

## Words Have Meanings

I designed this resource for some schools I was working with during my time in Australia. The best example done by children was from a senior high school way up in the north of Western Australia. Newman is a town with a population, when I worked with them, of around 4,000 people. The high school catered for all and so classes were of a mixed age. I hoped that the project, while developing their writing skills, as their teacher said in a letter to me after the work was done, would also help them to think about communication in general and how it is so important to make sure that what you have communicated is what the receiver has understood.

This is an extract from the teachers letter to me:-

*The English students of our school benefited tremendously by the One World Project initiated by you in 2004. Most of our students participated and did well due to the excellence of the project..... As Head of Department of English, I was personally very impressed by the various aspects of your project which enabled our students to participate and achieve skill-development and self-esteem as well..... The project has definitely been a wonderful way to motivate our students to work on their writing skills. Thank you for launching this project and working with our school.*  
*Swarnamali Seneviratne – Head of English, Newman Senior High School, Western Australia*

Here, then, is the work the students did.

### WORDS HAVE MEANING

Jake Bartlett

SALTWATER

by J. Lennon

We are a rock revolving around the golden sun

We are a billion children rolled into one

So when I hear about the hole in the sky

Saltwater wells in my eyes

We climb the highest mountain; we'll make the moon bloom

We're so ingenious we can walk on the moon

But when I hear of how the forests have died

Saltwater wells in my eyes

I have lived for love but now that's not enough

For the world I love is dying  
And time is not a friend, as friends we are out of time  
And it's slowly passing by, right before our eyes  
We light the desert ocean, send photographs of Mars  
We're so enchanted by how clever we are  
Why should one baby feel so hungry she cries?  
Saltwater wells in my eyes

The poem saltwater by Julian Lennon is a poem filled with the writers emotions and feelings, along with their opinion about modern technological advancement.

The first verse is like the introduction to the subject. The first two lines are used so that the writer can make his first and central point. He indicates that the world is very special, so when he hears about things like our problems with the ozone layer he is upset and concerned. "Saltwater wells in my eyes"

The second verse uses Sarcasm to begin expressing the song writer's opinion on the subject. He says though we think we are so smart and can walk on the moon; we cannot even look after our own forests or save our world. The sarcasm also introduces a feeling of sadness. "We're so ingenious we can walk on the moon But when I hear of how the forests have died Saltwater wells in my eyes"

The third verse is used to bring in a sense of urgency. The writer says we are running out of time and we get the feeling that we must act now to save our environment and look after our own land and people, rather than spending so much time on our technological achievements. "And time is not a friend"

The writer adds to the effect of his sarcasm by introducing poverty. The contrast between poverty and our belief of self-intelligences comes as quite a major blow and that sense of urgency is increased greatly. "Why should one baby fell so hungry she cries?"

I chose to analyse this song because I share some of the writer's points of view, and I care about our environment. I think this song is very emotionally engaging.

Hak Bettles

INCIDENT

by Countee Cullen

Once riding in old Baltimore,  
Heart filled, head filled with glee,  
I saw a Baltimorean,

Looking straight at me.  
Now I was eight and very small,  
And he was no whit bigger,  
And so I smiled, but he poked out,  
His tongue, and called me 'nigger'.  
I saw the whole of Baltimore,  
From May until December,  
Of all things that happened there,  
That's all that I remember.

The poem I have selected is called "Incident". The poem is about racism towards a black boy. The poem related to a story using effective language and technique to help the readers to understand the theme. The title of the poem "Incident" is a word that creates curiosity. This generates the reader's interest in wanting to read the poem to find out more. In the first line of the poem, the word "once" symbolises a story telling technique. This also relates to the title to create a story structure for the readers to have a better understanding.

The first stanza has a positive image to the poem. "Heart filled, head filled with glee" The technique is used to create a feeling of happiness and freedom in the boy. The readers visualise an image of a boy on a bike who is enjoying himself. The last line on the first stanza creates curiosity. "Keep looking straight at me" The technique is used to generate curiosity to who is looking at the boy. The words, "looking straight", suggest an unfriendly and a formidable stare.

The poem has more of a negative feeling in the second stanza. The technique was to point out racism. "Nigger" This is a harsh word and the readers feel that the innocent child has lost his freedom.

In the third stanza the image of the boy's adventure is a contrast of feeling that is emphasised. "I saw the whole of Baltimore, from May until December" The readers have an image of what the town is really like. The racist and unfriendly look from the white boy has stamped a formidable memory in the black boy's head. "Of all the things that happened there, that's all that I remember" The readers know that the curiosity is known now with the racist incident the black boy played a part in.

I selected this poem because I thought racism is a big issue in the world today. I think that the world and society does not need racism because it does hurt people and has an affect on people's minds.

Stan Bukilic

## THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

by Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveller, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth  
Then took the other, just as fair  
And having perhaps the better claim  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,  
And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day  
Yet knowing how way leads on way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back  
I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference

“The road not taken” by Robert Frost is a reflection of one’s decisions, contemplating whether it was right or wrong. He goes into considerable depth describing how hard it was for him to finally decide to take the road less travelled. Imagery is used to produce a picture in the reader’s mind of both roads. The poem makes the reader really stop and think about the decisions he/she makes in life, inflicting curiosity and sympathy to the poet and people who face same problems. In the introductory stanza Frost is confronting the problem (where he is undecided), and we can see how much of an impact this decision had on him by the way he speaks. In the second stanza, he decides to take the road less travelled by; this is unexpected by the people reading the poem, but again understandable. The 3rd stanza is when Robert contemplates on his decision, wondering if it was right or wrong. The concluding sentence talks about what happens as a result of his decision and how it’s affected him.

The way the poem is structured is what makes it so dramatic and effective for the reader.

Why I selected this poem:- People make significant decisions in life when they select certain pathways to follow. Sometimes these may result in positive outcomes; sometimes these decisions may bring disappointment. The poem discusses a very potent and real

issue as it unfolds the realities of life and the consequences of choices people make. In my life as an YR 11 TEE student I can relate to this poem well. That is why I selected to respond to this poem.

Brendan Czepulkowski

## RACE RELATIONS

by Jean Burgees

They played together behind the garden wall,  
The white child and the black, building in sand  
The palaces, the bridge and the tall  
Pinnacles of their enchanted land.  
They did not feel the wind was going chill  
They did not see the sun had left the walls  
They did not hear the voice grow near a shrill  
Mary why don't you answer when I call  
Oh you wicked child, have I not told you?  
You must not play with kaffirs? Go inside  
And wait for your father. He'll scold you.  
And serves you right, who have no proper pride.  
Dragging her feet Mary moved slowly, moved towards her mother,  
And she turned and without a sound  
The children did not look at one another  
She raised her foot and trampled to the ground  
The palaces of their enchanted land,  
Crunched underneath her heel the stones and clay  
And, leaving no trace upon the dirty sand,  
She slowly walked away

Race relations is a sad poem about a white child called Mary, who has a racist mother who tells her off for playing with a black child.

Verse 1 is about Mary and the black child playing in the sand dreaming, playing and having fun with each other. I think this verse is great; children should be able to play like this all the time because it helps them develop imagination and understanding

Verse 2 is about Mary's mother coming closer as she calls for Mary to come home. It is an important verse because it is when the children stop playing and everything fun for the children stops.

Verse 3 is about Mary being told off for playing with the black child. I think this is wrong and nasty because the children don't care about colour; they care about fun and friendship.

Verse 4 is about Mary unwillingly following her mother's racist commands. "Dragging her feet, Mary moved slowly, moved towards her mother".

Verse 5 is about Mary leaving the black child, crushing, destroying all of their fun, dreams and friendship as she follows her mother's instructions. "The palaces of their enchanted land, crunched underneath her heel".

I don't think that racism should be introduced to young children such as Mary. This poem addresses how unfair racism can be. I feel sad for Mary because she has been told off for making a friend when she thinks it is the right thing to do. Racism is bad for everyone.

Chloe Czepulkowski

### HUNGER STRIKE

by C. Prendergast

A chubby school girl stares at piles of clothing  
'And then at slim line skirts and skin tight jeans  
Views her mirror image with deep loathing,  
Caught in the trap of doubtful early teens  
She lonely and afraid of growing older  
Controls her life-she thinks-by losing weight  
Ignores the shivers though she's feeling colder  
And pleas to eat from a world she's come to hate  
The happy daughter, keeping bright and cheerful  
Sinks-her pared-down weight too much to bear  
Slightest upsets break her, makes her tearful  
Fearful of the world adults share  
Force-fed to health, her fragile nerves stretched tauter  
She slips as soon as left to live alone  
The fatted calf to sacrificial slaughter  
Offers to the god of self her bones

Hunger strike is a poem full of emotion about an issue I believe is very serious; and today's society is to blame for, as modern values on appearance has contributed to this tragic consequence. To me as I read, the poem is about a school girl reaching her early teens, she is trapped and doubtful of her chubby image as she stares at 'slim line skirts and skin tight jeans'. The school girl becomes 'lonely and afraid of growing older', this is because her

weight didn't matter to her as a child; she was still accepted, but now is afraid to grow older, 'caught in the trap of early teens', as her peers reject her more and more.

Eating is her escape, her comfort zone, which is why she wants to 'eat from a world she's come to hate.' I believe she's come to hate this world through the pressure society puts on people to be skinny, and wear the latest fashions to find a place to belong. The school girl enters depression; the pressure she faces day after day has influenced her to believe she will be happy and in control by becoming thinner; 'controls her life she thinks by losing weight.'

As the school girl puts on a happy face to her parents, the thoughts and pressures of her weight became too much to bear. This makes her become more self-conscious, and emotionally fragile. She is scared of being judged in 'the world that adults share' which she sees as a place that admires only the thin and beautiful. She is broken and depressed. As she grows older she becomes more alone, which as a result she becomes anorexic; this is symbolized in the poem as 'the fatted calf to sacrificial slaughter, offers to the god of self her bones; I believe the girl is the 'fatted calf' sacrificing her body to anorexia symbolized by 'god of self'! 'God of self' could also possibly symbolize society's pressures, she the fatted calf, gives into the god of self society and media.

Reading this poem makes me angry at society for putting these pressures on people, particularly girls. Driving them to starvation, in order to meet these expectations to fit in. I wonder, why the government allows pathetic, reality shows such as 'American Playboy Fear Factor' to be shown on television. People watch this and think 'I have to be beautiful like them' or 'am I fat because those girls are skinnier than me?' These television shows emphasize the pressure of being thin to fit in, they do not result in anything positive, constructive or useful, only the smallest human brain could be entertained by them. Another example is 'Joe Million Air'. One male picks from a group of females like a rack of meat who he wants to be with, while these so called 'beautiful' girls, lower themselves to extreme levels, throwing themselves at a man they do not know, or have even seen before. To me, that is not what being beautiful or attractive is about, perhaps in America's eyes, but we are Australian.

The Australian government should not bring pressures like this into our country, they are Americas shows, Americas pressures; we are not America's sheep! My opinion is reinforced in the poem where it states 'And pleas to eat from world she's come to hate,' everyone should hate a world which portrays such shallow values through these ridiculous television shows.

The media is the main problem causing self-image issues in society. It is a tragic incident

when someone is nearing their death because of such pressures. Worrying too much about their body and weight, when people should be accepted for who they are, not on appearance. After all, outward appearance is not at all as important as the beauty found inside.

Mitch Czepulkowski

### THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

by Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveller, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth  
Then took the other, just as fair  
And having perhaps the better claim  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,  
And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day  
Yet knowing how way leads on way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back  
I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference

The road not taken is a poem about choices that people have to make during their lives. Robert frost has brought this forward to the readers using a mixture of poetic techniques and language.

The first stanza of the poem tells the readers about the situation the narrator is in and that he has been struck with a choice. This is told by “two roads diverged in a yellow wood”(two choices) and “And be one traveller, long I stood”( the time took deciding which one to choose).In the first line yellow wood sets a setting but it also creates a mood which gives the reader intentions of the narrators hope. Also in the first stanza there is another symbol, “Undergrowth”. This symbolises covering



and in this case covering the road so the choice is harder to make because you can't foresee. The author also creates interest in the readers by making the last word of every line rhyme with each other in a scheme of A, B, A, A, B. This helps the readers pay a little more attention to message the author is trying to put forward. This is a quality that adds to its appeal.

The second stanza tells the readers that the narrator makes a choice- "Because it was grassy and wanted wear". The word grassy symbolises untouched and the line tells the readers that the narrator took the choice that others hadn't taken.

The third stanza brings forth the "what if" situations that people have and think about. The second line "In leaves no step had trodden black" means that you can't come back to the start. The third line "Oh, I kept the first for another day!" is joking about coming back and choosing that choice. This leads on to the last two sentences which brings to mind that you cannot really go back so always make the right decision.

The fourth stanza explains how the narrator took the right choice and it has made him a happy man. In the second line the author uses the colon mark and hence to indicate that he is telling a story. The last three lines explain how his choice has affected him.

Robert Frost intends to tell the reader about the journey of life and decisions that society has to make and this is the basis on why I like this poem. I like this poem because I think that the message put across is very relevant to me as an upper school student because in the next two or so years I will have to make a lot of choices about life and where and what I am going to do in the future. The first time I read this poem was in year 10 and I think it has made an impact on the way I think about decisions and also not to make decisions too quickly. The poem also emphasises that sometimes it pays to be different and go for your dreams instead of following others and doing what everybody else does when confronted with decision making. I like this poem because its interesting, has actually affected me and has probably educated a lot of others as well

Chamara Seneviratne

## INCIDENT

by Countee Cullen

Once riding in old Baltimore,  
Heart filled, head filled with glee,  
I saw a Baltimorean,  
Looking straight at me.  
Now I was eight and very small,

And he was no whit bigger,  
And so I smiled, but he poked out,  
His tongue, and called me 'nigger'.  
I saw the whole of Baltimore,  
From May until December,  
Of all things that happened there,  
That's all that I remember.

The poem 'Incident' tells us about a black boy riding in Baltimore when a white Baltimorean calls him a 'nigger'. The word 'Incident' itself is a powerful word because it suggests that something has happened. It arouses the curiosity of the reader. The word 'once' which is the first word of the poem makes us recall the story telling techniques ranging from the era of long ago to modern years "once upon a time...". I like that beginning very much because it suggests that a story is going to be told.

The theme of this poem is racism. Racism takes place, when it is considered ignorantly that one race is superior to other races. I do not like racism, because it is a negative thought that brings conflict and in the end it creates tragedy and unhappiness, depression and alienation as well as disaster. People filled with anger and hatred as well as thoughts of racism cause misery in others and in the world itself, due to their thoughtless, reckless and cruel actions. The poem makes me think a lot about the sad situation in our world today. When I read this poem, I thought of the sad situation in Germany during World War II when racism was the reason for the deaths of millions of Jews.

The tone of the poem I think this is a sad poem because it is telling us about racism as well as hate. It creates a feeling of anger as well towards the racist person in the poem who made the narrator sad and upset. The reader is also moved when he hears lines like-

I saw the whole of Baltimore, From May until December, Of all things that happened there,  
That's all that I remember The words- I was eight and very small – make the reader really sad for the child. When a child is exposed to cruelty like this, it is hard for him to cope unlike an adult who can be stronger. This whole thing sounds worse because it happened to a young child. The terrible impact the word "nigger" had on the carefree child was tremendous. His head and heart were filled with glee, so that meant that he was going to have some fun and all that was spoilt by the racist remark, "nigger". In the end that was all he could remember from the entire trip. How sad! The word "nigger" is a harsh sounding word; it is two-syllabic, abrupt and has a terrible sound. It is also a horrible insult.

Why I selected this poem: I liked to respond to this poem because it talks about racism. I have been a victim of racist comments in the past. Therefore I can relate to what the little

boy experienced. Poems of this nature must be made public and discussed like this so that people realise how hurtful and bad racism can be, and they all (hopefully) learn to reject it totally and completely. The colour of the skin is not important in anyone. What is important is what is inside... the qualities and the values of a human being.

Amy Zadow

## RACE RELATIONS

By Jean Burgees

They played together behind the garden wall,  
The white child and the black, building in sand  
The palaces, the bridge and the tall  
Pinnacles of their enchanted land.  
They did not feel the wind was going chill  
They did not see the sun had left the walls  
They did not hear the voice grow near a shrill  
Mary why don't you answer when I call  
Oh you wicked child, have I not told you?  
You must not play with kaffirs? Go inside  
And wait for your father. He'll scold you.  
And serves you right, who have no proper pride.  
Dragging her feet Mary moved slowly, moved towards her mother,  
And she turned and without a sound  
The children did not look at one another  
She raised her foot and trampled to the ground  
The palaces of their enchanted land,  
Crunched underneath her heel the stones and clay  
And, leaving no trace upon the dirty sand,  
She slowly walked away

It is really nice to see children of two different races playing together. Most parents hate their children playing with children that are a different colour to their own children. The child should get to choose who they want to play with. A parent shouldn't interfere with who the child is friends with, even if they are black. Once their parents would have yelled at them for playing with a black child so they should know how it feels to have a parent break up a friendship. Children feel upset when their parents won't let them play with their friends due to racist ideas.

In the first verse the children are so happy. They're having a great time building sandcastles and being friends.

In the second verse the children were having such a good time that they didn't notice that the sun had left the wall and there was a slight chill in the breeze.

In the third verse a parent came and started yelling at her daughter because she was playing with a black child.

In the fourth verse the parent told her daughter to go home and wait for her dad. The child dragged her feet slowly across the sand because she didn't want to go.

In the fifth verse the poet is describing what it was like for the children. The dreams were crushed by one racist parent.

This poem describes what a parent can do to a child. Jean Burgess describes the exact feelings of a child having fun, and friendships being destroyed, due to racism.