

Let Me Touch the Sky - by Valerie Bloom

Scheme of Work

Activity 1: *Don' Go Ova Dere*

Poem page number: 31

Skills or topics covered: language varieties; rhythm; rhyme

Activities: analysis of the poem; writing a story poem

Language varieties:

The first point of interest for this poem will probably be the language. Ask for comments and observations about the language. Explain that it is called Jamaican patois, which is the language spoken in Jamaica, where Valerie Bloom is from, and that it is closely connected to English.

If you are confident enough, try reading the poem to the class, or ask for a volunteer to read it aloud.

To show the relationship between the poem and Standard English, you could ask pupils to work on a "translation" of the poem. They should copy out the first three verses and on the facing page write a standard English version. The resulting version would be something along the lines of:

*Barry's mother told him
But Barry wouldn't [listen],
Barry's father warned him
But Barry didn't care.
'Don't go over there, boy,
Don't go over there.'*

*Barry's sister begged him
Barry pulled her hair,
Barry's brother bet him*

*'You can't go over there.'
'I can go over there, boy,
I can go over there.'*

*Barry got a big bag,
Barry climbed the gate,
Barry's granny called him
But Barry couldn't wait,
He wanted to get over there, boy,
Before it got too late.*

By looking closely at the changes you can generate some rules. The examples below are from the first verse:

Rules for speaking patois:

1. In patois you do not use 's or 't.
2. When a word has **th** in the middle, change it to **dd**.
3. When a word ends in **er** change this to **a**.
4. When a word starts with **th** change this to **d**.
5. You do not use the past tense in patois.
6. Some of the vowels are longer in patois, so **bwoy** not **boy**.
7. If a word begins with **h**, leave it out.

After reading more patois poems you can work on a comparison of English and patois. You could start this, though, by picking out one or two features, e.g. if **madda** means **mother**, then **th** in the middle of a word becomes **dd**.

Story poems:

The other main point related to this poem is that it tells a story. This means that it contains elements such as a plot, characters and a surprise ending which are often found in a short story. The main differences between this poem and a short story, however, are the rhythm and rhyme.

Rhythm:

Ask the pupils to work out how many syllables there are in each line. If they are not sure about syllables, use their names to demonstrate, e.g. **Robin** has two syllables.

Rhyme:

Ask the class to work out the way that rhyme is used in the poem. They will see that the second, fourth and sixth lines rhyme in each stanza. If you have already dealt with rhyming patterns in a previous lesson this can be described as ABCBDB (though there are variations in some stanzas due to repetition).

Writing a story poem:

There are a range of possibilities here to suit different ages and abilities. At one extreme pupils could write a simple story on one of the two themes suggested by this poem:

- encounters with an animal, or
- winning a bet with a family member.

At the other extreme, pupils could write a poem on one of these two themes using the same structure as **Don' Go Ova Dere**: verses of six lines; six syllables per line; a rhyme scheme of ABCBDB; incorporating a significant use of repetition.

Most pupils will fall somewhere in between these extremes, writing a poem with a simpler structure, where the teacher judges how much advice to offer as to the form they should use. For example, trying to keep to the same number of lines in each verse and/or to the same rhyme pattern. You could model the kind of level you think suits your pupils. Here is an example for one way of doing this:

- A. Brainstorm ideas for when you have got one over on a member of the family, e.g.:
- When I tricked my brother into doing my chores, (washing up or tidying my room)
 - How I got both my mum and dad to both buy me sweets for minding my baby sister.

B. Suggest a structure, e.g.:

- Verse 1, introduce and describe the family member:

*My mum and dad are both
As strict as any Head.
They don't like sweets, tell me
To munch carrots instead.
Never ever let me
Eat biscuits in my bed.*

- Verse 2, 3 and 4 (or more if needed,) tell the story:

*I love my little sister,
She really is so cute...*

- Last verse, explain how the trick works out.

Have you found this resource helpful? Send feedback or ideas and search for similar resources via www.valeriebloom.co.uk.