

Teacher's notes

A Caribbean Writer in Hackney: Eveline Marius. Suitable for a double lesson.

Lesson aims

Students build vocabulary to discuss poetic forms and the context of poet's lives

Lesson objectives

Students produce a piece of poetic writing based on their own experiences.

Resources

- 'Down in the ghetto' by Eveline Marius
- 'The day the African came' by Eveline Marius
- Audio and pictures of Eveline Marius and Hackney in the 1980s
- Whiteboard
- Highlighters

Background on Eveline Marius:

Eveline Marius's family came from St Lucia, a French-speaking island in the Caribbean. When Eveline did get to visit St Lucia 13 years later, she realised it was not really her home.

She started writing after hearing the lyrics of Bob Marley and the Wailers. Her poetry was published by Centerprise in the 1980s. She preferred to write alone and not be influenced by other writers. She made a decision to write in Standard English because she felt her poems would reach more people that way. In her poem '**Down in the ghetto**', her mood is bleak. She describes how people strut their stuff while wondering what they are going to do with their lives. By contrast the poem '**The day the African came**' is full of hope as she connects with her roots. The poem opens with short lines suggesting the idyllic Caribbean of the travel brochures. Next, she feels the excitement of coming 'face to face with a real-life African visitor', from 'a land she did and did not know'. However, the African is not quite how she expected him to be.

Starter activity

Get students thinking about poetic forms like:

- Adjective
- Metaphor
- Repetition
- Rhyme
- Simile

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All of these are also used in songs. See helpful definitions of poetic forms with examples from pop songs on p.4-5 below.

After checking they understand the definitions, ask them to think of metaphors, adjectives, similes, rhymes about themselves.

Activity 1

First students read the poem in their head and see who can spot poetic forms, like adjective and metaphor (the Cowboy, Frontline). Make it a race or a competition if you like.

In pairs, students should read '**Down in the ghetto**' by Eveline Marius in pairs and make notes on the questions given.

You could also ask if it's okay for outsiders to speak about an area as a ghetto or Frontline?

Activity 2

Students should be shown pictures of Eveline Marius while they listen to archive footage of Marius reading '**Down in the ghetto.**'

Now project the following definition on the whiteboard (on p. 12) and show them Alan Denney's picture of Sandringham road (p.10) and the photo of Ridley road (p.11).

Definition: Frontline is where action is, where people congregate. It is often an edge or meeting place between one culture and another.

In the 1980s, Frontline was around Sandringham Road and Ridley Road. Families arriving from the Caribbean or St Lucia, like Eveline's family, were used to living out in the open in the sun, with their community, not shut away inside their homes. Despite the cold weather in England, many continued this tradition, with music playing in the street. White people sometimes came to the Frontline because they wanted to experience different music, food and culture. The flipside of the Frontline was poor housing, unemployment, and discrimination from the police and authorities.

Young people in some cities still speak about 'Frontline' in relation to policing and riots.

Some of the students may notice Eveline chose to write in standard English. Ask them why they think that was (there's no right or wrong answer, but Eveline said she wanted everyone to understand her work).

Activity 3

Role play to reinforce understanding and prepare for writing their own poems.

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Activity 4

Encourage them to use some of the poetic forms explored in the starter activity.

Activity 5 Plenary & Home work preparation

Here students should recap and evaluate the session.

Possible homework or extension tasks: a) Complete your poem; b) Compare and contrast Eveline Marius poem '**Down in the ghetto**' with '**The day the African came**'. Where is the second poem set? What surprises her? What does she discover about her identity in this second poem? What is the mood of the second poem?

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Adjective: An adjective is a word that describes a noun in a sentence.

Adjectives are used in poetry to create different effects, either for a reflective description of the noun or to create more drama within a description.

e.g. Akala's Shakespeare

*When I spit on the riddem, I kill em
Raw like the Ball of Brazilians
You don't want war, cor, the kids brilliant
Blood, im the heir to the throne
Not William, Akala, smart as King Arthur
Darker, harder, faster*

Rhyme: A rhyme is when two words have a similar sound. Rhyme is used to create a pattern within a poem.

e.g. Natasha Bedingfield's 'These words'

*Tryn'a find the magic
Tryn'a write a classic
Don't you know, don't you know, don't you know?
Wastebin full of paper
Clever rhymes, see ya later*

Repetition: Repetition is when a word or sentence is placed more than once within a poem. Repetition is used in poetry for emphasis and to intensify meaning.

A refrain (a refrain is a verse or phrase that is repeated at times during the poem or song usually after the chorus or stanza).

E.g. Dizzee Rascal's, 'Brand new day.'

*When we ain't kids no more will it still be about what it is right now
Like fighting for anything anytime and acting without a care and where
And when we ain't kids no more will it still be about what it is right now
Like bank scams, street robbery, shotters plotters or H.M.P
And when we ain't kids no more will it still be about what it is right now
Pregnant girls who think they love useless mans with no plans
And when we ain't kids no more will it still be about what it is right now
Cause negative signs just keep showing up
Some of us better just start growing up*

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A chorus (a chorus is part of a song or poem that is repeated following each verse). E.g. Dizzee Rascal's, 'Brand new day.'

*But it's a brand new day, new opportunities what can I say
I plan to make my pay but put some away for a off key day
But it's a brand new day, new opportunities what can I say
I plan to make my pay but put some away for a off key day
Demand collect, cash up front and direct
Pay money pay respect don't insult my intellect
Demand collect, cash up front and direct
Pay money pay respect don't insult my intellect*

Simile: comparison of one thing with another thing of a different kind.

Akala's 'Shakespeare'

*Don't ever compare me to rappers
I'm so quick-witted that I split em like fractions*

Metaphor: A metaphor is a comparison which is not literally true. It often brings out a hidden aspect to something, it is deeper than simile. A metaphor makes a strong image in the reader's head by describing a place, subject or object in an unusual way.

In Rihanna's 'This is What You Came For', the woman is described as having power because of the implied ability she has to strike with the force of lightning...and get everyone's attention as well:

*"Baby, this is what you came for
Lightning strikes every time she moves
And everybody's watching her"*

When Daya sings about not being a 'puppet' in 'Sit Still-Look Pretty' she is suggesting she does not want someone to control her or 'pull her strings.' The other metaphor is her implicit comparison to herself as a 'queen' who does not want to be ruled by a 'king.' In these lyrics:

*"I know the other girlies wanna wear expensive things
Like diamond rings
But I don't wanna be the puppet that you're playing on a string
This queen don't need a king"*

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'Down in the ghetto' by Eveline Marius

Down in the Ghetto

Down in the ghetto where the cowboy comes from,
Contentment is something so hard to find,
Every day you wake up and say:
What you gonna do with yourself today,
But deep in your mind you know that you are only
Wasting your time:
Going down to the same old Frontline,
Down in the ghetto where the cowboy comes from,
A heavy burden always clouds the mind,
Every day you wondering, wondering,
What you gonna do:
Every day you sing the same old song too.

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'The day the African came' by Eveline Marius

The Day the African Came

by Eveline Marius

*The day the African came
Nothing seem to be the same
The day the African came
Gran Ma was deep in her cocoa trees
I was busy feeding the hens
Brother Too 'too was chopping wood under the
Star-apple growth whilst old faithful
Doze in the late afternoon sun
And there was the African coming towards me
Head bent, deep in thought,
wrapped in foreign cloth*

*The radiant rays of light dance through the
Leaves high up over the trees
Creating an air so unexplainable
Just like the African
Engrossed in what seemed to be an immensity
of thought
The African was quite unaware of old faithful
Running towards him full of aggression
I stepped in at that moment and seized faithful
And there I was face to face with a real
live African
In books I read of him
In magazines I gazed at portraits of him
Yes, it was really 'he', the African from the
Land I did know, and didn't know
However will get to know again
Gran Ma, brother Tootoo, come make haste
The unexpected guest has arrived
Bon apres midi mademoiselle
Good afternoon young lady, his voice echoed
Through my mind, an Anglo-French speaking African
An African speaks African
Gran Ma and brother Tootoo stepped in and made up for
My manners setting before the African a feast
I stared and stared, glancing across to the mirror
I looked at myself, then to Gran Ma and brother Tootoo
And back to the African.*

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Image of Eveline Marius, 1982 © Centerprise Young Photographers' group



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Image of Eveline Marius, 1982 © Centerprise Young Photographers' group



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Image of Sandringham Road, 1983 © Alan Denney



Teacher's notes

Image of Ridley road, 1980s © Centerprise Young Photographers' Group



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