



ISHAMI
FOUNDATION

creative **WRITING** **LEARNING RESOURCE**

#LessonsFromRwanda

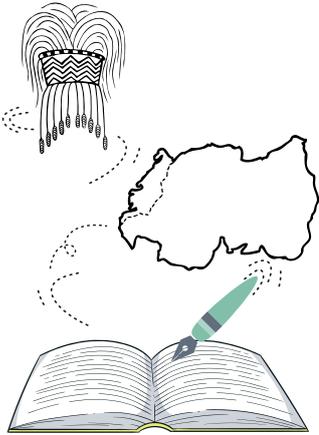


Who is the resource for:

Secondary school students in Years 8-12 studying English, History and Politics. Schools wishing to mark Holocaust Memorial Day, Kwibuka 100 Days, Black History Month or support their students to explore human rights.



Creative Writing Learning Resource



What students will explore:

- Understanding our own definitions of identity
- Poetry analysis and performance tips
- Analysing the stories of survivors and writing a found poem and third person narratives



Ishami Foundation intro:

The Ishami Foundation is a UK registered charity (Number 1186621) working in the UK and Rwanda. We draw on genocide survivors' experiences to help us all connect to our common humanity.

Ishami Foundation - about the project:

2019 was the 25th anniversary of the genocide against the Tutsi. As part of commemorations, fifteen survivors worked with Ishami Foundation co-founder Jo Ingabire and poet Laila Sumpton to creatively tell their stories and learn how to perform them. These stories form part of this resource for students to analyse and respond to creatively. Before the project few of the survivors had ever written a poem or story, or spoken of their memories of survival.



ACTIVITY

1

Understanding our identities



15 minutes

DISCUSS

in pairs which three words would you choose to define your identity?

Feedback and list as many different markers of identity including:

nationality

age health religion



sexuality

asylum status family



disability

interests and hobbies

region

profession

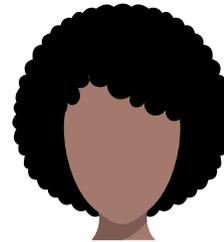
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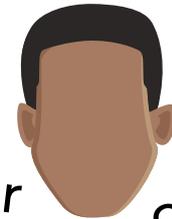


race

political belief



appearance



sex

gender

class

DISCUSS

Which of these are visible/invisible?

Which are chosen?

How can our identities affect our life?

We'll be thinking about how identity was weaponised during the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, where how you were identified determined your future. History tells us that calling out identity-based prejudice so that it does not escalate to violence is vital, as is campaigning for the protection of our human rights.

ACTIVITY

2

Why do we tell these stories?



DISCUSS

Why do we tell stories about the genocide against the Tutsi?
What does this mean for survivors personally and for audiences?

I speak at many schools so I'd like to be a better communicator.



Naila Kira

The written word lasts forever. So should our stories.



Eric Murangwa Eugene

As an educator, I know the value of the stories we tell. I have always wanted to tell the story of the people who saved us. I think this might be my opportunity.



Alphonsine Kabagabo

What survivors working with the Ishami Foundation told us about why they tell their stories

100

I'm a survivor who's never told her children what happened to her during the genocide. I hope these storytelling workshops will help me to learn how to do that.



Rhema Muguyenzeza

I find telling my story really hard to do but do so anyway. It's vital to tell these stories so that the next generation can learn from them. I hope writing will be an easier way to communicate my story.



Mariam Tumukunde

ACTIVITY

3

Found poems from survivor's stories



45 minutes



15 minutes



Read the stories on pages 7-10 and pick one to use to create a 10-12 line found poem. A found poem is a type of poem made by taking words, phrases or sections from other sources and using them to create a new piece. Do this by underlining or highlighting the words and phrases in the story that you think are the most important and interesting to condense and tell the story. Or give different tables different stories.

There are no right words to underline - find a pathway through the story that helps you condense the meaning.



20-30 minutes

Copy these favourite words and phrases out on a plain sheet of paper or word document and experiment with the form of the poem. How the poem looks on the page also tells the story and mood of the poem. Your poem should be a maximum of 12 lines long. Share found poems in pairs for peer feedback before sharing with the class.

TIPS:

- Pick vivid and visual phrases so the reader can see the fragments of the story clearly
- You can change the order of the lines or copy them down as you find them
- You can repeat important phrases if you think this helps tell the story
- Add connecting words to help make the story make sense but try to just use the words in the story
- Scatter the thoughts across the page
- Create a neat square or rectangle by wrapping the words around the edge of the line (enjambement) - be sure to end the line on a word that you want the reader to focus on. The way you wrap the words tells the story and controls the pacing

WHAT FORM? The form of a poem affects how it looks on the page. Adjust the form of your poem to fit the story.

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Stories from the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi:

NAILA KIRA *Living in the UK*

100

I remember a house full of laughter, joy and love, but when we went outside of the gate we were always anxious, fearful, and lost in the big world outside of home.

I was always told to be brave.

I remember one beautiful Saturday morning, my family, uncles, and grandparents came to our house.

I was dressed in a yellow flowery dress and Mum tied my hair into three ponytails. As she continued to get me ready for the day ahead, she reminded me that I am her “brave girl”.

As the day passed I realised it was the beginning of my dark days. I was leaving my family, as my Dad had decided to let me go to Uganda so I could be safe.

As Dad put me in the car, he reminded me that I was his “bravest girl”.

I remember Grandma’s smile fade away as the day went by, then she whispered as I was leaving, “I don’t know if I will ever see you again but you are our beautiful, brave girl. Look after yourself and don’t forget to pray”.

I remember standing at Lake Victoria when bodies were washing up coming from Rwanda to Uganda. I stood there waiting and fearing if I would see my family, hearing people making painful comments about the parts of the bodies that were floating. I felt alone, broken, not knowing whether my family was alive or among the bodies being mocked at Lake Victoria.

I couldn’t cry. I remembered I needed to be brave - after all I had promised everyone, I

had promised Dad.

I remember coming to Rwanda after the Genocide to the place that was once my happy home, and nothing was there - just one wall standing. My legs shivered and my heart broke.

I was not sure what Dad would have wanted me to do, because at this point, I could not be ‘brave’.

After a few days, I managed to find my Mother and siblings.

I remember the look on her face when she saw us, she smiled with tears in her eyes, hugged me tightly.

“Remember you are my brave girl”, she said.





Stories from the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi:

EGIDE RUHASHYA *Living in the UK*

100

We are sitting in a room, me, and my brother.

We are talking to figure out who should join the cause of liberating our country.

Suddenly, we flip a coin, and I am the chosen one.

I am full of joy despite knowing that the battle won't be an easy ride. My heart is full of questions. Where am I going? How will it be? The answer is to head there.

The willingness, courage, determination to save my loved ones are my motivation and strength.

God has been with me during the whole course of the battle. My country was full of tears, rivers of blood, dead bodies, atrocities that the world has never seen.

There is always a light at the end of the tunnel.

The sun now shines in my beloved country. I can hear the birds singing early in the morning like before. Cows are being milked again.

The country of a thousand hills that I fought for is promising a bright future to generations to come.

Rwanda is my pride.



Stories from the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi:

LOUISE *Living in the UK*

100

The first time that I met another Rwandan here in the UK who wasn't my brother I was slightly beside myself. I had met people from Nigeria, Ghana, and South Africa – but gradually I just started to believe that maybe we were the only ones left. I had been adopted into a White family and white had become my norm of reference.

That day, I stood in front of someone who had similar facial features, skin tone. I knew I was staring for too long, but I just couldn't help it.

I wanted to ask them so many questions but also was terrified of scaring them off. "What was Rwanda like?" "Where are the rest of us?" "Can we be friends?"

When I recounted this story to my Mum, she said that she was proud that she had made me "comfortable around white people". Yet here I was yearning so deeply to be immersed with people who looked like me. Even after many visits to Rwanda, it still fills my heart with such warmth to be in a room with other Rwandans.

I may not speak the language, but at least I fit in the picture now.

A picture feels like it's taken a lifetime to find. One that I will make sure my children have from day one. Because if you can't see yourself reflected in the world, how do you know that you belong?



Stories from the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi:

REHMA MUGUYENEZA *Living in the UK*

100

As we took the road to our escape, the rain started pouring down. We were passing roadblocks where people were being tortured and killed and I'm wondering – will I make it?

Terrified, I close my eyes and before I know it we've reached Nyabugogo Petrol Station. I'm looking through my black scarf which I use to hide my identity, trying to work out what is going on around me.

Then I heard a voice calling, "Ni wowe se?" ("Is that you?")

Here was my saviour – Gatsinzi in his military uniform wondering if I was really who he thought I was.

With my fearful voice I said "yego ni njyewe." ("Yes, it's me.")

He offered me a safe place in the front of his silver pickup, which made me a little bit relieved as I still didn't know what to expect. Despite this, the surrounding mountains looked taller than Kilimanjaro and I could not stop thinking – what if this is my end?

He protected me all the way to Butare – even at times pretending to be my relative!

As we reached my destination, he looked at me and said, "nzabamenyesha mu rugo ko washyitse amahoro." ("I'll tell them you arrived safely.")

For a few days it seemed like I had found heaven on earth before taking the road again.

Crossing the Akanyaru border looked impossible as we were surrounded by death. Crying and traumatised as we were



put in the line, I heard flying bullets over my head with the screaming voice saying "nimwambuke vuba!" ("Cross quickly!"). Then I started running till I could run no more.

With the Will of Allah, I'm now standing on the other side of the border shaking and unresponsive, wondering how it all happened.

With my hands in the air, I thanked Allah for my lucky escape and prayed for my family's safety too.