



# Ambassadors for Change Session

## 'The Spoken Word'

Poet and facilitator Francesca Beard feels lucky to work with inspiring teachers and brilliant young people in primary and secondary schools across London and believes that education is the single most powerful agent of positive social change. This resource has been designed by Francesca Beard to encourage engagement in active and sustainable travel through the spoken word.

TfL Travel for Life encourages children to walk cycle and scoot more, to influence other parents and students to chose active travel, and to campaign for changes to our local streets.

**Activity Length:** 30+ mins

This exercise is suitable for a wide range of abilities, from Key Stage 2 or ESOL to KS4 students.

### Objectives:

- To explore poetic language using a simple framework as a starting point for different outcomes
- To celebrate the diversity of individual experiences and responses to our environment
- To experiment with poetic techniques such as repetition, rhythm and rhyme
- To use our voices and words to communicate with our community as sustainability leaders

Performance lead in for 15 mins – livestream to poet

**Introduction:** 5 mins

Ask your students to share the different languages that they might speak at home and touch on the countries that these languages come from. Talk about how every language is unique, every language has its own rules.

Suggest that poetry is a language which likes to bend the rules. In fact, poetry is so bendy that you can't really get the rules wrong. Some people find this easy and some people find it a challenge. That's ok, poetry is often about how challenging life can be!



## Poetry Word Bank: 10 mins

Take a theme inspired by the TFL Stars work your school has done. Ask everyone in the group to donate a word – or two - which they connect with the project. Write this word on a large piece of paper or scribe it on the board.

For a KS4 group, this could be science informed, about clean air, global warming, or something very specific in your local area.

For a KS2 group, this could be around nature, animals, the journey to school or themselves and their families.

Some examples from STARS below:

'TfL Travel for Life' Activities	
Walk to School Week	TfL Pioneers Challenge
Big Walk and Wheel	Eco-Schools
Pollution reduction at school	Air Quality Monitoring
Car Free Day	Community events
Road Safety Day	Competitions
TfL Explorers Ambassadors	Student-led Assemblies
Brighten your bag	Bling your bike





environment scooting  
commitment space clean  
improvement engagement  
transport silver change  
recognition freedom london  
inspire safety  
nature cycle  
stars gold **active**  
transformation healthy  
lifestyle walking community  
wellbeing bronze fun  
leadership responsibility  
sustainability influence



## Build a poem: 10 mins

You can choose to do this individually or in pairs

Using the Word Bank as inspiration, make your 'I Speak the Language' poem by filling in the worksheet.

Encourage your students to make their poems as imaginative and personal as possible by being specific to their own memories, associations and sensory experiences of the world.

For example, many people might say 'I speak the language of buzz to the bees', but you could write 'I speak the language of silver teaspoons of sugar to the tired bees' and your friend might write 'I speak the language of golden teddy bears to the furry bumble bees'.

My hope is that this simple list poem structure allows for playfulness and experimentation. You could suggest to your students that they might want to alternate or contrast things that they don't like or want to change (pollution; littering; traffic) with things that they love and care about (trees, birds, family)

If any student wants to write their own poem or takes the form and does their own thing, I am always delighted, the main objective is to get them writing creatively and in their own voice.

You can offer some students the challenge of creating a rhyming poem – here are some rhyming patterns:

A, B, A, B, C, D, C, D, E, E

A, B, C, B, D, E, F, E

A, B, C, D, E F, G, G





# I speak the Language

I speak the language of Thames to the river  
I speak the language of weeping to willows  
I speak the language of Brockwell Park ponds to tadpoles  
I speak the language of hopes and fears for the future to my pillow.

I speak the language of plankton to blue whales  
I speak the language of green bins to recycling  
I speak the language of thermals to migrating swifts  
I speak the language of electrons to lightning

I speak the language of lavender blossom to bees  
I speak the language of clean water to thirst  
I speak the language of me to my mirror.  
I speak the language of home to our Earth



## What languages do you speak?

5 minutes: Share your poems!

Before I ask students to share their work, I talk about the power of sharing your world with other people and how artists can change the world by telling new stories and using words to connect us to big, important emotions and feelings. If possible, try and comment on each student's work by shining a spotlight on a line that carried emotion, made you smile or think or told a story through the choice of words.

## Note for Teachers

This exercise is about empowering your students through their own creativity, so I would err on the side of positivity, praise and building their confidence and let spelling and grammar and hand-writing take a back seat.

Ideally, the students should feel that they are able to be themselves while respecting others and that this lesson is not about getting things 'right' or 'wrong' but about exploration of things they have experienced and their own feelings about the world.

If I am running the workshop, I make this explicit throughout the session, by saying things like:

'The best person in the whole world to write this piece is you because no-one knows more about your own life and feelings than you.'

'Poetry is not fact or fiction, it's somewhere in between, so you can use examples from your own life and make stuff up based on your own experience.'

'Sometimes, a good way to learn is to make mistakes and take chances – it's not safe to do that when you are learning how to cross a road or build an aeroplane but it's a great way to learn how to be an artist.'



Francesca Beard is an internationally acclaimed spoken word artist who makes interactive and transformational work for live audiences. She has over twenty years experience facilitating projects with a wide range of diverse communities.

She's been called 'Brilliant' (The Scotsman), 'Spine-tingling' (The Independent) and 'The Queen of British performance poetry' (London Metro) She comes from London, by way of Malaysia. To find out more, please visit

[www.francescabear.com](http://www.francescabear.com)

This resource was created by Francesca Beard in collaboration with TfL Travel for Life





# I speak the Language

I speak the language of \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

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