

National Poetry Day – Theme:

Refuge



EMC ACTIVITIES TO SPARK THE READING & WRITING OF POEMS AT KS3, KS4 & KS5

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NOTE TO TEACHERS

Some of the poems here are more suitable for some age groups than others. Powerful, painful experiences are explored in poems about the refugee experience and the language, in some cases, might be shocking. Warsan Shire's 'Home' for instance, is an absolutely brilliant poem but the experiences it describes and the use of language might be most suitable for older students. We would recommend reading the poems in advance to select those that you feel are most appropriate for the students you are teaching.

Exploring Poems on the Theme of Refuge

The theme for National Poetry Day 2023 is 'Refuge'.

What is 'refuge'?

Here is a dictionary definition of refuge:

The state of being safe or sheltered from pursuit, danger, or difficulty
A place or situation providing safety or shelter.

Similar words are:

shelter
protection
safety
security
asylum
sanctuary
preservation
safe keeping
place of shelter
place of safety
haven
safe haven

A refugee has a more precise definition - someone fleeing violence, war, conflict or persecution - often crossing borders to find a new country that offers them shelter.

Refuge doesn't necessarily have to be about being a refugee. Here are some other, more every day examples of refuges - perhaps just from the pressures in your life.

- » a shed
- » a bedroom
- » a book
- » inside your head
- » refuge from a storm
- » visiting or staying with a grandparent
- » a mountain hut, for walkers to stay in

Listening to and Talking About the Poems

- I Listen to one or more of these poems about refuges of different kinds.
- I Talk about:
 - What kind of refuge the poem is about
 - What it suggests about the experience of seeking refuge
 - What the place of refuge is like
 - What the poem makes you think/feel
 - What phrase or line has a special impact on you and why.
- I How do you think the poet has managed to capture the experience in the poem?

Writing Your Own Poem

- I Write a poem about refuge. You could draw on one poem for ideas about what refuge is, use ideas from several poems, or come up with something of your own. For instance:
 - Write about a similar kind of refuge to that explored in one of the poems you've read e.g. refuge in the natural world, refuge from war, finding refuge in an object or place and so on.
 - Choose a different kind of refuge, not explored in any of these poems, drawing on the list at the start of this resource.
 - Draw on what you liked, or what had a special impact on you in one of the poems, to try to create a powerful impact in a poem of your own.
 - Do a 'magpie' poem, in which you pick out a few words and phrases from across several poems and weave them into a poem of your own.
 - Play with the different meanings of the word 'refuge' using the dictionary definition and other similar words, at the start of this resource, to create a poem about the idea of refuge.

The Poems

Pippa Little: For Refuge

<https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poem/refuge/>

Roger Robinson: A Portable Paradise

<https://nationalpoetryday.co.uk/poem/a-portable-paradise/>

Brian Bilston: Refugees

<https://nationalpoetryday.co.uk/poem/refugees/>

Julia Donaldson: I Opened a Book

<https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poem/i-opened-book/>

Warshan Shire: Home

<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/home-warsan-shire>

WB Yeats: The Lake Isle of Innisfree

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The Lake Isle of Innisfree

will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee;
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

W.B Yeats