

The Unknown Runner!

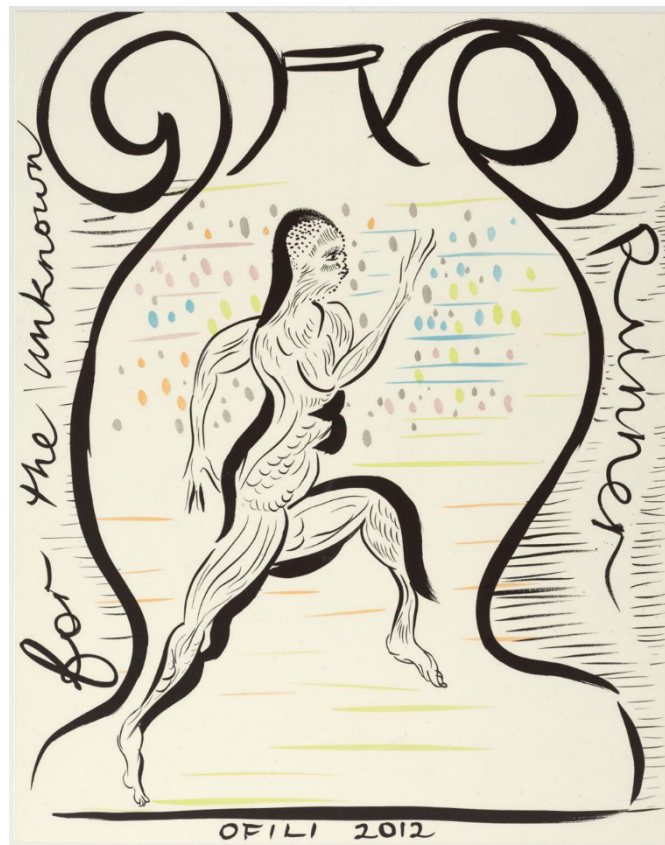
KS4 learning activities designed by Marvin Thompson

Are you the Unknown Runner?

What are we going to learn? We are going to use this picture of The Unknown Runner to explore the topic of discrimination. This includes looking at issues of fairness, kindness and equality. By the end of this booklet, you will have created a series of poems that explore the issues of discrimination and identity.

Warm Up 1: The picture below was created by the Black British artist Chris Ofili. However, who is the unknown runner? Where are they from? Have they got a disability? Are they male or female or neither? Are they old or young? Happy or sad?

To answer these questions, make notes in the space surrounding the picture. Aim for at least 7 ideas!



Warm up 2: What is discrimination?

Words: unfairly / power / world / centuries / kinder / The Unknown Runner / Britain

Discrimination is when people who are seen as 'different' are treated _____. It is a problem that exists in Britain and in countries across the _____.

Discrimination can become a huge problem when people with _____ decide to treat large groups of people unfairly. For example, imagine being discriminated against by your teacher, your boss at work or even a politician who sets the laws for your country. How would that make you feel?

In _____, some of the groups that are discriminated against include: Black people, Asian people, women, people who are part of the LGBTQ+ community and people who have a disability.

To make matters worse, many of these groups of people have been discriminated against for _____. This means discrimination often has an historical legacy. This can make discrimination even more painful for people because it can seem like their unfair treated will never end. However, through education and celebrating difference, we have the power to make the world a _____ place for everyone.

Some people who are discriminated against might wish they were like _____. The Unknown Runner has no skin, visible disability or gender to discriminate against.

Answers: unfairly / power / world / centuries / kinder / The Unknown Runner

Activity 1: Writing a list poem about discrimination

As previously mentioned, some people who are discriminated against might wish they were like The Unknown Runner. The Unknown Runner has no skin, visible disability or gender to discriminate against.

With this in mind, let's collect some ideas for writing a list poem. The title of the poem will be: **What it Could Feel Like to be the Unknown Runner**

Task 1: First of all, list 7 things that might make you smile (one has been done for you).

1. A warm hug from my grandmother

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

Ideas:

- Hearing a golden saxophone
- Slurping my mint choc chip ice-cream
- Laughing and laughing and never stopping
- Giving my best friend a high five when we are playing netball
- Dancing to fast music with a mermaid

My example poem:

What it Could Feel Like to be the Unknown Runner

Like slurping my favourite ice-cream

Like laughing and laughing and never stopping

Like dancing in the waves with a dolphin! best friend a high five

Task 2: Now re-write your list in the space below. See if you can re-order your list so you end on your most emotional or most powerful idea!

Your Poem

What it Could Feel Like to be the Unknown Runner

Activity 2: Writing a sonnet that celebrates difference

A sonnet is a 14-line poem made famous in British poets such as Shakespeare and Patience Agbabi. Because they are traditionally love poems, sonnets are the perfect form to write about identity and self-acceptance.

In the face of discrimination, some people want to be like The Unknown Runner. However, the truth is the Unknown Runner would very likely be discriminated against because of their difference.

Use ideas from all the activities so far to write a 14-line sonnet that explores and celebrates what makes you different.

Top tips:

- **Use powerful verbs:** munch instead of eat, trudge instead of walk.
- **Be specific:** Alsatian instead of dog, snowy owl instead of bird.
- **How about a bit of personification:** The mountains are watching us.
- **Be playful and imaginative:** You could write a poem from the perspective of your knee. Also, incorporate other languages if that helps to celebrate your difference.
- **Have fun:** In poetry, there are no rules except that you should enjoy writing your poem!

Here are some ideas about how you could structure your sonnet:

First 8 lines	Last 6 lines
List of what makes me different	Why these things make me special
Things I used to dislike about myself	How I now love those things
Things other people dislike about me	How I now love those things
What I would gain if I was not different	What I would lose if I was not different

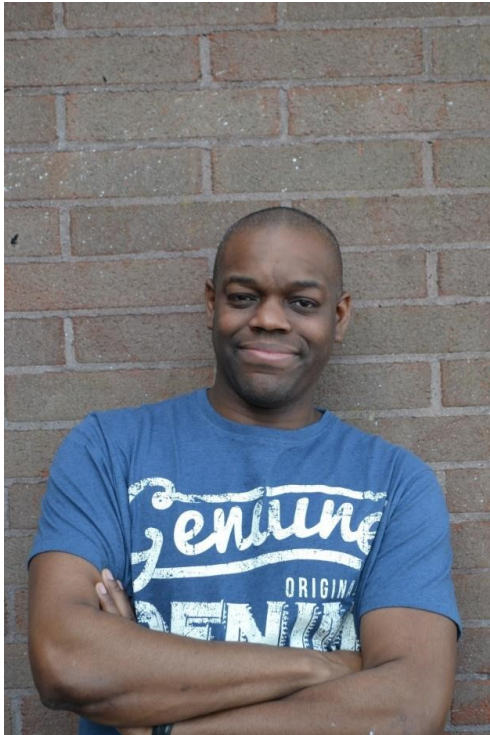
Notes and ideas for your sonnet

Your sonnet

Challenge: turn your poems into short films about identity and discrimination

- 1) Work in groups of three.
- 2) Write a script.
- 3) Think about location, different camera angles, lighting and sound.
- 4) There are lots of free apps and programmes to help you edit your finished film.
- 5) You could show it to friends, family, or in a school assembly!

About Marvin Thompson



Marvin Thompson was born in Tottenham, London to Jamaican parents and now lives in mountainous south Wales. His debut collection, *Road Trip* (Peepal Tree Press, 2020), is a Poetry Book Society Recommendation. In June 2020, the Poetry Society selected *Road Trip* as one of five Black Lives Matter Inspiration books.

In addition, *Road Trip* was one of 40 officially recommended collections and anthologies for National Poetry Day, 2020. *The Guardian* described *Road Trip* as an 'invigorating journey through the complexities of black British family life.'

In 2019, Thompson was one of only eight writers to be awarded a grant by Literature Wales as part of the Platforming Under-Represented Writers Funding Scheme. In addition, he was shortlisted for the 2019 Manchester Poetry Prize.

In 2016, Thompson was selected by Nine Arches Press for the Primers 2 mentoring scheme. He also has an MA in creative writing.