

# POETRY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

## 1. Practical information

<b>Theme</b>	Poetry and human rights
<b>Goal</b>	The pupils learn more about the different human rights and they try to see the world through the eyes of a refugee.
<b>Level</b>	4 ASO/TSO
<b>Time</b>	20-25 minutes 40-45 minutes if you want the pupils to write their own poem as well.
<b>Type</b>	- Class and individual work - Reading and speaking - Writing

## 2. Preparation

<b>Preparation time for teacher</b>	± 5 minutes <i>To do...</i> - Copy the worksheets for the pupils - Copy the guidelines for writing a poem
<b>Materials</b>	- Worksheets for the pupils with the poems and questions you ask about them - Guidelines on writing a poem - Pictures on which the pupils can base their poem - Dictionaries

## 3. Objectives

<b>VOET</b>	<b>Gemeenschappelijke stam:</b> 1, 2, 5, 7, 17 <b>Context 5:</b> 3, 13 <b>Context 7:</b> 3, 4, 6 <b>Leren leren:</b> 11
<b>Formation objectives: English</b>	<i>Language</i> - The pupils get in touch with a more fluent written language, that doesn't always respect the normal way of constructing sentences or a text. - The pupils learn that there are different ways of expressing oneself in words and that there are a lot of synonyms for words (in order to make a text/poem more interesting to read).
<b>Formation objectives: Human rights</b>	Personality formation - The pupils get in touch with emotions and they learn to look for emotions in other people. - The pupils know that working with emotions makes it more easy to find a way of expressing them yourself. World view - The pupils learn more about human rights violations all over the world. - The pupils get to know different forms of fighting against human rights violations. - The pupils develop a positive attitude towards human rights. By doing all kinds of activities they obtain insights and become aware of their own attitudes considering certain

	human rights. They also try and raise awareness amongst others.
<b>Final attainment goals</b>	Listening: 3, 7 Reading: 9, 11, 12, 14 Speaking: 17, 19, 20, 23 Writing: 29, 31
<b>Attitudes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The pupils are prepared to listen to each other with an open mind.</li> <li>- The pupils are willing to speak out loud.</li> <li>- The pupils are prepared to integrate into the social- cultural world of the writer.</li> <li>- The pupils are willing to focus on what they want to know.</li> <li>- The pupils are aware that they don't have to know every word to understand the context of a written text.</li> <li>- The pupils are prepared to scan their text for spelling- and grammatical mistakes.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The pupils are able to use a dictionary.</li> <li>- The pupils can find their way in a text by looking at pictures, key words, titles, subtitles and find important information by doing this.</li> </ul>

#### 4. Remarks

<b>Remarks</b>	<p>As an introduction, you can present a poem about human rights in an expressive way. You can find poems on the following websites.</p> <p><a href="http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/g_l/hughes/life.htm">http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/g_l/hughes/life.htm</a>  <a href="http://www.redhotjazz.com/hughes.html">http://www.redhotjazz.com/hughes.html</a>  <a href="http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/3">http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/3</a>  <a href="http://filipsagnoli.wordpress.com/">http://filipsagnoli.wordpress.com/</a></p>
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## 5. Activity and instructions

ACTIVITY	INSTRUCTIONS
<b>Introduction</b>	Tell the pupils that you found a poem you think they should read. It's a poem with the title <i>'I, too, sing America'</i> . Ask the pupils whether they understand what the poem is about?
<b>Task</b>	<p><b>STEP 1: pre-reading</b> Hand out the tasks to the pupils and tell them to read the first poem and solve the questions below the poem.</p> <p><b>Remark:</b> If you want to use more or other poems, you can always visit the link below and visit <i>'blog series'</i> and <i>'human rights poems'</i>. <a href="http://filipspagnoli.wordpress.com/">http://filipspagnoli.wordpress.com/</a></p> <p><b>Remark:</b> If you want, you can choose not to do this activity as a silent reading but as an expressive reading. You can present the poem expressively to the pupils.</p> <p><b>Remark:</b> You can show two pictures to the class: one of a black poet (Langston Hughes) and one of a white poet (Dylan Thomas). You can find the pictures in the enclosures. Ask them who they think wrote this poem. Why?</p> <p><b>STEP 2: reading/task</b> The pupils do their reading task.</p> <p><b>STEP 3: post-reading</b> When the pupils are ready, correct their answers in group. You can find a sheet with the answers in the enclosures.</p> <p><b>Remark:</b> To correct the first question (what human rights are violated), you can choose to put up pictures of human rights and ask the pupils which ones go with the poem. Then you, as a teacher, can tell them the correct name of that human right (or elicit this from the pupils). You can find pictures of human rights on the website below. <a href="http://www.vormen.org/downloads/">http://www.vormen.org/downloads/</a></p> <p><b>Remark:</b> For the second poem, you simply use the same strategies as you used for the first poem. In the introduction, the meaning of the word refugee should be clear to the pupils.</p>
<p><b>Some background information on Langston Hughes</b></p> <p>° 1 February 1902 Joplin, Missouri † 22 May 1967 New York</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- He was the great-great-grandson of the first Black American to be elected to public office.</li> <li>- He was an abolitionist: he wanted to end racism and the separation between black and white.</li> <li>- His parents divorced when he was young.</li> <li>- He was raised by his grandmother till he was 13, then his mother took over.</li> <li>- His father didn't really believe in poetry, so he encouraged him to do something else.</li> <li>- He went to Columbia University for one year.</li> <li>- He did a lot of different jobs: assistant cook, launderer, bus boy, ...</li> <li>- He was a seaman to Africa and Europe.</li> <li>- He moved to Washington D.C. in 1924.</li> <li>- He graduated in college education at Lincoln University (Pennsylvania).</li> </ul>	

- In 1930 his first novel, 'Not without laughter', was published, winning him the Harmon gold medal for literature.
- He wrote plays, poems, prose, short stories,...
- There is an influence of jazz in his writings.
- He wanted to tell the stories of his people the way that they would do it, he wanted to keep it real and express the fact that he is black.

[http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/g\\_l/hughes/life.htm](http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/g_l/hughes/life.htm)

<http://www.redhotjazz.com/hughes.html>

<http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/83>

**Evaluation:  
writing a poem**

**STEP 1: pre-writing**

Go over the brainstorming about the poem and the poets that you had with the pupils as a means to introduce the writing skill. Give the pupils some tips to write poetry: use synonyms, don't use too many words, you can use rhyme (but it isn't obligatory), write about feelings,...

**Remark:** If you have a computer with internet at your disposal in class, this is a website that can be used to find rhyme words.  
<http://www.rhymezone.com/r/rhyme>

**STEP 2: writing**

The pupils write their poems. You can choose to have them do this in pairs or in threes or fours, ... Walk around the class and see where you can be of any assistance.

**STEP 3: post-writing**

Here you have several options as to what to do with the poems: you can have the pupils read the poems out loud (in groups, in front of the class), you can have the pupils write their poems on big sheets of paper and hang them up, ....

You can also organise a literary contest in your school and/or an exhibition where different teachers can support the project (e.g. add illustrations to the poems) and/or create tableaux vivants, ...

## 6. Enclosures

6.1 Pictures: Langston Hughes, Thomas Dylan

6.2 I, Too, Sing America (Langston Hughes)

6.3 Refugee (F. Spagnoli)

6.4 Answers to the questions for the teacher

## 7. Sources

- Nelson, C. (Verified 19 May 2010).  
[http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/g\\_l/hughes/life.htm](http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/g_l/hughes/life.htm)
- Scott, A. (Verified 19 May 2010).  
<http://www.redhotjazz.com/hughes.html>
- Academy of American Poets. (Verified 19 May 2010).  
<http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/83>
- Spagnoli, F. (Verified 19 May 2010).
- Vormen vzw. (Verified 19 May 2010).  
<http://www.vormen.org/downloads/27RechtenTekeningenUitleg.pdf>
- One look dictionary search. (Verified 19 May 2010).  
<http://www.rhymezone.com/r/rhyme>

Langston Hughes



Dylan Thomas



## I, Too, Sing America (Langston Hughes)

I, too, sing America.  
I am the darker brother.  
They send me to eat in the kitchen  
When company comes.  
But I laugh,  
And eat well,  
And grow strong.  
Tomorrow I'll sit at the table  
When company comes  
Nobody'll dare  
Say to me,  
"Eat in the kitchen" Then.  
Besides, they'll see how beautiful I am  
And be ashamed,  
I, too, am America.



1. What is the poem really about, which human rights are not respected in this work?

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2. Who acts to defend human rights? How? Why?

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3. Are there similar conflicts that you know about (from the news, your neighbourhood, school)?

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**Refugee (F. Spagnoli)**

You can't be here, you can't be there,  
You can't be anywhere.  
Bacteria, that's what you are,  
Repelled and kept afar  
By States that think that they should be  
Immune systems for thee.

1. Which human rights are not respected according to this poem?

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2. Who is responsible for the violation of the human rights?

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3. Do you know a story of a refugee (from the news, your neighbourhood, school)?

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## Answers to the questions for the teacher

### "I, Too, Sing America" (Langston Hughes)

1. What is the poem really about, which human rights are not respected in this work?

- *We are all born free and equal.*
- *Don't discriminate.*
- *The right to a fair and free world*

2. Who acts to defend human rights? How? Why?

*Langston Hughes stands up for his rights. He feels that he is beautiful too and that he doesn't have to feel less than the people who discriminate him. He stands up by acting against the regulations, he will sit at the table and he will show himself to others.*

3. Are there similar conflicts that you know about (from the news, your neighbourhood, school)?

*Pupils' personal answers.*

### "Refugee" (F. Spagnoli)

1. Which human rights are not respected according to this poem?

- *Don't discriminate.*
- *Your rights are universal (shelter, ...).*
- *Right to asylum.*
- *Right to food and shelter.*
- *Fair and free world.*
- *Responsibility.*

2. Who is responsible for the violation of the human rights?

- *The people that are behind the war in the country of the refugees.*
- *The States that refuse to host the refugees.*

3. Do you know a story of a refugee (from the news, your neighbourhood, school)?

*Pupils' personal answers.*