



# OUR rights!

CONTAINS STORIES AND POEMS  
ABOUT CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

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These notes have been written to support KS2 teachers in using *Our Rights!* to teach both the national curriculum for English and for cross-curricular work around the theme of children's rights.

All the stories and poems are suitable for children aged 8+ – however, there are complex themes explored which may require sensitivity. Please consider your approach to using this resource depending on the needs and experiences of the children in your class.



# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (UNCRC)

An Introduction to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Our Rights! is a collection of stories and poems based on the 54 articles that make up The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Convention is an international human rights treaty which grants all children and young people (anyone under 18 years old) a comprehensive set of rights.

It was adopted by the UN General Assembly on the 20th November 1989 and entered into force from 2nd September 1990. The UK signed the convention on the 19th April 1990, ratified it on 16 December 1991 and it came into force in the UK on 15 January 1992.

Implementation of the Convention is monitored by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and they encourage children's participation in their work: Information for children | OHCHR

On pages 230-238 of *Our Rights!* you will find a child-friendly summary of each of the 54 articles. You can also find a colourful, printable version of the same summaries on the UNICEF website: [convention-rights-child-text-child-friendly-version.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/convention-rights-child-text-child-friendly-version.pdf) ([unicef.org](https://www.unicef.org))

On page 239 of *Our Rights!*, Amnesty International have provided a short summary of the rights as a whole. They categorise the principles of the convention as the four Ps:

- Protection – to keep children safe
- Provision – to make sure children have the essentials like shelter, food and education
- Prevention of harm – so governments make laws to protect children
- Participation – so children can take part in important decisions



Amnesty International endorsed the publication of *Our Rights!* and all author royalties go to Amnesty International to support the work they do globally to champion and defend human rights. Amnesty International also have further teaching resources to support your exploration of human rights in the classroom at: [www.amnesty.org.uk/education](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/education)



## INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

The following activities have been designed to introduce your pupils to the book and to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

1. **Discuss** the opening question put to the reader in Jake Hope's Introduction to Our Rights! on page 6-7: If you were asked to list the things which help to keep you safe, healthy and make sure your voice and views are heard, what would you choose? (5-10 mins)
2. **Discuss** your class/school rules – ask your pupils why these rules are in place. Discuss how they are in place to protect pupils and to make sure they have the right environment to learn in, etc. Introduce the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child and make the connection between these class/school rules and the international rules for governments about children's rights: e.g., these rules are in place to keep children safe all over the world. (5-10 mins)
3. **Introduce** your pupils to children's rights through a matching exercise – provide them with the child-friendly definitions of a selection from the 54 rights and ask them to read them and match them to the correct title: e.g., your pupils would have in front of them 'A child is any person under the age of 18' and they would match that definition to the title 'Definition of a Child'. Choose three or four rights to discuss in more detail. (5-10 mins)
4. **Share** Jackie Morris' poem **Imagine** (pg 8) with your class. In this poem, Jackie is asking the reader to imagine a better world for all children and asking everyone to work together to make that better world a reality. Discuss the values and rights in your school (Yr 3/4) or country (Yr 5/6) and why they are important. Using the third verse of Imagine as inspiration (Imagine a world where...), guide your pupils to write their own version of this poem, focusing on their school/country: e.g., Imagine a school/country where... (25-30 mins)
5. **Share** Anne Fine's short story **Rights of the Child** (pg 162) with your class. In this story, the protagonist Matthew tags along with his mother to a committee meeting where they are discussing the rights of the child. Bored during the meeting, Matthew creates his own humorous list of rights based on things he is frustrated by in his own life, such as the right to not eat broccoli and the right to be paid to be polite to Granny. It is a very personal list and Matthew ultimately realises that the rights to education and health care for all children are much more important. Ask your pupils to write their own humorous list of the rights they'd like to have with justifications for their choices. At the end of the activity, discuss why UNCRC is important for all children around the world. (25-30 mins)



## POEMS

There are 11 fantastic poems in *Our Rights!* Directly before each poem, you will find an explanation of which children's rights from the UNCRC are going to be explored.

### THE POEMS

1. **Imagine**, Jackie Morris
2. **They Tell Me**, C.G. Moore
3. **Callum Dunt Like Readin**, R.R O'Neill
4. **The Soldier**, Valerie Bloom
5. **Just a Child**, Rashmi Sirdeshpande
6. **Enjoy the Sunshine**, Beverley Naidoo
7. **Human Wrongs**, Benjamin Zephaniah
8. **To be Heard**, Dom Conlon
9. **I Magi Nationseye**, Sita Brahmachari
10. **A Friend Told Me**, Jordan Stephens
11. **Every Child a Song**, Nicola Davies





# USING OUR RIGHTS! TO TEACH POETRY

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- 1. Share** R.R. O'Neill's poem **Callum Dunt Like Readin** and Sita Brahmachari's poem **I Magi Nationseye** and ask them to draw what they picture while you read the poem. R.R. O'Neill's poem is written in rhyming couplets and uses everyday language and real-world imagery. Sita Brahmachari's poem is a free verse poem with complex, otherworldly imagery. At first glance, these poems seem like opposites, however they are both about education and the ways in which it can either help children fly, or fail to recognise their unique talents. Ask your pupils to reflect on which poem they prefer after an initial read. Then, spend some time comparing and contrasting the two poems focusing on language, structure, punctuation, imagery and meaning. After you've explored the poems, ask your pupils if their preference has changed, and encourage them to justify their opinions based on evidence from the poems. Extension: ask your pupils to write a reflection on their personal response to these poems.
- 2. Share** Beverley Naidoo's poem **Enjoy the Sunshine**. In this poem, Beverley is juxtaposing two images to highlight injustice – the image of child labour (a child working in the hot sun picking grapes), and the image of a promotional poster in a supermarket thousands of miles away saying 'Enjoy the sunshine in our grapes'. This poem is based on the right children have to be 'protected from doing work that is dangerous or bad for their education, health or development.' Discuss what juxtaposition is and why it is effective in this poem. Discuss if it is fair/right that a child must work in the hot sun instead of going to school so that we can eat grapes. Share the right 'Children have the right to the best health care possible, clean water to drink, healthy food and a clean and safe environment to live in'. Ask your pupils to rewrite the poem based on these two juxtaposed images: a child walking miles each day in the hot sun for dirty water just to survive, and a promotional poster for a water gun that says 'Fill it up again and again!'
- 3. Share** Valerie Bloom's poem **The Soldier**. This poem is seemingly about a soldier's experience, but the last line reveals a twist – the soldier is only ten years old. This is an impactful ending for the reader. Ask your pupils to discuss the ending of the poem – how does it make them feel? This poem lends itself well to performance. In groups of 4-5, ask your pupils to prepare a performance of the poem. They should consider who will recite each line, what their actions will be for each line and how they will make the ending impactful for the audience. Extension: You could ask your pupils to perform the poem from memory.



## SHORT STORIES

There are 11 brilliant short stories in *Our Rights!* Directly before each story, you will find an explanation of which children's rights are going to be explored.

### THE STORIES

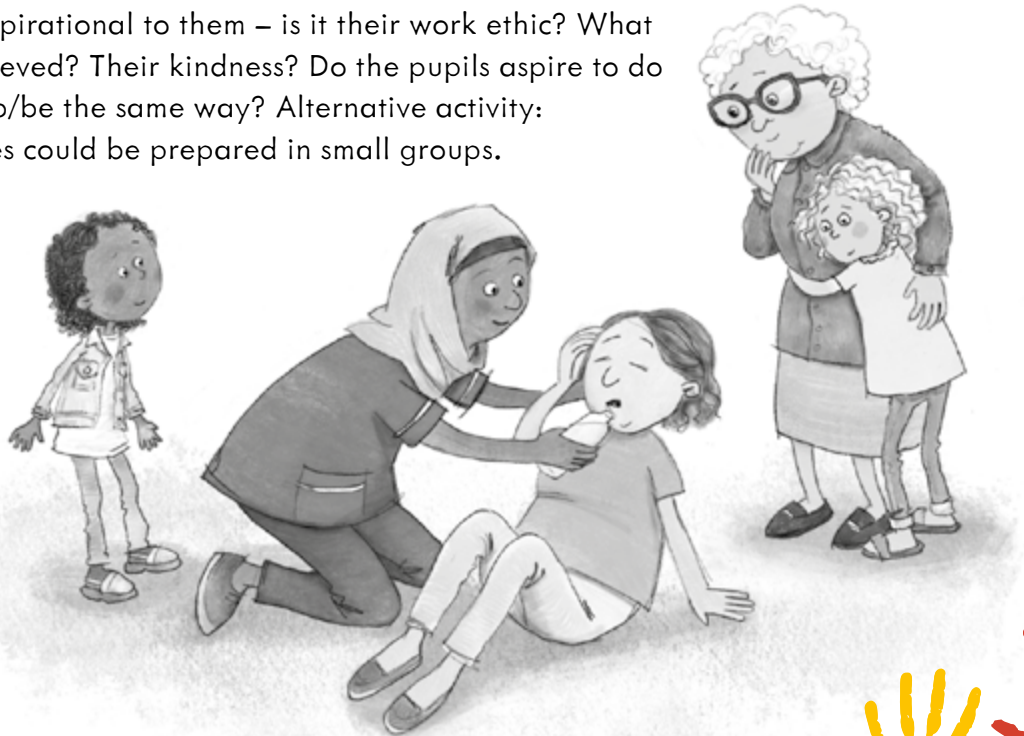
1. **Our Rights**, Jake Hope
2. **The Mascot**, Chitra Soundar
3. **The Big Day Out**, Cathy Cassidy
4. **O.L.A**, Joseph Coelho
5. **What a Woman**, Paul Jennings
6. **The Adoption Club**, Maisie Chan
7. **This is Who I Am**, A.M. Dassu
8. **ThisFrog and ThisGirl**, Jamila Gavin
9. **Rights of the Child**, Anne Fine
10. **Faduma and the Lion Man**,  
Elizabeth Laird
11. **Charles the Second**, Morris Gleitzman



# USING OUR RIGHTS! TO TEACH SPOKEN LANGUAGE

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

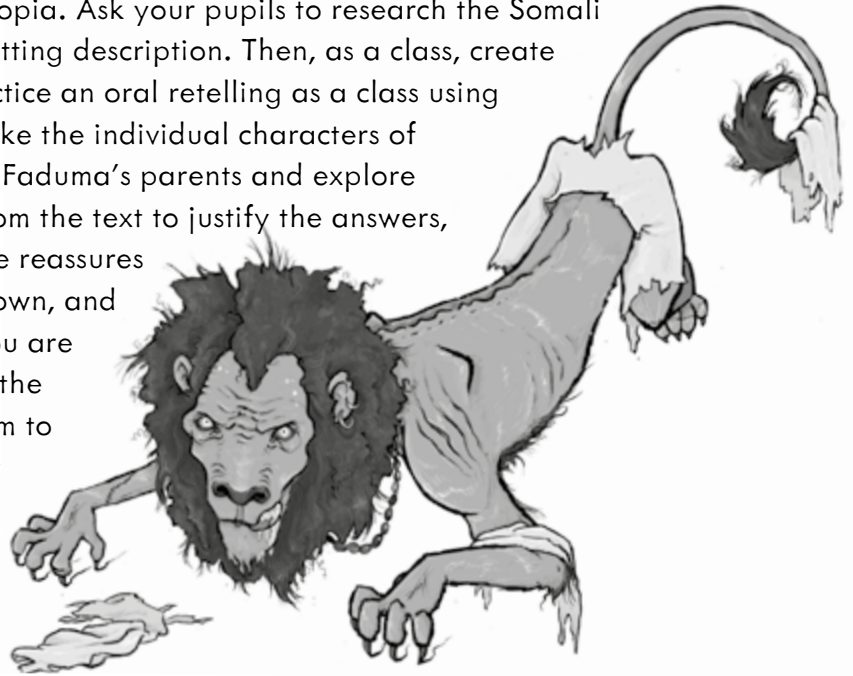
1. **Share** Cathy Cassidy's story **The Big Day Out**. In this story, Dad takes Ciara out of the country without Mum's permission. Ask your pupils to discuss why Dad did this and if this is something he should have done. Split your class into two groups and hold a debate on whether Dad was justified in what he did. On the 'Dad was wrong' side your pupils might point out that it is against the law to take a child out of the country by one parent if the other parent doesn't agree; and that Ciara feels upset, afraid and betrayed by his actions. On the 'Dad was right' side your pupils might point out that Mum had been deliberately keeping him away from Ciara so she got to know her new step-dad Barry, and Ciara deserves the chance to see her Grandma. After the debate, be sure to reiterate that it is illegal for one parent to take their child out of the country without the other parent's permission.
2. **Share** Morris Gleitzman's story **Charles the Second**. In this story, two children learn to love and embrace their unique names. Ask your pupils to reflect on what makes them unique – does their name have a special meaning? Do they have a special talent? What are their strengths? Ask your pupils to prepare a 1-minute verbal presentation for the class on what makes them unique. Extension: You could ask them to prepare a Powerpoint or make a poster to go with their verbal presentation.
3. **Share** A.M. Dassu's story **This is Who I Am**. In this story, the students are asked to prepare a short speech about an inspirational person. Ask your pupils to do the same – prepare a 1-minute speech, perhaps about someone they know, a current celebrity or an inspirational person from history. Encourage your pupils to focus on why that person is inspirational to them – is it their work ethic? What they've achieved? Their kindness? Do the pupils aspire to do the same job/be the same way? Alternative activity: The speeches could be prepared in small groups.



# USING OUR RIGHTS! TO TEACH NARRATIVE WRITING

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. **Share** Elizabeth Laird's story **Faduma and the Lion Man**. This story is from the oral tradition in the Somali region of Ethiopia. Ask your pupils to research the Somali region in order to write a detailed setting description. Then, as a class, create a text/story map of the plot and practice an oral retelling as a class using the new setting information. Next, take the individual characters of Faduma, the Lion, the Shepherd and Faduma's parents and explore their personalities, using evidence from the text to justify the answers, e.g., the Shepherd is kind because he reassures Faduma that the floods have gone down, and she is safe to leave the tree. Once you are confident that your class understand the story, setting and characters, ask them to rewrite the story. Extension: Ask your pupils to change the ending e.g., the Lion returns and eats the Shepherd or Faduma refuses to forgive her parents.



2. **Share** Paul Jennings' story **What a Woman**. Discuss the ways in which Sally is discriminated against and how it makes her feel e.g., the name calling, the expectation that she'll come last, she feels like she's not as good as the boys and never will be. Discuss why this negative messaging from others is a problem, e.g., Sally might not achieve her potential and might lower her aspirations for the future because she doesn't believe she can do it. Discuss some examples of other ways people are discriminated against: e.g., racism, homophobia, poverty, disability. Ask your pupils to write their own short story whose main character experiences negative messaging from others about who they are, and what they can do, but who ultimately triumphs.





# USING OUR RIGHTS! TO TEACH NON-FICTION WRITING

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. **Share** Jake Hope's story **Our Rights**. It is important that this story takes place in a library – what connotations does the word 'library' have for your pupils? What do they think of when they picture a library or a librarian? Discuss how libraries are used today and why they are important for local communities e.g., free access to books, internet access, books and reading experts, space for free community activities. Ask your pupils to create a leaflet advertising and celebrating their local library and all it has to offer.
2. **Share** Joseph Coelho's story **O.L.A.** This science fiction story is about a child's right to be alive and to have their own identity. In this story, the protagonist has a little brother who is a robot (Ola). When DUET, the company that made Ola, threaten to discontinue him, his brother must fight for his right to live. At the end of the story, a miracle occurs and Ola is no longer a robot but a real boy. Ask your pupils to write a newspaper article about Ola, including a timeline of the campaign to save him, a detailed description of the moment the miracle occurred, and quotes from interviews with his family, the local Councillor and Randolph Plate (owner of DUET).
3. **Share** Maisie Chan's story **The Adoption Club**. This story is told in diary entries from the perspective of three different adopted children. Introduce what adoption is and the reasons why a child might need to be adopted by another family. In the story, Nina was adopted from China to the UK and she struggles to navigate two different cultures. Ask your pupils to imagine how it would feel to be adopted to another country and to write a diary entry about their feelings and experiences. Encourage them to explore the positives of having two cultures as well as the challenges. Note: There may be adopted children in the class who may or may not find it an easy topic for group discussion.
4. **Share** Jamila Gavin's story **ThisFrog and ThisGirl** (Upper-KS2 only). This story was inspired by the real-life story of Shamina Begum. Share some basic information about Shamina's story and discuss how her story is reflected in ThisFrog and ThisGirl. Shamina is not allowed to return to the UK – ask your pupils to discuss whether they think ThisGirl should be allowed to return to the UK and why. Ask your pupils to write either a formal letter to ThisGirls' MP explaining why they think she should/should not be allowed to return to the UK; or ask your pupils to write an opinion piece for a local newspaper on whether ThisGirl should/should not be allowed to return.



# USING OUR RIGHTS! FOR CROSS-CURRICULAR WORK

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- 1. Share** Nicola Davies' poem **Every Child a Song**. Discuss the meaning: that all children are unique and have rights. Ask your pupils to reflect on the question 'If you were a song, what would you sound like?' You should encourage their answers to reference the different elements of music such as pitch, dynamics, tempo, timbre, texture and structure, so you may wish to refresh their memories of these first. Provide instruments (and/or use voice/body percussion). Each child in the class should choose a different sound to make (this can be achieved even with lots of the same instrument by choosing different notes with tuned instruments or by using different parts of the body of the instrument for untuned instruments). Take it in turns for each child to play/make their sound and put them altogether to make a class song. You could also choose to have some children read the poem over the top of the song, in its entirety or just repeating the final three lines 'Sing Joy! Sing Love! Sing Freedom!' (Music)
- 2. Share** Chitra Soundar's story **The Mascot**. This story takes place in India where a village is trying to decide on their new kabaddi team mascot. The children in the story are inspired to propose an Indian Palm Squirrel as it is their state's animal, and it is agile and fast like their kabaddi team. Ask your pupils to sketch a few ideas for your class/school mascot based on local wildlife or class/school name and values. Ask your pupils to justify their choices: e.g., I have drawn a dog with bumblebee stripes because it shows that in this class, we are friendly like dogs and we work hard like worker bees. When this is done, ask your pupils to select a favourite mascot from their ideas and create a painting or sculpture of their mascot. (Art and Design)
- 3. Share** A.M. Dassu's story **This is Who I Am**. This story is about Rumena learning to be proud of her identity after she experiences racism. Talk about what shame is and how it feels – ask the children to reflect on whether they've ever felt shamed by somebody for being different. Talk about racism – what it is and how it feels. Reflect on Emily's treatment of Rumena: why do you think Emily is racist towards Rumena at the beginning of the story? E.g., copying what her Granny is saying. What could the teacher or the other pupils in their class have done to make Rumena feel better? E.g., how could the pupils/teacher have demonstrated being actively anti-racist? Why does Emily's opinion on the hijab change by the end of the story? Talk about how it is possible to change your mind about something once you have more information. (PSHE/RSE)



## FURTHER RESOURCES

Amnesty International (UK): <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/education-resources>  
Amnesty International (UK): <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/books-younger-children>  
BBC Bitesize: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zf3mxbk>  
BBC Bitesize: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zg7rcmn>  
BBC Newsround: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/33109806>  
Book Trust: <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/news-and-features/features/2023/november/eight-books-that-empower-children-to-stand-up-for-themselves>  
Scottish Book Trust: <https://www.scottishbooktrust.com/book-lists-picture-books/exploring-childrens-rights>

**You'll also find themes of children's rights in many of the other books and poems written by the fantastic contributors to Our Rights! You can find out about their other works via their websites:**

Valerie Bloom: <https://www.valeriebloom.co.uk>  
Sita Brahmachari: <https://www.sitabrahmachari.com>  
Cathy Cassidy: <https://www.cathycassidy.com>  
Maisie Chan: <https://www.maisiechan.com>  
Joseph Coelho: <https://www.thepoetryofjosephcoelho.com>  
Dom Conlon: <https://www.domconlon.com>  
A.M. Dassu: <https://www.amdassu.com>  
Nicola Davies: <https://www.nicola-davies.com>  
Anne Fine: <https://www.annefine.co.uk>  
Jamila Gavin: <https://www.jamilagavin.com>  
Morris Gleitzman: <https://www.morrisgleitzman.com>  
Jake Hope: <https://www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk/author/6383/Jake-Hope.html>  
Paul Jennings: <https://www.pauljennings.com.au>  
Elizabeth Laird: <https://www.elizabethlaird.co.uk>  
C.G. Moore: <https://www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk/author/5626/C-G-Moore.html>  
Jackie Morris: <https://www.jackiemorris.co.uk>  
Beverley Naidoo: <https://www.beverleynaidoo.com>  
R.R. O'Neill: <https://www.richardthestoryteller.weebly.com>  
Rashmi Sirdeshpande: <https://www.rashmisirdeshpande.com>  
Chitra Soundar: <https://www.chitrasoundar.com>  
Jordan Stephens: <https://www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk/author/6289/Jordan-Stephens.html>  
Benjamin Zephaniah: <https://www.benjaminzephaniah.com>

