

Poems for secondary schools

I will rise (tribute to Maya Angelou)* by Hani Abdile

Hani came to Australia from Somalia via Kenya, Malaysia, Indonesia and Christmas Island about 2013. The Somalian civil war had made her family nomadic, and she was in the greatest danger of all, aged just 17, of forced marriage among other things. Her family sent her to Australia for her own safety. She has also published a book of the same title and her [facebook page](#) has more poetry and information. Her own website <https://abdilehani.wordpress.com> has more information on Hani's life, hope and activities as well as her writings.

* Maya Angleou was an African American woman who wrote many books and poetry, one of the latter being Still I Rise.

You now lock me in detention
and damage my hopes
but it's like dust
and one day I will rise.

You may avoid my sadness
and send me to Manus
but one day I will rise.

You may hide the reality
and break my heart
but one day I will rise.

You may send me to somewhere else.
why can't you help me?

I may be female of under age
who needs assistance from you.

You may send me to other countries
and shoot me with your words
but one day I will rise

You may punish me
by saying lies
but one day I will rise.

You may kill me with your hateful action
but it's like air
and one day I will rise

You may never care about my awful past
and enjoy my tears

but one day I will rise

I may have bad memories
rooted in pain

but one day I will rise

I may have left a fearful life of horror

but one day I will rise

Does my mind upset you
so full of thoughts?

I am an asylum seeker
who seeks for freedom and don't
have anywhere else to go.

Does it come as a surprise to you
that whatever you have done to me

I will forgive you?

Where ever you send me

as long as I see the sun rises and the moon comes
up..

I will rise.....

Home by Warsan Shire

The full poem is available at the [Genius website](#).

Warsan Shire is a London-based writer, poet, editor and teacher, born 1988 in Kenya to Somali parents. She emigrated to the United Kingdom at the age of one. In 2009, she spent time with a group of young refugees who gave a warm welcome to Shire in their makeshift home at the abandoned Somali Embassy in Rome describing the conditions as cold and cramped. The night before Shire visited, a young Somali had jumped to his death off the roof. "I wrote the poem for them, for my family and for anyone who has experienced or lived around grief and trauma in that way."

no one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark
you only run for the border
when you see the whole city running as well

your neighbours running faster than you
breath bloody in their throats
the boy you went to school with
who kissed you dizzy behind the old tin factory
is holding a gun bigger than his body
you only leave home
when home won't let you stay.

...

you have to understand,
that no one would put their children in a boat
unless the sea is safer than the land
no one burns their palms
under trains
beneath carriages
no one spends days and nights in the stomach of a
truck
feeding on newspaper unless the miles travelled
means something more than journey.
no one crawls under fences
wants to be beaten
wants to be pitied

...

i want to go home,
but home is the mouth of a shark
home is the barrel of the gun
and no one would leave home
unless home chased you to the shore
unless home told you
to quicken your legs

leave your clothes behind
crawl through the desert
wade through the oceans
drown
save
be hungry
beg
forget pride
your survival is more important

no one leaves home unless home is a sweaty voice
in your ear
saying-
leave,
run away from me now
i don't know what i've become
but i know that anywhere
is safer than here

We Refugees by Benjamin Obadiah Iqbal Zephaniah

He is a British Jamaican Rastafarian writer and dub poet. He is a well-known figure in contemporary English literature, and was included in The Times list of Britain's top 50 post-war writers in 2008. He was born and raised in Birmingham, the son of a Barbadian postman and a Jamaican nurse. A dyslexic, he attended an approved school but left aged 13 unable to read or write.

He writes that his poetry is strongly influenced by the music and poetry of Jamaica and what he calls "street politics". His first performance was in church when he was ten, and by the age of fifteen, his poetry was already known among Handsworth's Afro-Caribbean and Asian communities. He received a criminal record with the police as a young man and served a prison sentence for burglary. Tired of the limitations of being a black poet communicating with black people only, he decided to expand his audience, and headed to London at the age of twenty-two. Zephaniah has said that his mission is to fight the dead image of poetry in academia, and to "take [it] everywhere" to people who do not read books so he turned poetry readings into concert-like performances. More information [here](#).

I come from a musical place
Where they shoot me for my song
And my brother has been tortured
By my brother in my land.

I come from a beautiful place
Where they hate my shade of skin
They don't like the way I pray
And they ban free poetry.

I come from a beautiful place
Where girls cannot go to school
There you are told what to believe
And even young boys must grow beards.

I come from a great old forest
I think it is now a field
And the people I once knew
Are not there now.

We can all be refugees
Nobody is safe,
All it takes is a mad leader
Or no rain to bring forth food,
We can all be refugees
We can all be told to go,
We can be hated by someone
For being someone.

I come from a beautiful place

Where the valley floods each year
And each year the hurricane tells us
That we must keep moving on.

I come from an ancient place
All my family were born there
And I would like to go there
But I really want to live.

I come from a sunny, sandy place
Where tourists go to darken skin
And dealers like to sell guns there
I just can't tell you what's the price.

I am told I have no country now
I am told I am a lie
I am told that modern history books
May forget my name.

We can all be refugees
Sometimes it only takes a day,
Sometimes it only takes a handshake
Or a paper that is signed.
We all came from refugees
Nobody simply just appeared,
Nobody's here without a struggle,
And why should we live in fear
Of the weather or the troubles?
We all came here from somewhere.

Everyone Has the Right to See Asylum by Greg Foyster

Greg is a freelance journalist who's written for The Age, The Big Issue, Crikey and New Matilda. The above stories are based on letters from asylum seekers in detention.

I was born in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan.
I was born in Kashmir, between India and Pakistan. I was born in Iran.
I was born in Iraq.
I was born in Sri Lanka.
I worked as an architect, building up my business.
I worked as a negotiator, liaising with the government. I worked as an engineer.
I worked as a veterinarian.
I worked as an accountant.
I am a member of the Hazara ethnic group.
I am opposed to the government's occupation of Kashmir.
I am a firm believer in women's rights.
I am a whistleblower for government corruption.
I am an ethnic Tamil.
I was held down while I watched my father beaten to death.
I was kidnapped by the government and taken to an interrogation room.
I was knocked out with the butt of a rifle.
I was shot three times.
I was arrested and put in a camp.
They kept me in a solitary cell for four days without food or water.
They drove a nail through my thumb and put fresh chilli in the wound.
They beat the soles of my feet with canes.
They pulled out my fingernails.
They placed a metal roller on my shins and applied pressure until I screamed.
I bribed a guard to help me escape in the middle of the night.
I fled through the mountains and a farmer smuggled me across the border.
I hid underground for five months.
I sold my property and used the money for a plane ticket.
I cut a hole in the wire fence and crawled through the jungle to a safehouse.
I got on the first boat I could, wherever it was going.
I paid a man \$7000 to take me somewhere safe, but he left with my money.
I spent months in Indonesia hiding in the forest.
I was dumped in the middle of the ocean and had to swim to shore.
I arrived on Ashmore Reef and collapsed from thirst and heat exhaustion.
I was so relieved to be in Australia!

I was happy to be safe from the militia!
I was alive,
I was overjoyed,
I was finally free!
I was then locked up on Christmas Island for three years without a lawyer.
I was put behind bars and razor wire in the middle of the desert.
I was called by a number not a name.
I was kept in an isolation cell.
I was beaten and abused by the guards.
Why am I locked up if I haven't committed a crime?
How can I be in prison without a trial?
Why can't they treat me like a human being?
Why am I kept here all alone?
Why haven't I been told when this will end?
I am depressed and have constant headaches.
I am frightened and wake up screaming.
I am losing my mind.
I have sewn my lips together.
I have tried to kill myself.
I didn't want to be a refugee.
I didn't want to come to your country.
I didn't want to leave my family.
I didn't want to lose my house.
I didn't want to have to start again.
I am not here to get rich.
I am not here to receive charity.
I am not here to steal your job.
I am not here to cheat the system.
I am not here by choice.
I am here because otherwise I would be dead.
I am here because the militia threatened to kill me and my family.
I am here because I was shot.
I am here because my house was burned down.
I am here because I have nowhere else to go.
I was born in a dangerous land.
I was persecuted for who I am and what I believe.
I was tortured in an interrogation room.
I was dumped in the ocean.
I was locked up in detention.
I am an asylum seeker, every asylum seeker, and this is my story.
I am not a 'queue jumper'.
I am not an 'illegal arrival'.
I am not a 'political issue'.
I am a human being.
Please treat me like one.

Safe Schools: children can no longer wait by Yomi Sode

Nigeria-born Yomi Sode moved to London aged nine with his mother, in search of a better life. This short film features Yomi, actor Laura Carmichael and Magician Dynamo delivering a poem, written by artist Yomi using the voices of young people around the world to send a powerful message that children trapped in conflicts and natural disasters need safe schools.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84v9VM1KMTs>

Spoken poetry by Abraham Nouk (also known as Abe Ape)

Abe came to Australia as an illiterate Sudanese refugee and has become an award-winning spoken word artist and poet. As well as the spoken poetry below, he has published two books, Humble which speaks of his life and his thinking, and You're Not Everybody Else. The latter is available via iBooks as on his facebook page - [facebook.com/AbeNouk](https://www.facebook.com/AbeNouk).

"A belief of being larger than oneself is something that becomes apparent through much of Ape's work. Investing in people, something taught to him by his mother, is a principle that he constantly applies." Fluoro Digital

Story of a Refugee - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-ja-Mfpw60>

Stigma of living as a refugee - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=26XaDE_q3y4

Black and White - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oa9it0q6vVw>