

Print, Prose, Poetry: 1

Nothing to Do

Nothing to Do is a lively poem for three voices; it centres around damage to domestic property.

After the poem are a series of teaching suggestions and activities. The first set of activities are designed to help young people make sense of the poem and will be useful starting points within English, PSHEE and Citizenship contexts. The second section suggests ways in which responses might be developed in an English lesson. The final section suggests ways of using the material in a PSHEE or Citizenship context.

For your information, here is the mapping for this activity to the KS3 National Curriculum:

English	Speaking and Listening	1f; 2a, b, c, f; 4a, b, c; 11a
	Reading	1a, b, c, d, g, h, j; 8b
	Writing	1g, i, j, k, l, m, n, o
PSHEE	Developing good relationships and respecting the difference between people	3i, j
	Knowledge, skills and understanding	9c, g
Citizenship		1g

In all three sections the emphasis is on personal responsibility. While we feel empathy for the plight that the young characters have put themselves in, behind what they say is the realisation that they have become involved in a serious crime as a result of criminal activity. It is important for your students to understand this.

- Divide your group into threes and ask them to read this poem (or ask them to read the poem individually).

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Nothing to Do

Rod Dungate

There's nothing to do.
SIT DOWN, MAN AND CHILL
IT'S A SKILL.
Have a fag, boy.
I'LL HAVE TWO.
Sit down and enjoy.
Sit down where?
WE DON'T CARE.
Sit on this wall.

This house looks posh.
Owner's rolling in dosh.
And he hates us all.
FOR SITTING ON HIS WALL.
Says he'll call
the pigs. When?
If we do it again.
But we're sitting here now.
SO WE'LL SEE HOW
LONG TO THE ROW.
I'll tell him where to get off.
Fair enough.
Cool to look tough.
HE SAYS WE'RE ROUGH.
BE A BIT OF A LAUGH.

Bung stones at his door.
When? Last night.
It was all right,
we got a good show.
HE COME OUT -
He's a hundred and ten -
HE HAS A RIGHT SHOUT,
'DON'T DO IT NO MORE.'
LOOKED A RIGHT SIGHT.
Bit of a laugh.

Do it again!
Now? Yea. And when
he's here
we'll give him a scare,
be a bit of a laugh.

GOT A BETTER IDEA,
NOT STONES, THIS BRICK HERE.
Chuck it at his window?
Yea. It'll break it. So?!
Hear the crash,
the glass smash,

bit of a laugh.
He'll make us pay.
No way.
WE'LL RUN AWAY.
We'll say
we was at yours. At mine?
YEA, THAT'S FINE.
THIS GEEZER, LET'S FACE IT,
CAN AFFORD TO REPLACE IT.

Who's going to do it?
You. Me? *Yea.* Why?
YOUR TURN. *Yours man.*
Give it a try.
SHOW US YOU CAN,
DON'T BE SHY.
Nothing to it.
JUST DO IT.
What d'you say?

No way,
not today.

YOU'RE SAD.
We thought you was bad.
Wuss. No doubt of it.
WE'RE OUT OF IT.
Don't go. I'm sorry.
GO AND WATCH CORRIE
WITH MUMMY AND DAD.

It's no fun on me own
being alone.
I pick up the brick,
I'm not thick,
I'm not sick,
me heart gives a kick,
I throw it
so it
hits the window hard.
Hear the crash,
the glass smash
in his yard.
It's a bit of a laugh
and, let's face it,
the geezer can replace it.
And now it'd be wise
to leg it.
Hang on guys!!

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General Introductory Exploration - Making Sense of the Poem

- When your students have read the poem individually or in small groups they are ready to tackle these questions.

The objective is to check their overall understanding of the poem as a whole, so avoid over analysing how the poem works at this stage. The questions are designed to stimulate initial discussion.

- This poem is really a conversation between three people. How do we know there are three of them? (You may find that, if you have split your group into threes, they may have automatically divided the poem up into the three characters.)
- Read the poem out loud, using a different person for each character.
- What's the poem about? There are nearly always two sides to this question:
 - What's the story of the poem?
 - What do you think the poet is trying to say to us?

You may find it useful if your students answer these questions in their threes. Bring together their responses in a plenary session - keep in mind that this discussion is an exploration of the issues of criminal damage.

The attached list of questions are intended to form a thought-provoking task your students can tackle on their own or in their groups of three. The activity explores the poem in a general way; you may prefer to use this task within a specific PSHEE or Citizenship context.

When your young people have completed their answers bring the results together. See if there is a consensus. If there is, you could ask your young people to draft a letter to a local counsellor or MP setting out their views. They could also decide whether to send it – if so they would be likely to get a reply.

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Making Sense of the Poem

Which of these actions would help most in combating criminal damage behaviour among young people? Put them in order of importance by numbering them. If you think a point is irrelevant or of no use, cross it out.

- Make convicted vandals clean up vandalised areas.
- Make parents pay for the repair of criminal damage.
- Use anti-graffiti paint on buildings and other places.
- Provide opportunities for young people to do interesting things.
- Have a night curfew for young people in affected areas of, say, 10 o'clock.
- Make everybody carry ID cards.
- Use anti-vandal structures and materials - like unbreakable plastic.
- Increase CCTV surveillance.
- Ban hoodies in affected areas.
- Impose more severe punishments.
- Clear up and improve derelict areas.
- Offer more opportunities for employment and training.
- Make areas look good.
- Attract entertainment to neighbourhoods.
- Make schools better.
- Talk with young people about criminal damage early on.
- Have a zero tolerance policy to all crimes.
- Help improve young people's self esteem.
- Build gated communities with good security.
- Have more respect for each other and each others' property.
- Have more police or warden patrols.
- Ban the sale of paint and pens to people under 18.
- Get tough on law enforcement for under-age drinking.
- Have cheap or free places for young people to hang out, where there is friendly, minimal supervision and things to do.
- Offer creative, legal graffiti opportunities.

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English: How does the poem work?

This section concentrates on using the poem as an English resource. The set of questions can support a reading analysis lesson. There are suggestions for writing tasks - though these may lead to oral work or Drama if you prefer. Once again, this could be a whole class, group or individual lesson depending on context.

Suggested questions you might raise.

Read the poem carefully. You are looking at several things that will help you to see how the poet has gone to work. You can write notes on and around the poem - you might use different colours to make it clear. You are looking at:

Language

- What kinds of words does the poet use (formal, colloquial, slang, dialect and so on).
- What effect does this have?
- What kind of phrases and sentences does he use and what special effects does he employ: for example alliteration or onomatopoeia?
- How does the language he uses help us to 'see' the characters?

Structure

- What patterns (repetitions, rhymes, rhythms, and so on) can you find?
- What do you notice about the length of lines?
- What do you notice about punctuation?
- Where does the poem change direction? Try to make a comment on why the writer does this, and the effect it has on the reader.
- The poet makes use of his word processor software to help with the poem's structure. How does he do this and is it effective?

Characters

- There is a principal character, the main 'voice' (sometimes called a persona) in this poem, just as there always is in a story. Which is he, and how do you know?
- Are the other two people different?
- Who do you think might be the leader of this little gang?
- What methods do two of the characters employ to get the third to throw the stone?
- Why do they do it?
- What can you say about the fourth person in the poem? He doesn't actually appear, but he's in there all right.

Reaction

- What is your overall feeling about the poem?
- What was the poet trying to make you feel and think about the different people in the poem?
- Make a final comment to sum up your reaction.

The three suggestions below offer a choice of writing tasks that you may want to give to your young people. The writing tasks may also be used as ideas for a piece of Drama or for an oral presentation.

1. You are a journalist on a local paper. Write an article in which you argue that the council could tackle criminal damage better. You'll have to think about what might help.
2. You are a lawyer. The lad in the poem is up on a charge of criminal damage - he's been spotted on CCTV. He's guilty all right. Persuade the judge to let him off lightly.
3. You are the grandson or granddaughter of the victim in the poem. You are really worried about him, he's so upset. Write to advise your grandfather what to do if these horrible attacks carry on.

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PSHEE and Citizenship: What can you do?

This section can be tackled in a PSHEE or Citizenship session.

It concentrates on background, motivation, feelings and asks pupils to empathise with the victim and perpetrators. It is important that empathy for the principal character's vulnerability to bullying peer pressure and emotional blackmail should not obscure their understanding of the effect on the victim. We understand why the person has acted in the way he has but this doesn't excuse it. Discussion should always bring this out.

Activities are designed to point positive ways of engaging with the problem of criminal damage. The questions are designed to initiate discussion, and can be used with a whole group, small groups or individuals. These ideas may also be used for writing or discussion, or form the basis for role play situations.

- Now you have read the poem, who do you feel sorry for and why? (Note that you can feel sorry for more than one person.)
- Why do the young people in the poem do what they do?
- Does the victim deserve what happens?
- What do the young people in the poem say to justify their actions?
- As a result of what they have done, what might happen to them?
- People are often pushed into behaving in ways they normally wouldn't:
 - Do you know of any time when this has happened to you or somebody else?
Talk about it if you feel you can.
 - What suggestions might you give the main person in the poem to help him get out of the situation?