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RIT THROUGH SUBJECTS MOTIVATION FOCUS OPTIM



# ENGLISH

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## Teaching Character Through Subjects – English Suite 2 Key Information

<b>Teacher</b>	Rebecca Tighe	<b>School</b>	University of Birmingham School
<b>Overview</b>			
<b>Curriculum Area</b>	English		
<b>Subject Focus</b>	<p>The topic is to use poetry How we can use poems to explore character qualities. The scheme of work is aimed at groups in KS3</p> <p>The first four lessons gradually build the pupils’ skills at using drama to explore the themes of virtue within a series of poems, ending with the pupils devising their own ‘virtue- inspired’ poetry performance. The last lesson looks at poems that begin to explore what it means to be human: to live, to love, to die, to doubt etc. and particularly focus on the idea that poems ‘should not mean but be’.</p> <p>The SOW encourages wider reading, reading for pleasure, enables schools without discrete drama to use this within a poetry scheme of work, and through exploring the themes of the poem, begin to look at how poets use poetic devices to create meaning. There is also flexibility within the project to switch poems in certain sections to link more closely with prior studies, or with cross curricular themes.</p>		
<b>Identified Key Character Qualities</b>	The character qualities are confidence and optimism from performance virtues and integrity from moral virtues.		
<b>Character Focus</b>	<p>The approach combines three ways of developing key character traits.</p> <p>Firstly, the content of the poetry itself is used as a means to an end, identifying ways in which the ‘characters’ in the poem used virtue or vice, and what the outcomes of their choices were. For example, we look at how Isabelle in the poem by Ogden Nash remains courageous and optimistic, never falters in her determination to defeat obstacles in her way, and how use of this quality enables her to succeed even when odds are stacked against her.</p> <p>Secondly, dramatic techniques are developed to enable pupils to explore the motivations of the character further (developing and consolidating their understanding of character qualities) and set them up with some challenges inspired by the text to show them we are often asked to make difficult decisions but can draw on our character quality to help us make the right ones. For example, as part of the role play during the study of ‘Ozymandias’ pupils had to imagine they had been asked to create a version of history which they knew wasn’t correct – they had to think about all the choices their character had, what made doing the right thing difficult and what qualities their characters would need to acquire and develop in order to</p>		

	<p>make choices that they felt showed integrity and honesty.</p> <p>Finally, by exploring the poetry through drama, the pupils themselves often have to be optimistic and confident as many won't have used drama before. The scheme of work gently introduces very simple freeze frames, and moves slowly through short improvisations to script writing and longer polished performances. Exploration of body language, tone of voice, emotions and thinking about the role of the audience and how we perceive ourselves to be perceived by others really enables them to be 'taught' how to appear confident and then 'be' confident as they acquire, consolidate and develop their own virtues.</p>
<p><b>Differentiation</b></p>	<p>The choice of poems was made so as to be accessible to most with a glossary – 'Ozymandias' proved most difficult to access but the majority understood the main themes.</p> <p>Most are short (no longer than a page) and have lots of supporting materials (spoken word versions of 'Ozymandias' and 'Dulce et'). The process scaffolds learning through more difficult content, and by using role play first, introduces some of the more challenging themes in a way that then seems more contextualized. Several tasks had a more challenging element for those who needed stretch; one of the pupils in one class has an EHC for moderate learning difficulties so he just worked on smaller sections of the poems.</p> <p>I ended up adding lots of visual clues to the drama studio for 'Ozymandias' and 'Dulce et' – posters, pictures, music, artefacts and props for example – to help establish the scene.</p>
<p><b>Adaptability</b></p>	<p>These would be difficult to cover in a shorter lesson as they stand; there is easily enough material to slow things down, perhaps spend more time on textual analysis for longer lessons. Where this is the only introduction to poetry, more work could be spend on the text itself and drama could be used just to introduce the key themes of the texts.</p> <p>It has worked with a class who has had no prior drama teaching but would work equally well as a discrete drama unit or where drama is taught as a discrete subject within English.</p>
<p><b>Affect on School Priorities</b></p>	<p>It is difficult at this early stage to see what impact the lessons have had on their behaviour as we also teach character in tutor time and other lessons. However, we had an incident where a member of the class who had studied the Simon Armitage poem was on report, and we were able to think about whether being good some of the time is good enough, and how we have to work towards always doing the right thing.</p> <p>In terms of employability, they are definitely becoming more confident, working better as groups and working with people who they would not normally work with. Again, whether this is</p>

	because of the focus on character qualities, or because they are practicing more drama is hard to disentangle.
<b>Things That Worked Well</b>	<p>The pupils loved being given a challenging situation and having to work out what the 'right thing' to do might be. They realized there is sometimes no right answer, but definitely a 'wrong' answer, and they became very thoughtful about which qualities needed to go together to make right decisions.</p> <p>They enjoyed the fact that each week they had a different poem and a new challenge to work out. They also said it didn't feel like 'English' and have been starting to ask for more drama lessons.</p> <p>They particularly loved the Simon Armitage poem and we had some really interesting debate around whether or not you can ever say you are a good person or whether you are always on a journey to being one.</p>
<b>Things That Might Be Improved</b>	<p>I would have liked twice as long on each lesson to really explore the role play aspect of things and perhaps play out different scenarios, showing the long term effects of different choices. I also felt that sometimes the poems were more a stimulus for exploration of character and we lost some sense of their beauty and depth as 'literature' and art, but this could be regained with more time.</p> <p>Pupils really understood the benefits of being optimistic and confident and honest – it is slightly harder to grapple with the concept of integrity I think. More examples of people who have integrity (or probably easier, who don't!) through cross curricular links would be good.</p> <p>I would also really liked to have 'kindness' as a quality to explore and think this would have fit in nicely.</p> <p>The homework tasks were not taken quite as seriously as I would have liked and meant reflection at the start of lessons didn't have relevance for all and pupils felt it was getting in the way of the drama and just wanted to 'start'. Perhaps shift the reflection to assembly time or tutor time and give it it's own space?</p> <p>We didn't have time to involve parents and again, I think this would have supported homework tasks.</p>
<b>Lessons</b>	
<b>Subject Focus</b>	<p>Lesson One: 'Ozymandias' by PB Shelley – understanding integrity</p> <p>Objective: What to do if someone asks you to do something that you feel is morally wrong? What to do when a version of events is not a fair representation of the truth? How can character virtues help you make the right decision?</p>

	<p>Lesson Two: ‘poem’ by Simon Armitage – extend our understanding of integrity</p> <p>Objective: To explore whether it’s OK to make mistakes provided we learn from them. Are there some mistakes which just make us bad people or have we just made bad choices? How can character qualities help you make the right choices?</p> <p>Lesson Three: ‘Isabelle’ by Ogden Nash – begin to learn about confidence</p> <p>To explore how being confident can help us solve problems that might seem impossible. How can character qualities help us with our struggles in life?</p> <p>Lesson Four:</p> <p>Selection of poems that include the themes of optimism eg ‘Still I rise’ Mary Angelou ‘If’ Rudyard Kipling, ‘See it Through’ Edgar Albert Guest, ‘Inviticus’ H S Rice</p> <p>To explore how optimism can reframe how we see our day and the tasks we have to undertake. How can character qualities help us to enjoy the things we find more difficult?</p> <p>Lesson Five: Jonathan Carol ‘What’s it like to be human...’</p> <p>Objective: to look at the poems we have studied and poems they have been collecting and come to some conclusions about how character qualities affect the people we are. How can character qualities help us to be the people we want to become?</p>
<p><b>Character Focus</b></p>	<p>Lesson One: Integrity</p> <p>Lesson Two: Integrity</p> <p>Lesson Three: Confidence</p> <p>Lesson Four: optimism</p> <p>Lesson Five: optimism, integrity, confidence, honesty</p>
<p><b>Lesson Activities</b></p>	<p><b>Lesson One:</b></p> <p><b>Activity one: students and teacher in role as citizens of Ancient Egypt (5 minutes)</b></p> <p>Setting the scene, teacher in role</p> <p>Teacher starts the lesson in role as Ramesses the Great’s sculptor. Teacher explains that she has been commissioned to design a huge sculpture of Rameses the Great but has a real moral dilemma with the commission and some of the inscriptions she has been asked to write. She explains that Ramesses has asked her to design the biggest monument in history to celebrate the battle against the Hittites, but that it doesn’t tell the truth. She doesn’t want to design something</p>

that will be around for ever that tells a lie. Ask the class what she should do?

Teacher answers the questions in role, but using Socratic questioning where possible to throw the dilemmas back to the students. Teacher tries to steer the discussion around honesty, maybe suggesting that if she doesn't do as she is asked there will be dire consequences, but suggesting perhaps that we should do as we are told if someone in authority tells us to do it? Continue for as long as students' questions seem relevant.

**Activity two: students in role as citizens of Ancient Egypt discuss the moral dilemma (10 minutes)**

Teacher steps out of role, puts the class in pairs and explains that the class have been told they need to work on the monument too. For doing so, they will get paid good money and gain high status. Ramesses has made Egypt great, he has expanded the Empire and brought peace to many regions. If they don't, they will probably never work for Ramesses again. Add the dilemma -that they all had members of their family who fought at Kadesh against the Hittites, many were brave and fearless warriors who died in the battle -, but the Monument will portray the battle as if it was all down to Ramesses, and not mention the other soldiers at all. Pairs divided into A and B with A's arguing they have to take the commission, and B's saying they shouldn't with as many reasons as possible. Teacher chooses pairs to share their role play, and class draw together pros and cons of taking part in the building of the monument.

**Activity three: Reflection and introduction to 'virtues' (10 minutes)**

Once the class have shared some role plays, ask them how they felt to be faced with a moral dilemma. Is there always a right answer to things? Did they feel compromised having to argue something they didn't believe in? Have they ever thought about what it is that enables us to make the right choices especially when there are difficult decisions?

Introduce Aristotle's concept of virtues: A virtue enables us to act or feel in the **right way**, about the **right things**, toward the **right people**, at the **right time**, for the **right reasons**: what Aristotle called **the doctrine of the mean**, or the middle way.

Ask the class to think about what virtues or values they think Ozymandias should have had as leader of a country. Then ask them to think about what virtues they need to be good children. Are they any different?

DIFFERENTIATION: younger students or those with a more limited vocab could use worksheet with a list of values on it.

**Activity Four: students discuss the outcomes of Ozymandias' building campaign (10 minutes)**

Teacher shows slides of Ramesses' legacy, particularly focussing on an inscription allegedly written on one of his statues (explain Ramesses name translates into Greek as

'Ozymandias');  
'King of Kings Ozymandias am I, If any want to know how great I am and where I lie, let him outdo me in his work'.  
What are the classes' initial thoughts and feelings about this? (don't comment on the 'values' of these judgements).  
Help by providing a vocab list on a slide of useful words perhaps including 'ostentatious', 'ambitious', 'celebratory', 'boastful', 'vulgar', 'pretentious', 'optimistic', 'awe inspiring'.

**Activity four: reading of the poem  
(10 minutes)**

Explain that the class are going to look at a sonnet (explain that this normally means a very rigid rhyme scheme and rhythm but Shelley didn't really follow it in this poem) written about 'Ozymandias' that was written by Percy Bysshe Shelley in 1816. He wrote it inspired by the news that a huge fragment of a statue of Ozymandias was going to come to an exhibition in London. Both wrote about one of the huge statues that Ozymandias had made for himself but are looking at it a thousand years later...

Try to get the class into groups ideally of three.

DIFFERENTIATION: the level of differentiation required for this will need to be judged by the teacher. As long as pupils grasp the basic message that the statue has broken, the empire no longer exists and the irony of Ozymandias' claim, it will be enough. Some vocabulary will need explaining (antique, trunk, visage') and you can help them visualise it by showing an image of 'trunkless legs of stone'. Explain they need to try and investigate what the poem is about, and how it makes them feel.

They should read it through on their own quietly, then in groups out loud, with each person in the triad taking on one of the voices of the poem, asking any questions they need for clarification. There may be versions of this being read aloud on the internet which the teacher could share.

The groups should then share their thoughts about what it is about and how it has made them feel. Try to scaffold learning from what we have learnt about the statue to the wider metaphors about humanity, nature, time, art etc.

**Activity five: bringing meaning to their own lives: what is an honest life? (10 minutes)**

Was Ozymandias' legacy of statues and buildings a true reflection of who he was? Was he honest? Did he have integrity? All the money that Ozymandias spent on wars meant that when he died, there was no more money in the treasury to sustain the Empire and it soon became defeated.

In small groups the students are once again in role as the sculptors assistants. They have decided they cannot undertake the work that they have been asked to do, as they know it is wrong and dishonest. Show how they come to this conclusion.

Explain they have to prepare a speech that they are going to deliver to Ozymandias himself, including all the reasons why they have made their decision; extra challenge could be to add

a section where they suggest alternative ways of celebrating success that are not so ostentatious.  
The groups then present these to the teacher in role as Ozymandias, who can decide in each case to accept their reasons, or have them banished to prison or worse!

**Plenary: reflect quietly on what you think you have learnt about honesty. L(5 minutes)**

Is there always an 'honest' way to behave? Has anyone started to think about the strategies they might use to help them make the right choice?

**Homework:** over the next week, try and notice when there is a situation that requires honesty, either from you or others. Are you able now to stop and notice the choices that are available and think about what a good decision might be? Students can bring some of these to be shared next lesson

NB ideally, there could be a way of sharing these anonymously, with pupils either emailing their teacher before hand, or handing something in for those who don't want to publically share these. The teacher should try and notice a situation to share too.

**Lesson Two:**

**Activity one: sharing what we've noticed (5 minutes)**

Students and teacher share what they've noticed about situations where they or someone else had to be honest; any relevant anonymous feedback shared. IS honesty just about handing in lost purses or not cheating or is it wider? Try and brainstorm ideas about what it means to be an honest person and come up with some ideas on the board.

**Activity two: initial reading of 'Poem' by Simon Armitage (10 minutes)**

Get the students in groups ideally of three (a group of four should nominate someone as director). Explain they are going to be looking at a poem by Simon Armitage, a contemporary poet.

Hand out the poem and get them to read and think about how it makes them feel.

NOTE: some might need help understanding the more colloquial language

In their groups, ask students to prepare a series of tableaux that captures each of the five main actions in the poem which they are then going to show to the class. They should focus on thinking carefully about the facial expression of the male character.

At least one person needs to add themselves to the tableaux as someone who is there at the scene but only as an observer – maybe a pedestrian, nurse, neighbour, other family member but they don't need to explain to us who they are yet.

Choose a couple of groups to share their tableaux. Ask the class



to think about what would we think about the character from what we have seen in the tableaux?

**Activity three: drawing out poetic devices  
(10 minutes)**

Tell the class they are going to try and find out more about the anonymous man, so they can eventually make a judgement about his life, and see if they agree with the narrator.

Before they do this though, get them to try and look at what devices the poem uses to make making this judgement difficult?

Depending on prior knowledge, perhaps looking at the significance of the title ( or lack of one), the anonymity of the main character, the controlled use of structure, syntax and repetition, the effect of colloquial language and euphemisms, the use of an omniscient but neutral, non judgemental narrator etc

**Activity four: drawing out character  
(15 minutes)**

The group are going to watch the teacher demonstrating hotseating; she will be in role as a neighbour who watched him sweep the snow away. The class are invited to ask questions to find out more about the man and will obviously be the 'experts' as they know the whole picture. The teacher should make out that she is glossing over any bad points, and hopefully get the class to demand more answers.

One of the students who was an 'observer' is then chosen to go in the hotseat to talk about watching the daughter get slipped. Let the class lead the questioning; if the observer did nothing, and the class don't explore this, the teacher should step in role with audience to encourage them to do so.

Repeat for the remaining scenes.

Did all the characters do something about the things they saw?  
What actions did they take?

**Activity five: 'a good life'  
(15 minutes)**

Remind students about what a virtue is (enables us to act or feel in the **right way**, about the **right things**, toward the **right people**, at the **right time**, for the **right reasons**: what Aristotle called **the doctrine of the mean**, or the middle way).

Based on the evidence in the poem, do they think this man has led a good life? This should open up a debate about whether it is possible to always be good, or whether it is what we learn from our mistakes that is important. Are some actions clearly more wrong than others; are lots of little mistakes more acceptable than one big one?

The students should now go back into their original tableaux, and choose one of the scenes from before but this time freeze just before the wrong thing takes place. They are then going to improvise the next minute of the scene where a change happens and the 'wrong thing' doesn't happen, either because the man changes his mind and talks himself into the right

actions, or because an observer intervenes and persuades him to change.

Share the scenes and get the class to try and notice what strategies were used that led to the right thing happening.

**Activity 6: reflection**

Ask the students what they have learnt about changing wrong actions to right actions from what they have role played today. Have they used looking, thinking, noticing, self talk, advice? Can any of them see how these techniques might be useful in their own lives?

**Homework: the good life**

Ask them to start noticing when they have a difficult choice to make. Can they use any of the skills they have learnt over the last two weeks to help them make wiser choices? Can they ask for advice, stop, look, notice?

**Lesson Three:**

**Lesson 3: how confidence can help with integrity and resilience**

**Starter: reflection**

**(5 minutes)**

The class and teacher share any anecdotes or examples (or look at any examples sent anonymously) of a situation they have found themselves in since last lesson where they have been able to make the right choice by stopping, looking, listening and noticing and doing the right thing.

Ask them again to share what virtues they need to always do the right thing. If it doesn't come up, ask them about courage.

**Task 1: sharing what it feels like to be lack confidence**

**(5 minutes)**

Get the class into pairs, sometimes sitting back to back for this makes sharing personal feelings easier. A closes their eyes, tries to remember a time when they lacked the confidence to do something that they don't mind sharing, and describe in as much detail as possible how it felt, what was going through their mind, what their worries and concerns were and B listens carefully. The teacher then chooses three or four B students who tells the class about the experience but pretends it has happened to them (narrating it in the first person). The pairs swap and repeat.

**Task 2: reading 'Adventures of Isabel' and finding ways to have confidence**

**(10 minutes)**

Explain we are going to look at a poem where the central character shows lots of confidence. The class are then going to create their own character and take them on an adventure where they have to be brave.

Decide how the class are going to read the poem. It is a good one to read with each pupil taking a rhyming couplet each

around the circle or with small group of four taking a stanza each. Once it's been read a couple of times, discuss what makes Isabel such a 'brave' character. What does she do to win the battles? Capture responses and guide the pupils to exploring whether she uses any virtues (courage, resilience, grit, love etc)  
Task 3: reading '

**Task 3: using non naturalism to create an imaginary journey for their superhero (10 minutes)**

Class brainstorm some of the 'obstacles' a child younger than them might encounter where they need them to be confident (teacher to collect ideas or add some to show examples but the list should be led mainly by pupils eg taking a test, making friends, telling someone they have a problem, talking in assembly, finding a spider in their school bag).

In small groups pupils then create a younger child Superhero, who overcomes the obstacles in their way. Either through narration, direct address or holding up cards during a freeze frame, the group should clearly show what virtues they are using to overcome the obstacles.

DIFFERENTIATION: this would work well as a piece of non naturalism, using personification to enable the 'obstacles' to talk and show what techniques they are using to strip the Superhero of their confidence, with soundscape, repetitive actions and direct address adding to the effects.

Share the plays with the class with the audience focusing on how the characters use their confidence (10 minutes)

**Task 4: caterpillar**

Explain that for the last three lessons we have been looking at virtues and how virtue enables us to act or feel in the **right way**, about the **right things**, toward the **right people**, at the **right time**, for the **right reasons**: what Aristotle called **the doctrine of the mean**, or the middle way.

What helps us to be able to feel in the right way?

Show the caterpillar slide. Ask the students to think about what it means to them and share their thoughts with the class. If it is proving difficult, the teacher should start by sharing what it means to her and giving some examples. Ask if the pupils think this might help them do the right thing in certain situations?

**Homework:** ask them to start using the caterpillar technique when they have to make a decision do something where they're not sure what the right thing to do might be.

**Lesson Four:**

**Lesson 4: when the going gets tough... using a selection of the poems below or other relevant ones chosen by the class or teacher**

'My heart leaps up'

'See it through' and 'It couldn't be done' Edgar Albert Guest

'When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes' Sonnet 29

William Shakespeare

'If' Rudyard Kipling  
'Still I rise' (possibly without stanza 7) Mary Angelou  
'Think Different' Apple advert  
'Mother to Son' Langston Hughes  
'Do not go gentle into that good night' Dylan Thomas  
'On a Sunny Evening' anonymous (sccc.swarthmore.edu)  
'Invictus' by W.E. Henley  
'This too shall pass' Helen Steiner Rice

**Task 1: reflection**  
**(5 minutes)**

Teacher and pupils share their experiences around whether they have been able to use the techniques discussed (stop, notice, look etc) to help them to feel in the *right way*, about the *right things*, toward the *right people*, at the *right time*, for the *right reasons* and make decisions more consciously? If not, what have been the barriers? How could we overcome them?

**Task 2: Introduction to optimism**  
**(10 minutes)**

Show a glass of water filled to half way with water. Ask the class to put up their hands if they think it is half full, again if it is half empty. Use this to explain differences between pessimism and optimism. Get the class to brainstorm why being optimistic might be helpful as a virtue. Does there need to be a 'middle way' with optimism? (if the class can't think of any examples, teacher might ask what might happen if someone was overly optimistic about how hard they had prepared for an exam)  
NOTE: there are lots of 'optimism tests' and 'cognitive bias training tests' on line that you might want to use with the class for a bit of fun or to set as an additional homework.  
Finish by letting the class listen to 'Always look on the Bright Side of life'.

**Task 3: Poems celebrating optimism - pupils as experts**  
**(40 minutes)**

This task will enable different groups to explore different poems and find a message relevant to the virtue of optimism. The poems could either be collected into an anthology and classes read through them quickly and decide on one they would like to explore, or the teacher could allocate one to each group, thinking about the accessibility of each poem and how to scaffold towards understanding of the key themes depending on the groups' confidence.

Part 1)

The group should read the poem quietly on their own, then out loud together, focussing on finding a message in the poem, or something that resonates with them ( this may just be understanding a couple of lines, or a particularly liking of a phrase or couplet). A scribe then captures the key points of a group discussion about how the poem made them think or feel, which words or poetic techniques they enjoyed and why, including also what they find challenging.

Part 2)

The group will then decide how best to present the poem orally to the rest of the class to ensure they share the 'important bits'. This could be a choral reading, narration with tableaux, each group member taking a line at a time, adding music or pictures from the internet to highlight key episodes etc) to be followed by a discussion about what they think the poem is about, how it made them feel and what poetic techniques in particular the poet has employed that did this, and what they might learn from it about how to stay optimistic.

Part 3)

The group should also add their own piece of drama putting the themes of the poem into a modern setting. For example, they could create a short piece about a football team who are losing, and then use one of the poems to inspire a coach's motivational half term speech.

**DIFFERENTIATION:** most able should attempt to add another few stanzas in the style of the original poem, or create their own homage to the original using the same style, structure and rhyme scheme as the original poem.

#### **Task 4: putting theory into practice – being optimistic (5 minutes)**

Each member of the class has to think about at least one thing they did well in the lesson today, and recognise something positive that someone else did in the class too. How does it feel? Unusual? Normal? Uncomfortable? Teacher to start to explain about habituation, and fact that anything that is practised becomes easier, and it's the same for virtues.

#### **Homework: random acts of kindness**

Class to start noticing positive things, find time to put positive spin on things, say and do nice things to each other as random acts of kindness and noticing the response from others and how it made them feel. This in its purest form could simply be 'smile more'. If they have a planner or journal they should write these down.

#### **Lesson Five:**

#### **Lesson 5: what it means to be human**

Resources: large sheets of sugar paper, post it notes or scraps of paper.

#### **Activity 1: sharing poetry and song (10 minutes)**

Have some inspirational music playing in the classroom and possibly some images of 'nature' from a streaming site. The teacher then reads her favourite poem, and shares what it means to her.

Explain that the Latin word for poetry was 'carmen' which was also the Roman word for 'spell' 'song' and 'prophecy' (the magical ability to see into the future'), and that poems and songs have been found in every culture in every tradition since we have records of history.

What is it about poetry and music that still captivates us today?

Try and capture some of the feelings of the class; it may be easier to focus on the element of song, or nursery rhyme, hymns or chants as a lot of pupils might NOT yet be captivated by poetry!

The class are then invited to share anything they have collected on the poetry wall over the last few weeks and explain what it means to them.

DIFERENTATION: depending on the class, the teacher could ask for volunteers to share and explain their choice, read out poems and songs selected by the students, or put the groups into pairs to share.

**Activity 2: poems that make us reflect on who we are!  
(10 minutes)**

Teacher explains that poets throughout the ages have often used poetry to question the very nature of our existence; what are we here for, what does it mean to be human in all its parts, where do we fit in to the world around us. It can help people when they are lonely, lost, in love, coping with death or sadness or overwhelmed with joy.

Read 'What is it to be human' quietly on their own then out loud taking a couplet each around a circle

**Funny**

What's it like to be a human  
the bird asked

I myself don't know  
it's being held prisoner by your skin  
while reaching infinity  
being a captive of your scrap of time  
while touching eternity  
being hopelessly uncertain  
and helplessly hopeful  
being a needle of frost  
and a handful of heat  
breathing in the air  
and choking wordlessly  
it's being on fire  
with a nest made of ashes  
eating bread  
while filling up on hunger  
it's dying without love  
it's loving through death

That's funny said the bird  
and flew effortlessly up into the air

Teacher asks class to notice any devices the poem uses to show the immensity and complexity of what it means to be human and introduces concept of paradox, metaphor, personification and couplet if they don't know the vocab.

How do they feel about the response of the bird. How do they

think being a bird might be different? Have we over complicated things?

Any favourite lines or comparisons or things that they didn't expect? Why do they think the writer has used so many paradoxes? What does it tell us about being human?

### **Activity 3: making a 'human' poem (20 minutes)**

Teacher explains they are going to create a 'found' poem, poetry that might not have started off as a poem but will end up as one. She then asks pupils to sit very quietly and still for five minutes whilst they reflect on what it means to be them. What makes them special? What in their lives defines them? What couldn't they live without? Who are they? Maybe play some contemplative music or ask them to listen to the sounds around them. How could they capture this in poetic language or use a simile or metaphor and use the devices of paradoxes presented in the poem?

**DIFFERENTIATION:** depending on the group this might need some scaffolding with some examples first, but then on slips of scrap paper or on post-it notes, the pupils then each come up and start writing their couplet on a single piece of paper, repeating with as many single slips as they like, placing them back in the middle or posting them on a wall. The more the better but focus on quality of language.

Teacher gets pupils into small groups of three or four. She then rereads the first line of the poem and uses one of the pupil's couplets next to show how we are making out own poem using each others' couplets.

In their groups, the class then share out the post-its and arrange them as they want to on the sugar paper making their own 'found' poem.

They should be guided to look for phrases that sit better together, and they should be allowed to edit in any way they like – removing or adding words, adding new phrases to balance out others, rejecting others, until they have a 'found' poem which they will then find a way of performing.

**DIFFERENTIATION:** again the editing process might need to be made more explicit for some groups, with the teacher moving post-its around, adding adjectives, changing lines, reminding students of the need to draft and draft again.

Spend a little time reflecting on the content of the found poems. Life is complicated – no wonder we need virtues to help us!

### **Activity 4: Reflection and inspiration (20 minutes)**

There are so many poems that a teacher could choose here to show how poetry doesn't just capture what it is to be human, but that the act of writing and reciting poetry and being moved by it is part of being human too; a quick look at 'Daffodils' or 'Rainbow' by Wordsworth or 'Darkling Thrush' by Hardy shows how poetry transcends the meaning and shapes our humanity, or ask the class to choose a song that is relevant to one of them and how it means much more than the sum of its words. Words

	<p>are so much more powerful than we think. Try and get the students to remember the only thing that was left of the statue of Ozymandias (the inscription!).</p> <p>Activity 5: The last poem shows how when all else is lost, we still have words.</p> <p>Share the poem but not the last two lines. Get the class to read it quietly then ask for a volunteer to read it out loud. What do they notice about optimism, how the poet is moved by nature, how there is humility, integrity. How would they compare the narrator to Ozymandias, or the man in 'Poem'? What do they notice about nature itself and how it is described? Where do they think it is written and on what occasion?</p> <p>Now show a picture of Trevin concentration camp <a href="https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/terezin.html">https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/terezin.html</a> Show the raw statistics of the number of children who survived. Explain that the poem was written by a group of children being held in Trevin. Now reveal the last two lines.</p> <p>How does it change their perception of the poem and poet? Without forcing things, does it make the pupils think about their own lives differently? What are they going to take away from the lesson about living the 'right life'?</p>
<p><b>Notes on Differentiation and Adaptability</b></p>	<p><b>Lesson One:</b> This worked well in a classroom, with a powerpoint showing pictures of Rameses and pictures of Egypt on the whiteboard.</p> <p>The teacher needs to be well rehearsed in how to take the lesson in role, although this is a relatively easy process. Wearing a 'prop' or some Egyptian artefact that comes on and off as she is in and out of role would help if they haven't done it before.</p> <p>The poem needs some decoding for students who do not have high prior attainment, with a glossary for hard words. The pupils could even just be given a few lines that are then shared, with each group making sense of a fragment of the poem like they are decoding hieroglyphics or something.</p> <p>I didn't use it but there are many versions on line where the poem is recited which would work well for those with weaker literacy.</p> <p>As an added level of challenge pupils could lead some of the debates.</p> <p><b>Lesson Two:</b> The tasks lend themselves well to being differentiated by determining who has which part. For example, a pupil who</p>



lacks drama experience or skills could take the part of 'the man' where his actions are already set out in the poem; pupils who want more of a challenge take on the role of bystanders who have to improvise the whole scene.

**Lesson Three:**

The first verse of the poem is the most straightforward – the language and the themes in the second verses are slightly more complex so when groups are asked to act out their parts bear this in mind.

Not all groups will manage the challenge of non naturalism – some may need more literal tasks. For really weak pupils, have a simplified version of the poem with just the key events outlined and get them to work on the scenarios like this.

**Lesson Four:**

Some poems in the suggested selections are more accessible than others.

**Lesson Five:**

Having a bank of resources that are collected over the weeks is really useful here as a tool for differentiation. Pupils that have been collecting their own poems, songs, quotes etc will have a wealth of ideas to draw on. They may feel more comfortable working with resources that they feel are already 'theirs'.

Creating a sense of space where the pupils feel they are in charge is crucial for this lesson – the teacher really needs to have everything set up with the task already outlined so they can act as facilitator and step back a bit. Perhaps take the pupils somewhere new – the library or a hall with the resources set up – so the teacher relinquishes her ownership of the space if possible.

**Other Points Worth Noting**

The resources needed for this are minimal but the confidence of the teacher to lead drama sessions is key. Looking at some work on 'mantle of the expert' from Primary schools, or sitting in on a drama lesson before hand would be helpful.

If you can set the lessons up in a drama studio, so much the better but a classroom with tables pushed back and the chairs in a circle would be fine. Setting the scene with props, some appropriate music and using the whiteboard as a backdrop works well.

Homework is used to practice the character traits.