

LEARNING RESOURCES – DAVID ALMOND

IF YOU ONLY DO ONE THING...

WRITING POETRY 2: 'I SHOULD LIKE TO'

Mina's motto by Blake is well worth reflecting on both for its beauty, its symbolism for Mina, and for its comment on educating children:

*How can a bird that is born for joy
Sit in a cage and sing*

TALKING: UNDERSTANDING, ANALYSING AND EVALUATING: LIT 207G; ENG 219V

I have used the following Sandy Brownjohn activity many times with great success with both P6/7 and S1/2 groups. It fits really well with Mina's desire to let her imagination fly.

Read the Poem *To Paint the Portrait of a Bird* – Additional Resource 3 - by Jacques Prevert (trans. Lawrence Ferlinghetti, in Touchstones Anthology 3). Briefly, this poem says you can paint a cage with an open door and place the canvas against the tree. Then you must hide and wait for the bird to come and enter the cage. Then you must paint the cage closed and then paint out all the bars. Then you must paint certain things to make the bird sing.

*The green foliage and the wind's freshness
The dust of the sun
The noise of the insects in the summer heat.*

The intangibility of these lines is what sets the children free to imagine what they would like to do. Things which could not normally be done – e.g. they hear things you could normally see, touch or taste, and have to try to see sounds, to taste smells, or touch tastes. Ask the children to write for each 'wish' and to expand the description of it to make each picture more vivid. Although at first they might read the poem and feel it

can't be done, once they are off, it is amazing what flights of fancy they are capable of. With all the barriers down and constraints of the real world forgotten, the children are free to experiment with words and ideas.

WRITING: CREATING TEXTS 2: ENG 230AH

EXAMPLES

*I should like to touch the sound of the skylark
waving on the horizon
Or feel the stars in the night sky.
I would love to keep the moon shimmering in
a jar.*

*I would like to hear the sound of the past
Or paint the liberty of life*

– R Luff

*I should like to paint the noise of a vulture on
the eastern mountains on a summer's
evening,
The buzz of dragonflies on the marsh
The sound of a hummingbird's wings as they
go up and down in a plant.
I should like to take home the rays of the
moon on a frosty night,
Or touch the magic of a witch in Hell
I should like to hear the glow in a tiger's eye
on a very dark night,
The calling of a painting to an artist.
I should like to understand the ways of the
gods of ancient Mexico,
The mystery of the dark,
And the paint in the tin, waiting to be mixed.*

– R Mattinson