

Spoken Word Challenge

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You Will Need:

- Access to the Internet & YouTube
- Paper & a pen
- A book (any that you have in your house – can be fiction or non-fiction) or newspaper/magazine

The Challenge:

Using these activities below, you will create a spoken word piece (max. 4 minutes) to express how you feel about the current world we live in, and you'll be able to submit this in an EBP competition.

Most importantly, it's about celebrating our experiences in the world we're living in - both positive and negative.

We'll be taking time to explore this through writing and spoken word poetry.

The World Today & Spoken Word

Spoken word poetry can be really powerful and is all about getting your point across in a way that is creative, emotive and persuasive.

But spoken word doesn't necessarily have to be poetry. It can be drama monologues, scripts, news reports, podcasts, chats/dialogue, comedy skits, speeches/debates, instructional videos/audio – there are lots of routes to expression! Think about YouTube videos – mostly these are carefully constructed - things are planned, written beforehand and edited.

Here are some activities that you can do at home to have space and time to think about our current state of the world in a creative way.

Activity 1: The World Today

On paper, write down a list of some things that are happening in the world right now, good and bad.

These can be things that are concerning you, and things that make you feel better. E.g. coronavirus & the lockdown/quarantine, but also people livening up their quarantined streets with art, laughter, music e.g. Italy screening films on walls, singing, couples dancing.

You can look up stories online too.

We end up having similar concerns and anxieties, especially in unsettling times like today, but we should also share the *good news* too.

Now: Pick 2 or 3 items from that list that you're most interested in – can be a mixture of good and bad things happening in the world currently. This is what you're going to use to create a spoken word piece.

Write these items out on a separate piece of paper and then write a few more words/lines for each issue to help you create a word bank/mind map for things that are happening in the world.

E.g. Coronavirus = lockdown, quarantine, fear, boredom, empty shelves, hand sanitizer, gloves, masks etc.

Do this for the other items you've picked and then put them to one side.

Activity 2: Examples of Spoken Word Poetry

Take a look at examples of spoken word poetry.

Lots of these poems are about being honest, sharing with an audience an event that has affected you, about hope, or about rebelling against the system.

While you're watching these, have a think about:

- What methods do these poets use to get their points across?
 - Is there anything they did that you like/would do better?
 - Think about the audience reactions – which parts got a reaction from them? Why do you think that was?
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDa4WTZ_58M&list=PLC5PJtWBigV2f4TM4Gx7IIpe1ummqg5jt&index=32 - Rudy Francisco - "My Honest Poem" (Button Live)
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buhWuhl8MMg> – Andrea Gibson – I Sing the Body Electric, Especially When the Power's Out
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUGDwmlb_yc&list=PLC5PJtWBigV2f4TM4Gx7IIpe1ummqg5jt&index=3&t=0s - Ajanae Dawkins - "When Viola Davis Won" (Rustbelt 2016)
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odCrgq5Po8c&list=PLC5PJtWBigV2f4TM4Gx7IIpe1ummqg5jt&index=26> - Brian Yu - "Reasons Why I Hate Student Loans" (CUPSI 2016)

Poets use similes, metaphors, numbered lists, exaggeration, emotive language, facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, pauses, varying volumes, and more. These are all tools that you can use too!

If you want to see more examples of spoken word pieces, have a look at more on the 'Button Poetry' channel on YouTube – <https://www.youtube.com/user/ButtonPoetry> - there are lots of videos to choose from. Watch what they do and use methods that inspire and suit you.

Activity 3: Random Metaphor Exercise

Quick reminder:

Similes = comparison, something is like something e.g. she was as brave as a lion.

Metaphors = comparison, something is something else e.g. she was a lion.

We're going to create new random metaphors through an exercise by the brilliant poet Ross Sutherland to help spice up our writing.

Here is a statement that you'll be filling in the blanks for:

'The world is a _____.'

Choose a book (any – fiction or non), magazine or newspaper. Flick randomly to one page and put your finger on a word, and then do the same with another page. Those are your two words that you fill in the blanks with.

You can switch them around so it makes sense, or if your eyes float to a better word, you can use that instead. Some are very odd but most are great and really improve your writing!

Here are some examples when I did it:

The world is a messy possible.

The world is a nagging thoughtcrime. (1984)

The world is a thin soap. (Marie Kondo)

The world is a joyful sink. (Marie Kondo)

The world is a yes! remember.

The world is a comfortable journey.

You can use any of your random metaphors in your spoken word piece. You can write out your favourite metaphor on another page, and if you'd like, use that as a starting line for your poem.

You can also substitute the statement too, and can pick something like 'This family is a _____.'
OR 'The NHS is a _____.' Play around with this and see what metaphors you get.

Activity 4: Writing to music

Have a go at writing to these songs below in a stream of consciousness.

This means that you have to make sure you write continuously and don't lift your pen off the page. If you get stuck, just keep writing a word over and over again until you get out of it.

It doesn't have to be poetry – it can be prose, or random words, sentences, or a few lines repeated. There are no wrong answers.

It's a really good way to get things in your head out onto the page, and you often find interesting words/lines in it when you're not thinking too hard.

1) Have a go at writing to the song *Avril 14th* by Aphex Twin:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F6dGAZTj8xA>.

What does it make you think of?

2) Now write to the song *Perdido Street Blues* by Louis Armstrong:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqBgap8Kgms>.

Again, what does it make you think of, or feel? Keep writing all the way through and see what you come out with!

3) Now have a listen to *We Are Winning* by Flobots:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9gc6iQYQJ8>

This is a great song & spoken word piece to music about resistance and rebellion. How does it make you feel? What does it say about people, or society today?

You can listen to this and write your response after, OR whilst the song is playing. The lyrics in this might make you want to listen first and then write after. Let the song sink in.

Now read back over your stream of consciousness writing.

Circle/underline a word(s) or line(s) that you liked, or that surprised you.

Feel free to use these for your spoken word piece. If you want to take a favourite line and expand it by writing more on another page, do that too!

Also, for your spoken word piece, if you'd like to use music in the background, please do so! Just make sure to practice how it sounds, pick a track that suits your words and that is no longer than 4 minutes, and make sure you can be heard clearly so that you're not being drowned out by the song.

Activity 5: Write Your Spoken Word Piece

Look back at your writing and think about your words, the issues in the world you picked at the start, your random metaphors, your writing to music, and any other memories, feelings, struggles and what makes you, you in the world today. You'll use all this to create your spoken word piece.

Remember: this can be a poem, story, letter, monologue/speech, or any other piece of spoken word that you prefer. Write your piece in any structure you choose, and be as creative as possible!

General Tips & Reminders:

- **You will create a spoken word piece (max. 4 minutes) to express how you feel about the current world we live in, and you'll be able to submit this in an EBP competition.**
- You have a unique voice and a story to tell. It's important to celebrate diversity and experience, or even lack of experience. If you speak another language, make sure to use that in your work!
- Think about all the methods that spoken words poets use in their work to persuade their audience. Remember your body language and facial expression, volume, tone, pauses, rhythm, expression, enthusiasm. Also remember that poetry doesn't need to all rhyme!
- You don't need to 'act' the poems, but consider the emotion and intention behind them, the voice they are written in, to whom they are being spoken.
- Think about tense (past, present, future) and voice (first – I/We, second- you, or third person – he/she/it/they).
- Spend time editing your piece – read out loud and if you trip up on any words, then you may need to re-write it. Your brain can pick up lines that don't work as well. If you can and want to, read it to someone else and see what they think!
- Own your space and have conviction in your words. When you're recording your **entry (audio or video)** remember to practice first, and then perform with confidence. We all get nervous so help this out by breathing, standing strong and practicing so you know the piece well. Then submit your best take. **Good luck!**