

# Respecting Differences - Writing (Poetry)



## Aim:

To have a greater understanding of discrimination, stereotyping and prejudice through the writing of a poem

## Activity Description

Pupils will write a poem using a self-created 'word bank' of expressions, phrases, words and ideas.

## Main activity:

You might have seen a *hai-ku* – it's a very short poem of just three lines, where the first line has five syllables, the second line has seven, and the last one five again. For example:

*Faith is so complex*

*Dizzying diversity*

*Where do I fit in?*

These tiny poems are often used to fit big ideas into shorter statements or reflections. You'll be writing a poem inspired by three words – *discrimination*, *prejudice* and *stereotyping* – which follows a similar structure of set lines and syllables.

## What is discrimination?

Discrimination is when a human being is unfairly treated because they belong to a particular community. This can include communities of faith, sexuality, ethnicity, age and disability.

## What is prejudice?

A prejudice is an opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience. For example, somebody might consider all members of a particular community to behave in a set way – they literally 'pre-judge' individuals without knowing anything about who they really are.

## What is stereotyping?

Stereotyping occurs when it's assumed a fixed set of characteristics always represent people in a particular community. It ignores individual differences, reducing people to 'types'.

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The three characters in *Our Place* all experience and/or witness discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping in different ways:

- **BETH** experiences discrimination when she first arrives at the village school in Year 3 and is ignored and avoided because she is the only black student there
- **ALI** witnesses prejudice in his Dad because his Dad believes all Muslims are terrorists, even though he has never properly met a Muslim
- **JOSH** is stereotyped by **ALI's** Dad because **JOSH** is South Asian, and **ALI's** Dad therefore assumes him to be Muslim, not Christian

To create the 'word bank' that will form your poem, think about the definitions of *discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping* above and ask yourself:

- Which communities in your school, town or in England might be seen in these ways?
- Are there any situations in which you have seen or heard about these things happening – including in local or national news?
- Have you ever experienced any of these things directly?
- How do these things make you feel towards those responsible?
- Why do you think people might end up with ideas that lead to this way of thinking?
- What do you think those who discriminate, stereotype or act with prejudice could do to prevent them from thinking that way?
- How is it possible to overcome things you might genuinely believe, or have been told about those who are different to you?


Write all of your responses down on a piece of paper. They can be words, whole sentences, fragments, places, emotions and many more elements. Try and capture as much as you can.

Circle things that stand out to you. Connect them. Think about why they connect, for you.

**Now it's time to write your poem. The poem will have 9 lines in total.**

Use something from your word bank in every line of the poem. It does not need to rhyme!

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*Line 1 will have **1 word.***  
*Line 2 will have **3 words.***  
*Line 3 will have **5 words.***  
*Line 4 will have **7 words.***  
  
*Line 5 will have **9 words.***  
  
*Line 6 will have **7 words.***  
*Line 7 will have **5 words.***  
*Line 8 will have **3 words.***  
*Line 9 will have **1 word.***

*Bus*  
*Words of hate*  
*Everybody stares but no-one speaks*  
*Bubbling angry red-faced insides start to swirl*  
  
*Why can't I stand up, tell them they're wrong?*  
  
*I'm scared for my own safety too*  
*But slowly I get up*  
*Hear myself say*  
*Stop*

These sorts of poems capture reflections, images, ideas and emotions. You are painting a picture with words. It might sound incomplete or odd, but you are leaving gaps for a reader or listener to fill in with their imagination.

**What journey can you take us on through discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping, and how we might overcome it in the future for ourselves and others?**

## **Time required**

60 – 75 minutes

## **Materials required**

Pen and paper.