

**Teaching Chapter 7 - Rage**

\*\* This chapter comes with a Content Warning for sexual assault, abuse, violence, sexism, misogyny, transphobia and trans misogyny

**Intro**

My favourite poet, Sarah Kay, describes learning to write spoken word as a “vulnerability marathon”, and I think that is absolutely spot on. Poetry and spoken word can crack open parts of yourself you thought were long closed. It can bring up unexpected emotions or even unearth unpleasant thoughts and feelings and memories from the past, now that you have this new way to contextualise ~~and~~ those things in a cathartic way through writing.

This chapter is about using specific tools, both in writing and performing, to allow students to distance themselves from writing that is informed by painful experience, so that pain does not at any point resurface in the mind mapping, planning, writing, editing or performing their spoken word.

A very important clarification: this is not to encourage students to write about painful experiences, it is to ensure that if students *want* to write about and engage with painful experiences from the past, they can do so without feeling that pain in the present. These tools are helpful for writing all kinds of spoken word, not just sad poems.

**Suggested Mini Exercise**

**‘Practicing Performance’**

This mini exercise is performance based and will encourage the students to practice the emotions they want their poems to convey without having to feel those emotions themselves at the time of performing.

* Ask the students to pick a short stanza from a previous poem they have written.
* Give them five minutes to practice that one stanza out loud in a lot of different ways so they can hear how the meaning of the words can change when different emotions are placed behind them.
* Also get them to play with pace (how fast they say the line), pitch (how high or how low their voice is), with gestures and stillness and with pauses.

**Poem and Learning Objectives**

**“Dark” – Personification and Metaphor, Sensory Detail**

**Link - https://youtu.be/gBZOsxeW824**

**Dark**

are you scared yet?

is the fear stinging the back of your throat

through to the hairs on the back of your neck

the bitter pill

you cannot get your mouth to swallow

getting a taste of the medicine

they are unwittingly force-feeding

are you scared yet?

are you squashing it down?

deep and hidden and part of you

like bones of the skeletons in your closet

you never put there

the ones with eyes that still stare in the sockets

watch you everywhere

are you scared of what will come out of the

furniture at night if you ever dared tell

are you scared yet?

is the ink you swill around your mouth

fine as wine and fit for

decanting to page

to spill your fill of this truth,

turned to ash, to gristle in your teeth

turned to nothing

turned to black hole

making negative of the universe you held inside of your soul

or worse

has it been siphoned out of your speech

and into their pens

already writing their own version

of the story you hold in your veins

*we all know how this one goes*

*it’s a cautionary tale*

are you scared yet?

scared of letting go

of your anger? your rage?

the untameable tempest battering your rip cage

I’ve swallowed down so many stories that didn’t agree with me

I got tried of bringing up

the past

this tingling in my throat is from when I swallowed coals

taken from the hearth of grandmother courage

and let it burn

turned it into poison, got sick, got better, got stronger

let them choke

on the taste of what they made me

festering and broken and ripe for the picking

In the beginning there was a blank page

bright eyes in colour-book age

by torchlight she hid

it did nothing to stop him

in cupboards she hid

it did nothing to stop him

in silence she hid

it did nothing to stop him

the only thing that did was a mouth full of courage

and the spilled ink was mopped

the stain is still on her life

for years the truth swilled around her clever mouth

but now it’s too late to let it come out

Are you scared yet?

you should be

because I

rose from the ashes of all that you made of me

this time around I’m fireproof

I’m the proof of what you can become

when you rip down the walls and let the light in

open the doors and set the world to rights in

the pits of your pain is the heart of our flame

we will let it light you up

I am half the world

I am angry and broken but

you can’t keep me in the dark forever

I don’t hide by torchlight any more

this is the part of me no one has ever seen before

and I’m sorry if it’s hard for you to watch

but stories are powerful things

and while I have you moth to flame

she is coming for you

we are all coming for you

we will have our revenge

and it starts right here

with this

just this;

I will never be afraid of you again

**Context – What’s the Poem About**

The poem, ‘Dark’, is about rage and persecution. It deals with sexual assault and the consequences of living in a society where the stories of women are silenced or not believed. The poem is angry and raw and overly vulnerable, and only suitable for a more mature audience. While the poem is undirected in its anger at the beginning, and focuses more on addressing the “victims” of this society, it takes a more direct turn towards the end, directing the anger against the “abuser”. It underlines the power of words and how using them can be an act of reclaiming and healing.

**Group Discussion – Things to Ask the Class**

* When the writer asks, “are you scared yet?”, who is she talking to? Does that change at any point in the poem?
* Has the writer revealed anything private? If not, what has she alluded to that is private? How has she distanced herself from the private thing she is drawing on in the writing of the poem.
* Do you think the right aligned text has a purpose? Does is say anything when looked at on its own?

**Suggested Main Exercise**

**‘Objects in Love’**

The main writing exercise for this chapter is to practice using personification and metaphor as distancing tools for their writing. This exercise is called ‘Objects in Love’, and it is a love letter between two inanimate objects that is meant to sound like a letter between two people.

* Tell your students to pick two objects from the below list
* 1. a key
* 2. a guitar
* 3. a backpack
* 4. a hiking boot
* 5. a doormat
* 6. a kite
* 7. a steering wheel
* 8. a notebook
* Give them ten minutes to write down everything they can possibly think of about each object. What does it look like? What is it for? Does it have any cultural significance? What does it connotate? This is the mind map stage.
* After they have finished their mind map, give them another five minutes to turn as many things as they can into personified traits. For example, if your student picked a key and wrote “made of metal”, they can take that further and write “made of stronger stuff” or “will or iron”. This is the planning stage.
* Now the students have their lists of personified traits for the two items they picked, the are now ready to go on~~to~~ to write their piece, which is a letter from one object to the other. If their letter were to get lost on the street and a stranger were to find it and read it, they should have no idea it is between two objects, this letter should sound like it is from one human person to another.

**Some things to think about**

Remind students that although all spoken word is meant to be spoken out loud, not all spoken word is meant to be shared. Your students can write as much as they want about anything they want. They only have to ever share what they are comfortable sharing.