defence,  
sharp like Sharizas tooth,  
As brave as king kong.  
Year 5 collective poem

Outstanding,  
A land of a picture,  
A zone of dreams,  
Extending as long as the crystal rivers,  
As bright as the suns light on jewels,  
My drawing was the zone of dreams,  
It made me dream.  
Year 6 pupil

David Hockney picture,  
You stood out,  
Rapunzel's hand holding a rose,  
You look like 10 comb velvet,  
Why are you a black and white fairytale.  
Year 6 pupil

**Since its development schools have been using ASN as a starting point for topic work, further classroom literacy activity, Arts Award and staff training days.**

**The Art and Science of Noticing was shortlisted in 2015 for a Museum and Heritage Educational Initiative Award.**



© Bradford Museums & Galleries



© Bradford Museums & Galleries

## Taking Over: Life skills and literacy

Bradford Museums and Galleries has supported 'take over' days at Cartwright Hall Art Gallery for the past three years involving over 150 pupils from Bradford schools.

### Taking over...

The day is based around the national 'Kids in Museums' initiative 'Takeover Day' and involves classes of pupils taking over some of the job roles within the art gallery. Following an in-school visit by museum staff pupils visit the art gallery for the day and participate in activities, working with different staff members. They take on roles including:

- **Natural Sciences Curators** - identifying and monitoring pests
- **Learning and Outreach Officers** - learning how to give a tour
- **Business Assistants** - answering phone enquiries about the venue
- **Collections Officers** - finding out about frame conservation and having a go in gilding techniques.

The afternoon is an opportunity for the school to invite parents and governors to the gallery where pupils give guided tours and share learning.

It is hoped that by 'taking over' pupils feel more confident within the gallery and want to share the experience and return with others such as friends and family.

"Takeover Day at Cartwright Hall has reminded us what a rich resource our local museums and galleries are, which help us to enrich the lives and broaden the horizons of our children and their families." Principal, Whetley Academy

### Life skills and literacy

Takeover Days require pupils to consider and use many cross-curricular and key skills such as communication, teamwork, maths and of course literacy! To participate in tasks pupils must learn new vocabulary, new skills, share, respond, present, communicate ideas, work with new people and support each other. Activities encourage pupils to develop confidence and competence in spoken language and listening skills. The sharing afternoon with parents, adults and governors provides an excellent opportunity to put some of these skills into practice, together with being an inspirational and memorable experience for all involved.

"Usually some of them are so shy and hardly speak in class – it's great seeing them like this." Class teacher, Hollingwood Primary

"Today's Takeover Day has been a wonderful insight into what goes on not only in the forefront of the gallery but also behind the scenes. The children have clearly enjoyed the experience - very good - loved it." Parent after being given a tour.

**For more information about the Art and Science of Noticing or Takeover Days contact: [learning@bradford.gov.uk](mailto:learning@bradford.gov.uk)**

© Bradford Museums & Galleries



# I am a Poet

## Further depiction and poetry

### Preparation:

#### You will need:

- Cameras & a printer
- Paper and pens/pencils



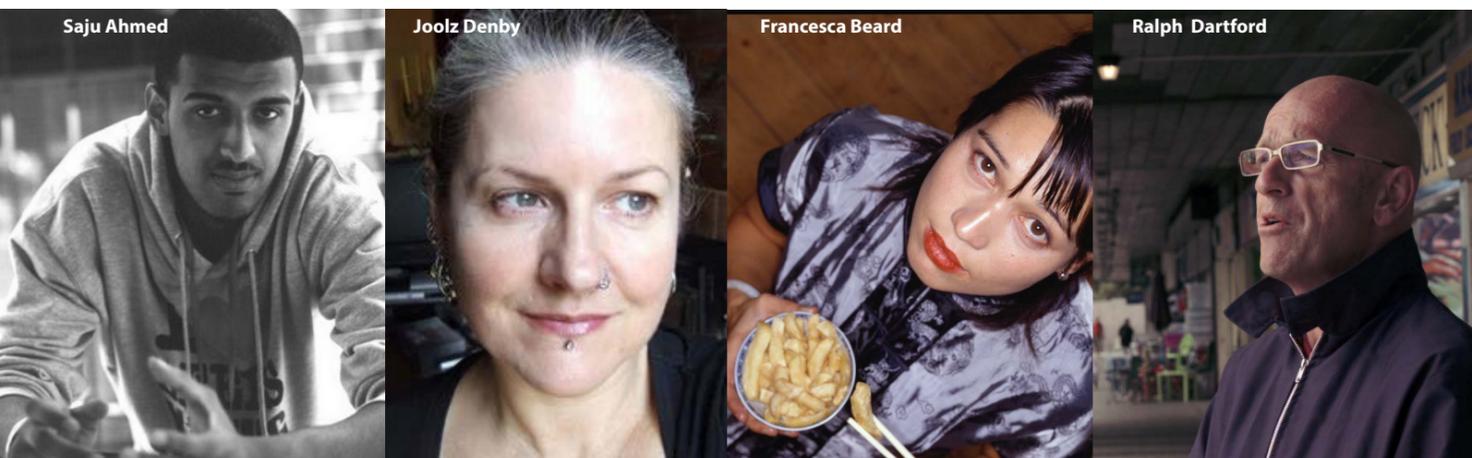
Pupils work in pairs to describe their personality, what they like and dislike, where they come from, what makes them unique and the prompts from Activity 3.

The partners plan photographic portraits of themselves based on the information gathered above. Where will they be? What is in the background? Which way should they be looking and what might this say about them? Is it a full body shot or head shot? Will they need props to help illustrate? A black and white photograph or colour?

Support pupils over a session or a week to take photographic portraits of each other as the poets in this resource, using a variety of settings and backdrops.

When pupils are happy with the photographic portrait, photographs are printed and shared. They write an identity poem based on the photographic portrait they have made of themselves. Poems remain anonymous.

With a display of anonymous poems, the class as a full group now work out if they can match the photographic portraits to the poems.



### On display!

Compile the work to create a class exhibition of poems and celebratory portraits of the poets themselves.

## Francesca Beard

### Who here?

*Who here has a favourite pair of underpants?*

*Who here wishes they could breakdance?*

*Who here knows the name of someone else's favourite flower?*

*Who here has attempted to carry on reading a really good book in the shower?*

*Who here has ever changed their name for a supply teacher?*

*Who here has made a New Year's resolution to do better?*

*Who here has seen a film more than twenty times?*

*Who here stops to read the lost pet signs?*

*Who here has walked home crying in the rain?*

*Who here has walked home singing in the rain?*

*Who here has turned their bedroom into a fort?*

*Who here has a collection of plastic sporks?*

*Who here feels like a DJ when they turn up the volume?*

*Who here has whispered a secret to the moon?*

*Who here has been kissed by someone you loved?*

*Who here likes lists?*

*Who here isn't included in the above?*

© Francesca Beard



## Joolz Denby

### Bradford

*And I sit down for a minute, amongst the books  
and think of the town, stretching out and away  
from here; dark and bright, beautiful and ugly,  
the high-sided wind-scoured canyons of the deserted mills  
telling their silent stories of what has been and what will be;  
the deaths, the births, the fighting and the love,  
all the humanity of it, gathered from every place in the world,  
and all of us, everything, under the infinite night-sky now,  
a silver twist of crescent moon fragile as a girl's first earring  
visible even over the streetlights' sodium glare,  
and I think - this is where we live, in this stone maze,  
in this northern city, under the terrible stars, and we belong.*

*Extract taken from Joolz Denby's poem 'Bradford' © Joolz Denby 2002  
Full poem can be downloaded at [ourstories.org.uk](http://ourstories.org.uk).*



## Hafeez Johar

### Travellers

(Inspired by a painting)

*We were negotiating new paths  
And moving on,  
But our journey is harsh.*

*The dreams that we packed in our eyes  
When we left home,  
Have all been claimed by sandstorms.*

*The caravan of pain  
has no destination in sight,  
the sky is cruel  
and there is no shelter from the sun  
where we can rest.  
How can we keep going?*

*In the distance over the horizon  
there are signs of a settlement.  
If we can find a suitable dream there,  
then  
with renewed vigour  
we will start our journey  
towards life.*

© Hafeez Johar, 1999



## Saju Ahmed

### City Oppression

*The cars we dream, the scars we scream,  
the sky we see but the stars we fiend.*

*The grass ain't green, concrete conquers at any mean, mixed race confused I'm semi-gened.*

*Pregnant girls they're barely teens, paedos, girls and fairy queens,  
crime is serene but goes unseen,*

*the pupil in the eyes that's the black hole,*

*so we are the universe, we were unique first, created our surroundings now we diverse,  
can't see the future so now we die first.*

*Covered by lies cursed to be the worst, sip on our own blood to clinch the thirst.*

*They say we moving inches coz we bust bars and push bricks.*

*Escalate beef, who's in for the quick hit?*

*Will this bruise and why we die hard for?*

*Father lust so we bastards.*

*Wars blast first but we blast third, blasting fee is a blaspheme so don't blast for me,  
in the name of God they jail us through jea-lou-sy,  
sticky systems like jail you see.*

*Born to be the oldest male, stories of our fathers are only tales so I pray to the Holy Grail,  
society screams you've surely failed, we get blamed like just this,*

*government scaled there is no justice, just ice so we struggle through,*

*smart enough to use the 5Ws, I'm sorry can't beat me even if there was a double you.*

*Don't wanna pop your bubble dude, but look around you it's rubble so you screwed too.*

*So let them sing them songs until kingdom comes, like pharaohs rain land,*

*I'm still lost like Jonzi D in aeroplane man.*

© Saju Ahmed



## Imran Hafeez

### Not In My Name

*If I can understand and you can understand me,  
Then maybe we can get to where we need to be,  
No need to flee, come together and agree you will see,  
Our branches are different but were from the same tree.*

*Let me share what I see as I walk through this crowd,  
Should I dare, will they let me talk, will I be allowed?  
Lost in a cloud my destination is far,  
Corruption and violence and war give me scars.  
Someone show me the truth and what's meant to be,  
I'm on a mission trying to find my identity.*

*See me I got more labels than a high-street shop,  
I keep on getting called these names that I just am not,  
Why don't you stop?*

*Question the hate in your hearts make a start,  
Rip all your prejudices apart.  
'Coz the reason for cohesion is for us to get along,  
Don't wait to be told to, just get on with it and it won't feel so wrong.*

*Look from the outside every ghetto is the same,  
Heartbroken mothers silently suffer in pain,  
In a rage, we all look for someone to blame,  
But this is not the way – no – not in my name.*

*See my father worked hard, never questioned why,  
He had to graft seven days a week just to get by,  
'Coz of your struggle I can dream and hold my head up high,  
Your sweat, blood and your tears I can never deny.*

*It's not a lie, yes we can, come together indeed,  
No matter which end you're from or your colour or creed,  
Bradford as one- together we determine the need.  
Fight for your poverty and hunger but not for your greed.*

*Let's take heed in the lessons that we learn,  
Put our city on the map-this is our concern.  
And for the critics who talk and only watch when we burn,  
Excuse me sir, I live here, it's my turn.*

*To speak and to share how these things really are,  
'Coz your vision is distorted when you look from afar.  
And for the future I just hope that my kids can have a choice,  
In a place that's diverse with freedom and voice.*

Only in Bradford...

© Imran Hafeez



## Dumi Senda

### Black, White, Brown, Mixed... so what!

*Need I blow the vuvuzela?  
To make you understand, my brothers and sisters  
That a rainbow is a rainbow because of all its colours*

*I've been watching children play, watching them grow  
They miss nothing and see everything  
Everything but the colour of skin colour*

*Life in their eyes  
Is like a big lollipop with eyes  
Why can't we all be children like?  
Black, white, brown, mixed... so what!*

*Oh yes! I am aware of history  
Aware of its ugly faces I am  
Evil too, and its recycled phases breeding doom*

*But history just like the seasons transitions with time  
There are times of winter, drought and famine  
But just as sure as day will follow night, the rains will come  
Times of plenty and plenty of sunshine*

*Black, white, brown, mixed... so what!*

*That fleeting illusion that Bob Marley sang about  
That dream alluded to by Martin Luther King on the hill  
That robbed Mandela's freedom on Robben Island  
Village pitted against village, Nation against Nation  
That valley of human values, the trough beyond which we cannot fall  
And claim to be human at all*

*That line has been crossed  
And I for one am cross  
To see such great work by such greats  
Put to such great waste  
Black, white, brown, mixed... so what!*

*Does it count?  
That I count as the minority of the county  
Why does my blackness or whiteness or brownness  
Break the banks of their patience  
They that are not gifted with colour blindness  
That see not beauty deeper than skin pigment  
Carry their excuses hollower than elephant tusks  
That will not forgive the past*

*Their ignorance can be trusted to take more to the grave than flying bullets  
And their hate to enslave more than binding chains  
How better are they than cats and dogs?  
That hate for the sake  
How sad are we to feed of the hate bowl?  
For goodness sakes*

*Black, white, brown, mixed... so what!*

© Dumisani Senda

<http://www.voiceinjournal.com/dumi-senda/>

## POETS AND PICTURES IN THE RESOURCE

The following section includes poems and photographs of poets who feature in this programme. We have included some of their poems in this resource. To access our full archive of downloadable poems, recordings and performances please go to our microsite [www.ourstories.org.uk](http://www.ourstories.org.uk).

Photography by David Newland



Dumi Senda

Dumi Senda is an internationally acclaimed award-winning poet, children's author and peace activist. He is also an Ambassador for the Zimbabwe Educational Trust. He has performed in honour of President Nelson Mandela and has been a guest speaker at the United Nations in Geneva and the UK Houses of Parliament. He is a winner of the Zimbabwean Achievers Awards and a nominee of the BAFTA Awards. He has been personally mentored by legendary Civil Rights Activist and poet Clarence Thompson OBE, appeared on stage and performed with the world famous Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, shared platforms with members of the European Parliament and a CNN Hero of the year, and has been a plenary speaker at the Oxford University Pan-African Conference along with several African leaders, including government ministers and the current Acting President of Zambia, Guy Scott.

Dumi is published internationally; his debut children's book *"The Day the Sun Promised to Smile FOREVER"* has been translated into three languages with all proceeds donated to Innocence in Danger, a children's foundation created at the initiative of the UNESCO Director General to raise money for summer camps catering for victims of child sexual abuse in more than 32 countries.

His poetry has been published in several countries including Zimbabwe, Ghana, Germany and Canada, with some publications being used to educate children in Uganda.

Dumi has supported global philanthropic initiatives, including the Sarajevo International Peace Conference, Planet Aid, Save the Congo, Academia For Green Africa, AFRUCA children's charity, Haiti Earthquake Disaster, Pakistani Hope and many others. He has gained international acclaim for activism in areas of protection of children's human rights and race relations.



Hafeez Johar, 1973

Hafeez Johar was one of a new breed of Urdu poets who came to Britain as a 13-year-old, grew up in a wider British environment, and imbibed Asian cultural values from the backyard of his parental home.

He worked as a librarian for Bradford libraries. His work has been published nationally and internationally in newspapers and magazines in Britain and across India and Pakistan. He has to his credit a collection of poems titled *Barf Ka Roag* (misery of snow). His diction was modern and his poetry subjects came from the west.



Kirsty Taylor

Photograph by Emily Connor

Kirsty Taylor is a Bradford-born, Bradford-bred secondary school teacher. Guilty of MC'ing in her bedroom throughout her teenage years, with a keen ear for hip-hop and grime (tracksuit and trainers to boot!) Kirsty finally found her own way with words. Inspired by her beloved city of 'Bratfud', Kirsty takes a sensitive look at life in *Broken Britain*; from *Sausage Roll Babies* to *Social Media Addicts*, her rhymes and rhythms tell stories which are honest, accurate and often a brutal yet heartfelt reflection of today's society.

"She didn't read her poems, she didn't recite her poems, she delivered her poems with an astonishing commitment, and her combination of brutal honesty, passion and care was thoroughly engaging." John Clarke, Red Shed



Saju Ahmed

Saju Ahmed is a performance poet and a graduate of the Leeds Young Authors project. He has performed nationally and internationally at poetry slams and literary festivals including New York, California and Washington.

Saju says that he used to find it difficult to concentrate at school because he found it boring and often got into trouble with his teachers. This was before he discovered Poetry Slam which changed his life.



Joolz Denby

Bradford's very own Joolz Denby is perhaps the country's best-known female performance poet. She is a writer, illustrative and fine artist, tattooist, art curator and photographer. Her poetry collections include *The Pride of Lions* (1994), *Errors of the Spirit* (2000), and *Pray For Us Sinners*, a book of short stories and poems published in 2005.

Her featured poem was written as part of Bradford's bid for European Capital of Culture status in 2008. Joolz is an avid supporter of the Bradford Literacy campaign. She has attended events and has supported poetry competitions through her amazing writing tips for pupils.



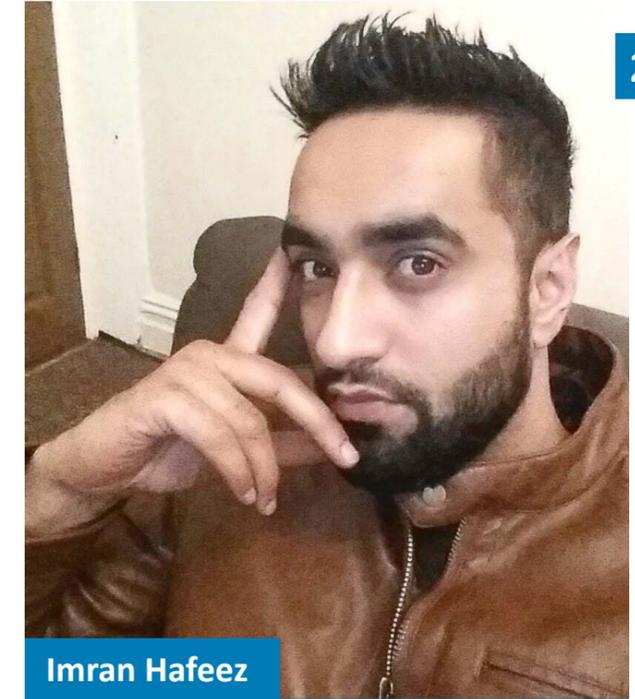
Francesca Beard

Francesca Beard is an internationally acclaimed performance poet. She has toured nationally and internationally as a solo artist and in various poetry collectives. She works extensively with the Poets in Education programme for Apples and Snakes, and has led poetry workshops and projects for over 10 years in schools and cultural organisations.



Ibrar Hussain

Ibrar Hussain is a secondary school teacher and learning mentor who describes writing lyrics as his way to synthesise his inner emotions and make sense of the world around him. In 2007 Ibrar helped to set up a local youth voices project called lyrics lounge which used the medium of spoken word performance to get kids off the streets and into a safe space where they could express themselves. He is a role model to many young people whose lives he has touched.



Imran Hafeez

Imran Hafeez is the National Literacy Trust's Hub manager in Bradford. He has supported the development of this programme and hopes the experience will help to inspire and build resilience in vulnerable young people in the city. He has written and recorded rap poetry in conjunction with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Bradford Council for social action projects and last year he spent some time with Bradford school groups inspiring them with his performances.



Michelle Scally Clarke

Michelle Scally-Clarke is a Leeds-born writer and performer. She is a published poet with two novels *I Am* and *She Is* currently in print. Michelle has performed with some of the UK's most recognised poets such as Linton Kwesi Johnson, Benjamin Zephaniah, Lemn Sissay and Simon Armitage, and has toured as a solo performer throughout the UK and internationally including America, Europe, Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

# PROJECT PARTNERS

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**Bradford Museums and Galleries**

**Bradford Council Music & Arts Service**

**Bradford Achievement Service**

**Bradford Literature Festival**

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## About the National Literacy Trust

We are a national charity dedicated to raising literacy levels in the UK. Our research and analysis make us the leading authority on literacy. We run projects in the poorest communities, campaign to make literacy a priority for politicians and parents, and support schools.

 Find us on Facebook [facebook.com/nationalliteracytrust](https://www.facebook.com/nationalliteracytrust)

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*Hafeez Johar, 1973*

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