

THE UNIQUENESS OF VOICE

INTRODUCTION:

The uniqueness of our voices is embedded in the very distinctiveness of our individuality. We boast of unique physical characteristics such as fingerprints but rarely we acknowledge the unique power of our voices. Each person's voice reflects the unique engineering that is produced at the vocal cords. However, before the voice is produced, there is an intricate process that occurs. Sound waves are channelled through the throat and ultimately the sound is released from the mouth where many harmonics are added. Furthermore, each human voice produces different frequencies, and a different set of strengths at each frequency, rendering each human voice unique. The remarkability of it all is that we tend to take our voices for granted, we speak without realizing the powerful instrument that we have been gifted with. The human voice has been dubbed the mirror to the soul, the carrier of life and death, the organ of the spirit! Our voice has never been heard before nor will it be replicated when we are gone, we can use it to make positive change.

EXERCISE 1 - WARM UP

Hide the Word is a simple but effective activity which gives each participant the opportunity to have their voice heard. Each participant is given a word and their goal is to tell a story for 30 seconds and hide the word that they were originally given. The other participants have three attempts to guess the hidden word.

EXERCISE 2 - MAIN

This exercise works best in pairs; however, it can work on an individual basis. If working in pairs, person one picks any tangible object that is in the room and their duty is to give this inanimate object a story, a journey through poetry. The form of the poem can be narrative or free verse completely up to the participant. Person two after hearing the poem would have the chance to guess the object behind Person One's poem. Subsequently, it will then be person two's turn to do the same thing. Ideally, each person should be given at least 10-15 minutes to choose, reflect and write their poem.

The aim of this exercise is to firstly understand that listening and being listened to are both equally important. Secondly, there is power in using our voices to tell our stories, to represent our communities, to ultimately be a voice for the voiceless. I believe this idea of giving voice to the voiceless is a wonderful way of getting creatives to start thinking about the power of their gift and how they can empower others to start using theirs.

EXERCISE 3 - DEVELOPING YOUR WORK

A great way to continue developing their work outside of the workshop is to continue practicing the art of representation by switching from inanimate objects to maybe a neighbour, the postman, ultimately someone that they see in their communities.

POET BIOGRAPHY

John Bernard is a Coventry based Poet, Rapper & Writer who uses his artistry to inspire, influence and invigorate his listeners. He has featured on BBC Radio 3's The Verb, BBC radio 5 live, BBC Contains Strong Language Festival, BBC 1extra as well as performing regularly around the UK. Distinctive delivery, commanding voice, an intricate lyricist his content is authentically raw and potent. He has undoubtedly carved a lane for himself infusing Spoken Word poetry, Alternative-Rap and Neo- Soul.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Kae Tempest Glastonbury Performance

I have chosen this video to highlight how our voices can be used for activism and the endless opportunities that come from saying yes to our voice!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CmHgQT9zP_c

Casey Baily 'Dear Brum'

Great example of using our voices to represent our cities and communities.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJir7cccyPY>

George the Poet

In this piece George did not use any music to accompany him but his tone and delivery keeps you engaged.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1zVhSKsMnok>

Jasmin Gardosi

Incredible piece, showing how we can stretch our voice and performance. There are no limits!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7IFMpF6Jlko>

Jay Z

Speaking about the power of our voice and how understanding this power can help change things societally.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cPa76DrWiUE>

Amanda Gorman

Discusses the connection between poetry and politics and how using your voice is a political stance.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zaZBgqfEa1E>

Empowering Young Voices Project – a collaboration between University of Warwick and Coventry Boys and Girls Club with generous funding by the British Academy and Leverhulme Trust

Share your experience of using this resource with young people on Twitter or Instagram @EmpoweringYV

Visit <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/philosophy/research/currentresearch/eyv/> for more information