

We Are Lewisham Creative Challenge KS4-5

A National Poetry Day resource by the teachers and children of Dalmain Primary School, from creative workshops with Francesca Beard and support from National Poetry Day.

#NationalPoetryDay
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Decimation

They're cutting down the trees.

And all I can hear
above the machines
is a voice
screaming
Hurt not the trees!

Hard to believe the girl up there,
held high by branches,
is real.

Her hair flies in bunches and
she's waving a flag
that she's made of her clothes.
Half-naked she stands
astride the world,
in her bra and ripped jeans,
in the rain,
certain she'll stop the bulldozers,
the saws,
that grate and grind,

salivating, mechanical wolves,
teeth bared
and tearing at air.

I dream of doing
something incredible.
I dream of daring to do the impossible
sometime,
soon,
before it's too late.

from *Activist* by Louisa Reid (Guppy Books, 2022)
© **Louisa Reid**

Poetry can be a powerful tool for protest.

Read 'Decimation' by Louisa Reid out loud
and talk about it together.

- What is the mood of this poem and why?
- Who has the power in this poem?
- Does the writer make you want to do something about the trees?

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February

The number of amphibians are in decline, they have suffered from an increase in disease and a lack of habitat as we build and bulldoze.

Soft pond jewels are forming
in sunlit forest eyes
and garden pools.

Expectation and hope
balled-up in clear jelly.
Frog baby crèche.

When the frogs were plenty
and the spawn everywhere
we'd jar-scoop them.
Handlebar dangle them
to the old fish tanks stored
on our balconies.

We'd watch the full stop grow
on an unwritten sentence,
would our hopes hop?

It is now too dangerous
to take frogs home.
We've diminished their numbers,
filled in their forest eyes.
Denied our childhood hopes.

from *A Year of Nature Poems* by Joseph Coelho,
illustrated by Kelly Louise Judd (Wide Eyed Editions,
2020)

© **Joseph Coelho**

Now read 'February', by Joseph Coelho.

- How is the mood different about the impact of bulldozing nature?
- What emotions does he conjure up in this poem?
- Does it make you want to act?

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Brainstorm some ideas in groups about anything you want to protest to do with the environment – it could be about clean air, global warming, or something very particular in your local area.

Write down some things that connect you personally with the issue you have chosen e.g. your brother has asthma and struggles with the pollution

Think how you will use your poem to protest. It could be spoken word, or a short poem for a placard. You could write a poem letter to someone in a position of power.

You could use a strident voice, like in 'Decimation', starting with a bold statement like 'they are choking up our streets' or the nostalgic tones of 'February' – remember how people used to revel in the sun but many felt fear this summer during the heatwave. Or try using repetition, writing a list poem where each line begins in the same way, like the beginning of ['I Never Asked for Another City' by Dean Atta](#).

Further reading: this [collection of poems of protest from the Poetry Foundation](#) may inspire you with how different writers have tackled a range of issues.



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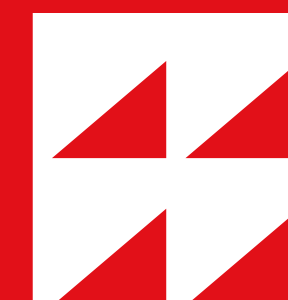
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