



Key Stage 3-5

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

In 1819, the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote the political poem, *The Mask of Anarchy*, in response to the Peterloo Massacre, Manchester. 15 people were killed and hundreds injured when cavalry charged a crowd of people gathered to call for parliamentary reform. Shelley's poem wasn't printed until 30 years later, showing just how explosive it was considered at the time. In it he asks 'What art thou, Freedom?' and then answers his question in these lines:



An activity by Sophie McKeand, Young People's Laureate for Wales, for Literature Wales, the National Company for the development of literature in Wales.

www.literaturewales.org
www.youngpeopleslaureate.org



The Mask of Anarchy (extract)

'To the rich thou art a check,
When his foot is on the neck
Of his victim, thou dost make
That he treads upon a snake.

'Thou art Justice—ne'er for gold
May thy righteous laws be sold
As laws are in England—thou
Shield'st alike both high and low.

'Thou art Wisdom—Freemen never
Dream that God will damn for ever
All who think those things untrue
Of which Priests make such ado.

'Thou art Peace—never by thee
Would blood and treasure wasted be
As tyrants wasted them, when all
Leagued to quench thy flame in Gaul.

by Percy Bysshe Shelley

