

Freedom *Stories* - MOHSEN'S STORY

Freedom Activity

Teacher's Notes

- The suggested activities are suitable for students in Years 10 – 12.
- Teachers are advised to access Mohsen's story – 'Dreaming of Freedom' (23 minutes) among the additional short films via the Freedom Stories DVD menu > More stories > Chapter 5.
- Teachers should consult the Freedom Stories [Study Guide](#) (pages 33-34) for further information about Mohsen's experiences as an asylum seeker and refugee.
- While Mohsen's story is suitable for students in Years 10 – 12, the poetry featured in this activity can be used with secondary students in Years 7 – 9.
- Teachers should note: This documentary discusses psychological trauma and conveys thoughts of suicide and self-harm, which may be disturbing for some viewers.

For more information go to www.freedomstoriesproject.com/education

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Learning objective: to understand the idea of freedom and its relevance to the issue of asylum seekers and refugees.



Mohsen Soltani Zand is a poet and musician. Iranian born, Mohsen is now an Australian citizen.

He was detained for four years upon his arrival in Australia, first at the Port Hedland detention centre and then the Villawood detention centre. It was during his time in detention that Mohsen became a prolific poet, writing about his experiences there. Mohsen's poems have featured in Australian literary journals and he has appeared at Australian writers' festivals. For Mohsen writing poetry during his time in detention was a way to cope and also a way to tell people about the desperate situation of asylum seekers in Australian detention centres.

Activity 1

1. Look up the meaning of the word 'freedom' in a dictionary. Make a record of the definition of freedom in your note book. Which definitions are relevant to the issue of asylum seekers and refugees? Why?
2. What does freedom mean to you? Mind map your answer to this question. Drawing on the content of your mind map, write your own definition of freedom.
3. Why do people need freedom?

Watch Mohsen's story, 'Dreaming of Freedom' on the *Freedom Stories* DVD extras or go to www.freedomstoriesproject.com/education for more viewing options

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Activity 2

Read Mohsen's poems on page 4 below. When you have finished reading each poem, answer the following questions:

1. What did the poem make you think?
2. What did the poem make you feel?

In developing an analysis of each poem, you should consider:

- Subject matter - what the poem is about;
- Form (organisation or structure of the poem);
- Sound devices (rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia);
- Figures of speech (similes, metaphors, personification, metonyms, allusions);
- Other relevant language techniques (for example: direct speech, humour, foreign language, selection of vocabulary).

Mohsen's Poems

Democracy

I didn't come with the green of spring,
I don't want to go with the red of
autumn,
I didn't come with the migrating birds,
I don't want to go with them,
I didn't come with the sunrise,
I don't want to go with the sunset,
I didn't come in the morning,
I don't want to go in the night,
I want to stay here,
I want to sit with you forever,
I don't care how many seasons come,
I am waiting for tomorrow,
I will wait for the next tomorrow, all
tomorrows after that,
I was born to love,
I will wait for you,
Here,
Forever.

Realpolitik

I see a donkey that is singing for democracy
I see a hyena that is waiting for the 'war on terrorism'
I see a shark that is helping rescue boat people
I see a prisoner mouse making a party for the cat
I see a fox teaching freedom to the hen and rooster
I see an executioner putting on the mask of religion
I see a locust sowing a green field for humanity
I see an elephant stepping tentatively to avoid crushing the ant
I see a hungry wolf shaking hands with a lamb
I am seeing people who are blind to all but the magic box
I see people who are deaf to all but the animal's song
I see people who are working for humanity, but with only the power to grieve
I saw democracy in the oil
I saw humanity in the bullet
I am obsessed with death, I wait for it like crazy,
Because death is better than the real world.

Numb(er)

These are the sounds I fear –
heavy footsteps running,
urgent voices shouting,
the kick that breaks open the door.

There are the images that haunt –
looming shadows,
burning light,
my huddled form.

This is the question that begs –
"What is your number?"
"What is your number?"

These are the words I keep in my head –
My number is pain,
my number is shame,
my number is death.

These are the actions that define –
power is the baton,
broken limbs the evidence,
shattered dreams the victim,

This is the cure for this country's wounds –
two panadol,
ten cups of water,
and no report.

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Activity 3

Write your own poem(s) about freedom.

a.) Write a cinquain poem about the meaning of freedom.

A cinquain poem has five lines.

Line 1: Title (noun) - 1 word

Line 2: Description - 2 words

Line 3: Action - 3 words

Line 4: Feeling (phrase) - 4 words

Line 5: Title (synonym for the title) - 1 word

b.) Write a haiku poem about what freedom means to you.

A haiku poem has three lines.

Line 1: five syllables

Line 2: seven syllables

Line 3: five syllables

c.) Write a poem about what freedom means to asylum seekers and refugees.

Mohsen's poems are free verse poems.

A free verse poem does not follow any rules of rhyme or metre. There are also no rules about line length in free verse. Try to keep the words that belong together on the same line, unless separating the words supports the poem's meaning. A free verse poem will have some type of rhythm. This is achieved through vocabulary choice and the use of poetic devices.