

NATIONAL POETRY DAY

25th
anniversary

3RD OCTOBER 2019

Fair Play

A National Poetry Day
resource created
by Schofield & Sims

Key Stage 1/2

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Fair Play

Mirror mirror on the wall
Could you please return our ball
Our football went through your crack
You have two now
Give one back.

© Benjamin Zephaniah
from *Talking Turkeys* (Penguin Books, 1995)

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There's truth in what I say

Sometimes poets use falsehoods for humorous purposes. When we readers know something is untrue, then we can share a belief in their lie to enjoy a joke. This is what Benjamin Zephaniah is doing in his poem ***Fair Play***.

Activity:

Read aloud the first line of the poem and ask what the children think the next line will be.

- Discuss 'Who is the fairest of them all?' from Grimm's fairytale *Snow White*.
- Share the whole poem, noting how the poet continues to use bathos to misdirect us.

Together, examine what is and isn't true in the poem. Focus on truths, half-truths and lies. Ask:

- Was the mirror already cracked or might the football's impact have caused the crack?
- In a way, does the ball's reflection make the poet's assertion in line four true?

Point out how we have been asking questions to try and reach – as in a court of law – the truth, the whole truth and nothing but.

Invite the children to create their own parody with a different new line to follow this opening line, or experiment changing other familiar openings to create 'tall story-poems', such as 'Run, run, as fast as you can'.

Explain that when we are little, we can believe something is true, based on mistaken observation, that later we realise is untrue. For example, a toddler, meeting a very tall man, might believe she was telling the truth saying she had met a giant.

Sometimes we tell lies without realising it, simply through exaggeration. For instance, you might say, "I've eaten beans millions of times" – when the truth is, you've not even eaten a million meals, with or without beans.

Ask the children, in pairs, to tell their partner four things about themselves that are true, and one that is a lie or half-truth. Bring the class together and ask how easy was it to spot their partner's lie or half-truth? Draw on the children's exercise to show how truth can be 'bent' to create a 'lie'. For example, look at the difference between "It's true *I'm a clown*" and "It's true *I act the clown*".

Challenge each child to draft a poem titled ***There's truth in what I say***. They should make most of their poem true, but include a lie, half-truth or exaggeration. You could suggest that each line begins, "It's true ..."

Invite individuals to read their poems aloud. Discuss how successfully they have mixed truth and imagination.

