



Ark Pioneer Learning at Home Core Curriculum *English Literature 11 – Additional Support Booklet*

Work to be completed

This booklet is designed as an alternative to the main English Department booklet. This booklet explores a powerful poem by British poet Benjamin Zephaniah: '*What Stephen Lawrence Has Taught Us*'. We will be exploring the theme of racism* in poetry.

**Racism is the belief that some races of people are superior to (more important than) others based solely on the colour of their skin.*

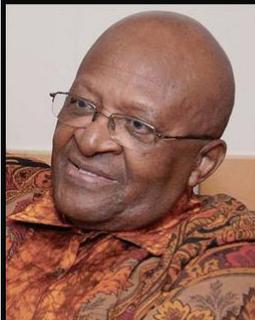
For hundreds of years people in Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities have been, and continue to be, subjected to illegal racist treatment by some, not all, white people. This is a shameful part of our society and we must work together to eradicate (get rid of) it fully.

Once you have completed the work in *this* booklet you can return to the *main* English booklet and attempt the other poems if you want to. One option would be to attempt the 'Do Nows' on each poem.

Resources/Links to help with this work:

- [This](#) is a link to the handwritten poem 'What Stephen Lawrence Has Taught Us' that Benjamin Zephaniah donated to the British Library.
- [This](#) is a link to Benjamin Zephaniah's official website.
- [This](#) is a link to an interview Benjamin Zephaniah did with The Guardian newspaper.
- [This](#) is a link to a reading of a poem called 'Stephen Lawrence Isn't On The National Curriculum' by Josephine Corcoran.
- [This](#) is an article written in 2018 by Doreen Lawrence, Stephen's mother – she was marking the first Stephen Lawrence Day (22nd April) and calls for schools to teach children to challenge racism and embrace inclusion.

I'm not racist, so I don't think this has anything to do with me

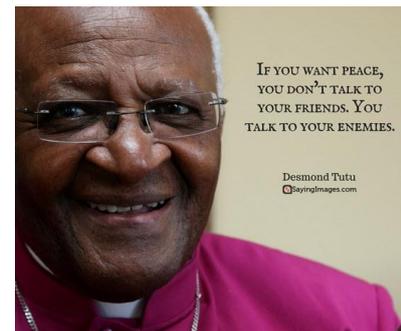
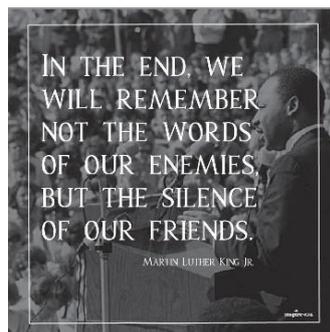
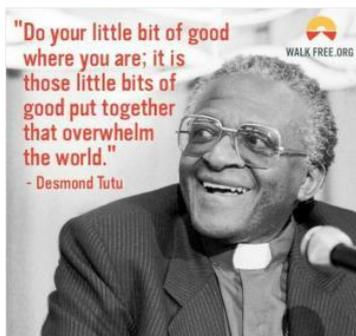


If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.

(Desmond Tutu)

IZQuotes

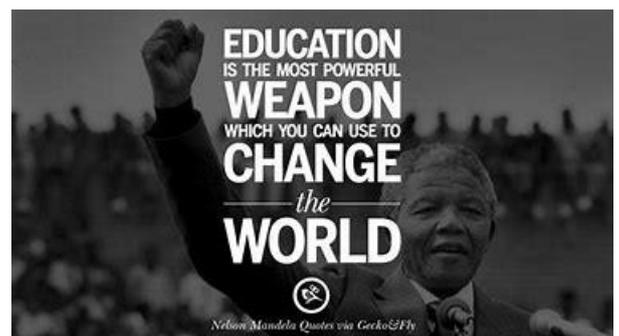
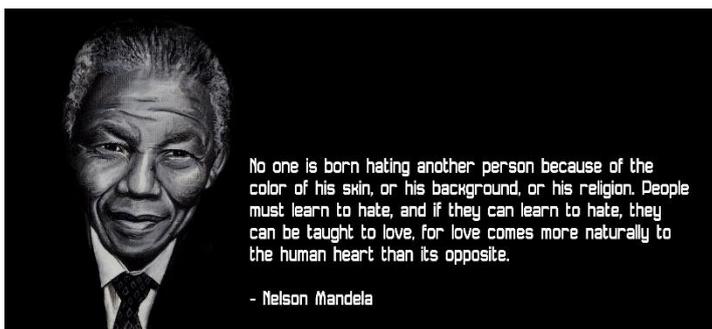
As Mr Rimmer said in our assembly; each and every one of us has a duty to respond to racism when we witness it – to shine a light on its darkness and work to eradicate it from our society. Discriminating against people because of the colour of their skin is not only wrong but illegal: this behaviour has no place in our homes, our schools, our places of work, our streets. It is easy to feel hopeless, to feel that we cannot make a change, to feel that we are too small to move ‘the elephant’ Archbishop Desmond Tutu speaks of in the quotation above. But doing nothing is not an option – if everybody does something, then a change will come.



The way in which you respond is up to you – you can denounce (say you are against) racism that you witness happening. In doing this you let the perpetrator (person doing it) know it is unacceptable and that you stand with the person they are attacking. With the permission of your parents you can write to your MP, attend protests and sign petitions for change. If you yourself have been subject to a racist attack, don't suffer alone – tell an adult you trust, which of course can be a teacher at school.

What has this got to do with poetry?

Many people use the arts to expose and condemn (say that they are against) racism – in music, in art, in plays, in novels and in poetry. You can definitely do this! We will be studying a poem by Benjamin Zephaniah 'What Stephen Lawrence Taught Us' – a poem he wrote in response to the murder in 1993 of 18 year old Stephen – a black boy, killed by white boys.





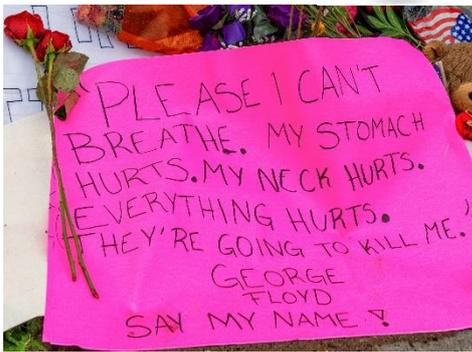
Do Now:

Look at the images on this page.

What do they make you think?



How do they make you feel?



You can use some words from the bank at the bottom if you need to.

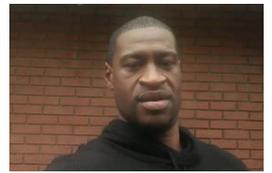


racism injustice illegal brother son father unarmed unlawful
murder protests peace violence Black Lives Matter brutality
global law justice organise petition tragic

angry confused frightened hopeless disappointed unsure fearful
passionate hurt sad horrified hopeful



Who was George Floyd?



On 25th May of this year, George Floyd, a 46 year old black man, was killed by a white police officer, Derek Chauvin, in Minneapolis, USA. Chauvin was filmed kneeling on George Floyd's neck for over eight minutes until he died. On 29th May Chauvin was charged with murder. The world has recoiled in horror at this atrocious act and protests, marches and vigils have taken place globally to demand justice for George Floyd's family and an end to police brutality against black people. Protestors stand in support of the Black Lives Matter movement demanding racial equality worldwide.

**BLACK
LIVES
MATTER**



Who Was Stephen Lawrence?

Stephen Lawrence was a black British teenager from Plumstead, Southeast London, who was murdered in a racially motivated attack while waiting for a bus in Eltham, London on the evening of 22 April 1993 – he was 18. The case was hugely controversial (created a lot of disagreement) because of how poorly it was investigated by the police and courts of law. An inquiry into the handling of the case led to cultural changes of attitudes on racism and the police, and to the law and police practice. Two of the perpetrators (people accused of the crime), Gary Dobson and David Norris, were convicted of murder in 2012 – 19 years after the crime took place. A 1998 public inquiry, examined the original Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) investigation and concluded that the force was institutionally racist. The murderers were always known locally but it took nearly twenty years for justice to be served – and this was in no small part to the tireless campaigning of Stephen's mother, Doreen Lawrence, Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon, OBE. To this day, not all those responsible for Stephen's death have been put on trial.



The death of Stephen Lawrence in the UK prompted Benjamin Zephaniah to write a poem called 'What Stephen Lawrence Has Taught Us' that we will study in this booklet.



Task 1



Comprehension Questions – *remember full sentences, capitals and full stops:*

1. What is the name of the American man whose death last month has sparked global protests?
2. In what city in America was he killed?
3. Who has been charged with his murder?
4. What organisation is fighting for the equal rights of black people everywhere?
5. What is the name of the teenager killed in a racially motivated attack in 1993?
6. How long did it take for his killers to be found guilty of his murder?

Task 2



Read the poem at least twice. You can also listen to Benjamin Zephaniah reading the poem aloud [here](#). As you read think about these questions:



- What feelings do you think Zephaniah is experiencing in this poem?
- What does he want his reader to feel and experience?
- Look up any words you don't know that aren't included in the glossary column.

What Stephen Lawrence Has Taught Us

We know who the killers are,
We have watched them **strut** before us
As proud as sick **Mussolinis'**,
We have watched them strut before us
Compassionless and **arrogant**,
They paraded before us,
Like angels of death
Protected by **the law**.

It is now an open secret
Black people do not have
Chips on their shoulders,
They just have injustice on their backs
And justice on their minds,
And now we know that the road to liberty
Is as long as the road from slavery.

The death of Stephen Lawrence
Has taught us to love each other
And never to take the **tedious** task
Of waiting for a bus for granted.
Watching his parents watching the cover-up
Begs the question
What are the trading standards here?
Why are we **paying** for a police force
That will not work for us?
The death of Stephen Lawrence
Has taught us
That we cannot let the **illusion** of freedom
Endow us with a false sense of security as we walk the
streets,
The whole world can now watch
The academics and the super cops
Struggling to define **institutionalised racism**

Glossary

strut – walk proudly with a swagger

Mussolini – an Italian dictator in the 1930s and WW2

Compassionless – not caring

arrogant – self-important

the law – complexities in the law meant the killers were not convicted though the local community knew they were guilty

tedious - boring

paying - British taxes paid by all who work in the UK go towards the costs of many services, including the police force

illusion – false idea

Endow – to give

institutionalised racism - when an organisation fails to support people

As we continue to die in **custody**
 As we continue **emptying our pockets** on the pavements,
 And we continue to ask ourselves
 Why is it so official
 That black people are so often killed
 Without killers?
 We are not talking about war or revenge
 We are not talking about **hypothetics** or possibilities,
 We are talking about where we are now
 We are talking about how we live now
 In **dis state**
 Under **dis** flag, (God Save the Queen),
 And God save all those black children who want to grow
 up
 And God save all the brothers and sisters
 Who like **raving**,
 Because the death of Stephen Lawrence
 Has taught us that racism is easy when
 You have friends in high places.
 And friends in high places
 Have no use whatsoever
 When they are not your friends.
 Dear **Mr Condon**,
 Pop out of **Teletubby** land,
 And visit reality,
 Come to an honest place
 And get some advice from your neighbours,
 Be **enlightened** by our community,
 Neglect your well-paid ignorance
 Because
 We know who the killers are.

Benjamin Zephaniah

because of their skin
 colour

custody – when being
 held by the police

emptying our pockets – a
 reference to the stop &
 search policy which
 targeted black people

hypothetics – something
 that isn't real

dis state – a play on words,
 suggesting a nation, but
 also a mess

dis – using Caribbean
 dialect

raving – a reference to the
 times police are called to
 investigate a party
 because the partyers were
 black

Mr Condon – the
 Commissioner (head) of
 the Metropolitan Police
 when Stephen Lawrence
 was killed

Teletubby – a character
 from popular toddler TV
 show in the 1990s set in a
 fictional, fantasy world

enlightened – taught

Task 3



What is this poem about?

(Use the word bank below to help you fill in the blanks.)

Zephaniah's poem 'What Stephen Lawrence Taught Us' examines the aftermath of the _____ of ____ year old Stephen Lawrence in _____. He is _____ at the lack of justice Stephen's family received in their quest to find his killers. Zephaniah makes it clear that the local community know who the killers are, but that complexities in British Law prevented them from being brought to _____ and punished for their _____. Zephaniah is disgusted that while academics and the police force discuss racism embedded (buried deep) in our society _____ are being unfairly stopped and searched, they are dying in police custody, and they are being killed without the killers being found. Zephaniah questions why the taxes of black people should go towards supporting a _____ that doesn't support them.

Zephaniah notes that if you have _____ in positions of authority ('high places') then it seems you are above the law. He challenges the (then) Metropolitan Police Commissioner _____ to come to south-east London where Stephen and his family lived to speak to the black community there. He challenges Condon to admit he is being paid to _____ he doesn't know what is happening and instead to _____ investigate the crime by asking those who know who the killers are.

properly 18 crime friends Paul Condon justice
pretend death 1993 angry police force black people

Task 4 – Think Harder



Questions about the poem

1. What is a rhetorical question? (Use a dictionary or Google)
2. What three rhetorical questions does Zephaniah ask in this poem? (**Tip:** Look for the question marks.) Why do you think he asks them if doesn't expect an answer? What effect do they have?

Rhetorical Question	Effect created
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'What are the trading standards here?'	Trading Standards ensure that consumers are protected from unfair trading. Zephaniah's rhetorical questions points to how unjust the situation is for the Lawrence family; if people can be protected against unfair trading systems, why was Stephen's family not protected against unfair laws and an unfair criminal justice system. Why did they have to fight for justice?

3. Repetition (using the same word(s)/phrases more than once) is often used in poetry to emphasise a point and Zephaniah uses this to powerful effect in this poem. Find at least three times Zephaniah uses repetition in his poem. What points do you think he is trying to make?

Repetition	Point being made
We, us, you, they	Zephaniah uses these pronouns to emphasise the fact that the black community are unified in their quest for justice against the police community who are obstructing it.

4. What imagery (metaphors and similes) can you find in the poem? Why do you think they have been used? They have been partially found for you – use the poem to fill in the blanks.

Simile or Metaphor	Meaning
'We have watched them strut before us/As proud as sick Mussolinis'	Comparing the killers to a murderous dictator shows the reader exactly what Zephaniah thinks of them - that they have abused power and killed in a merciless way.
'Like a _____ of d _____ '	
'Black people do not have _____ on their _____./They have _____ on their _____/And _____ on their _____,'	
'we know that the r _____ to l _____/Is as long as the r _____ from s _____'	

5. Why do you think Benjamin Zephaniah wrote this poem? What do you think his message is? Do you think he is successful at delivering his message?

Red Pen Check your answers on the next page and return to the main booklet if you wish to explore some more poetry on the topic of racism.

Red Pen Check your answers

Task 1

Comprehension Questions:

1. What is the name of the American man whose death last month has sparked global protests?
The name of the American man killed last month was George Floyd.
2. In what city in America was he killed?
George Floyd was killed in Minneapolis.
3. Who has been charged with his murder?
Derek Chauvin has been charged with the murder of George Floyd.
4. What organisation is fighting for the equal rights of black people everywhere?
The Black Lives Matter organisation is demanding equal rights for all black people.
5. What is the name of the teenager killed in a racially motivated attack in 1993?
Stephen Lawrence was killed in a racist attack in 1993.
6. How long did it take for his killers to be found guilty of his murder?
It took nearly 20 years for two of Stephen's killers to be found guilty in a court of law. Others involved in the attack walk free to this day.

Task 3

What is this poem about?

(Use the word bank below to help you fill in the blanks.)

Zephaniah's poem 'What Stephen Lawrence Taught Us' examines the aftermath of the death of 18 year old Stephen Lawrence in 1993. He is angry at the lack of justice Stephen's family received in their quest to find his killers. Zephaniah makes it clear that the local community know who the killers are, but that complexities in British Law prevented them from being brought to justice and punished for their crime. Zephaniah is disgusted that while academics and the police force discuss racism embedded (buried deep) in our society black people are being unfairly stopped and searched, they are dying in police custody, and they are being killed without the killers being found. Zephaniah questions why the taxes of black people should go towards supporting a police force that doesn't support them.

Zephaniah notes that if you have friends in positions of authority ('high places') then it seems you are above the law. He challenges the (then) Metropolitan Police Commissioner Paul Condon to come to south-east

London where Stephen and his family lived to speak to the black community there. He challenges Condon to admit he is being paid to **pretend** he doesn't know what is happening and instead to **properly** investigate the crime by asking those who know who the killers are.

Task 4 – Think Harder



Questions about the poem

1. What is a rhetorical question? (Use a dictionary or Google)
A rhetorical question is one that does not require an answer.
2. What three rhetorical questions does Zephaniah ask in this poem? (**Tip:** Look for the question marks.) and why do you think he asks them if doesn't expect an answer?

Rhetorical Question	Meaning
'What are the trading standards here?'	Trading Standards ensure that consumers are protected from unfair trading. Zephaniah's rhetorical questions points to how unjust the situation is for the Lawrence family; if people can be protected against unfair trading systems, why was Stephen's family not protected against unfair laws and an unfair criminal justice system. Why did they have to fight for justice?
'Why are we paying for a police force/That will not work for us?'	Throughout the shoddy investigation of the death of their son, Mr and Mrs Lawrence's taxes will have been going toward the police force who were failing to properly bring their son's killers to justice. This fact is the same for black people everywhere who the police have mistreated. Zephaniah's rhetorical question shines a light on this shocking truth.
'Why is it so official/That black people are so often killed/Without killers?'	This rhetorical question forcefully points out that people who are killed must have been killed by someone – and yet official

	statistics show that the killers of black people are rarely brought to justice.
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3. Repetition (using the same word(s) more than once) is often used in poetry to get a point across and Zephaniah uses this to powerful effect in this poem. Find at least 3 times Zephaniah uses repetition in his poem. What point do you think he is trying to make?

Repetition	Meaning
We, us, you, they	Zephaniah uses these pronouns to emphasise the fact that the black community are unified in their quest for justice against the police community who are obstructing it
'We know who the killers are' opens and closes the poem.	By opening and closing the poem with this phrase, Zephaniah makes it clear what his poem is about and that he does not intend to hold back in his attack on the criminal justice system.
'We have watched them strut before us' is used twice in the opening stanza.	This repetition emphasises how powerless the black community feels to have to witness such merciless defiance of the killers of Stephen and be unable to seek justice.
'The death of Steven Lawrence has taught us' is repeated three times in the poem.	Zephaniah does not want Stephen's name or manner of his death to be in vain or forgotten – his repetition of this phrase ensures that.
<i>There are many other words and phrases repeated in the poem – you may have selected something else.</i>	

4. What imagery (metaphors and similes) can you find in the poem? Why do you think they have been used? They have been partially found for you – use the poem to fill in the blanks.

Simile or Metaphor	Meaning
'We have watched them strut before us/As proud as sick Mussolinis'	Comparing the killers to a murderous dictator shows the reader exactly what Zephaniah thinks of them – that they have abused power and killed in a merciless way.
'Like angels of death'	Zephaniah's short simile is brief and packs a punch – he does not hold back in describing Stephen's killers – likening them to creatures from hell.
'Black people do not have a chip on their shoulder,/They have injustice on their backs/And justice on their minds.'	Zephaniah purposefully employs an overused metaphor in 'chip on their shoulder' that has become a cliché and cleverly intertwines it with a new metaphor of black people being weighed down by injustice pressing down on their backs while longing for justice consumes their minds.
'we know that the road to liberty/Is as long as the road from slavery'	Zephaniah uses this metaphor to point out that despite the abolition of slavery over 150 years ago, black people are still not free of racist treatment.

5. Why do you think Benjamin Zephaniah wrote this poem? What do you think his message is? Do you think he is successful at delivering his message?

I think Benjamin Zephaniah wrote this poem for several reasons. First and foremost I think he wanted to expose the killers themselves – to let them know that their identities were known to the black community who were watching them. Secondly I think he wanted to let the world know that the police force was corrupt to its core and was purposefully failing to serve justice to the Lawrence family. I also believe that Zephaniah wanted to highlight that Stephen's death was not a stand-alone incident but part of a pattern, allowed and encouraged by institutionalised racism within the police force and British law.