

This Is My Place

by Danielle McLauren

For Children's Mental Health Week, Liverpool Learning Partnership have commissioned poet/spoken word artist Danielle McLauren to create a poem on the theme 'This Is My Place.'

In this pack you will find a copy of the poem in case you want pupils to have access to a written copy during Danielle's reading. Spoken word poetry is written to be performed aloud rather than read silently. The poet's voice, rhythm, pace and emphasis are an important part of how meaning and emotion are conveyed. You may wish to share this so students can read along, or simply encourage them to listen for how the poem is performed as well as what is said.

During the online workshop, Danielle will lead the students through some idea generation activities to help them start developing their own poetry. You may wish to give them further time after the session to complete these works. If you wish, you can send written versions of these poems to admin@liverpoollearningpartnership.com and we'll collate them together into a downloadable document and also share them with Danielle.

Ideas:

- Share the poem with the pupils and ask them to illustrate it. It could be done as one picture that shows a scene from the poem or short illustrations to demonstrate the emotions of the speaker.
- Give pupils a stanza or two to develop into a performance piece. Ask them to annotate words that could be highlighted and think about how to use volume, emotion, body language or sound effects to get the meaning of the words across.
- Danielle's poem uses lots of references to colour. If your school uses Zones of Regulation, spot how she uses the different colours to demonstrate different emotions. What zones do you experience throughout the school day? This speaker uses a quiet nook in school as a space to self-regulate. What works for you to help you self-regulate?



This Is My Place

By Danielle McLaren - The Half Pint Poet

Ready or not, here I come,
Cue the heart beating like a drum -
Duh-dum, duh-dum, duh-dum, duh-dum, duh-dum.
Anticipation, frustration, elation,
That weird combination of excitement and hesitation.
You see,
The weekends are great,
But sometimes, not.
Sometimes I feel like the one they forgot,
So when Monday rolls around and we're back at school,
Although it's time to tie my tie, tuck in my shirt, remember the rules,
I'm thinking about the bells, assemblies, and timetables,
And it sort of feels...
Warm.
A wave of green sweeps over me,
Strengthening those roots that ground me.
A peace that comes from such familiarity,
Reminding me
That I am ready.
Are you?
One, two, three, you can't catch me!

From the moment I start my journey to school,
Something kicks in,
And in spite of a whirlpool
Of anxiety,
I can follow a path that my heart has memorised,

So that in times
When I feel yellow with worry,
That might turn to a blue bubble in my tummy,
I realise
That no matter what,
I will get to where I need to be.
You see,
I carry a map so I don't get lost.
It's not the paper kind,
With x marks the spot,
But rather, it's etched in my mind,
Or in my feet.
They know the beat
They need to walk to,
All the obstacles I might need to go over, under, or through.
And they will take me to my place,
Where the quiet seeps in,
Where a calm creeps over my face,
Because here,
I have the space
To breathe.

It starts with the gates, where we wait,
Or dash through, can't be late.
Then,
I see my mates.
Jacob hands me the ball, I drop it for a kick,
Amira rushes past:
"Tag, you're it!"

And before it's even quarter to nine,
We're zooming around the playground,
Imagining we can fly,
But there goes the bell,
Registration time.
Are you ready?
One, two, three, you can't catch me!

The day goes by, I'm sat in class,
Sometimes I'm having so much fun
And the hours whizz past,
But sometimes they crawl -
Slowly, slowly.
It all feels too much,
I feel too small.
I curl into a ball,
But the bright explosion of anger grows bigger inside,
I might burst at the sound of the classrooms that are far too loud,
So I find a hushing quiet in the place where books are found.
There's something about the library,
With all these characters I can call my friends,
So when the hard days feel like they will never end,
I can turn a page
And pretend.

Then at lunchtime, in the line,
Best friend in front of me,
I know that I'll be fine.
A hall full of hungry bellies,
The smell of lasagne, mixed with the sweetness of jelly.
As we take our plates with chips and beans,
Find our seats,
Time to eat.
The noise, the chatter, the clatter of trays,
Half way through the day,
Have some food, then out to play.
One, two, three, you can't catch me!

The afternoon stretches on,
Emotions begin to ping pong
And I am swirling.
Swiftly, I slip into that little corner in the classroom,
Our "Just Breathe" nook,
Where I close my eyes, count to ten, draw a picture, read a book.
Take my time to still my mind,
Until the words I need to use rise
From deep inside
And I can explain why
The red monster made me hide,
Until the stillness let me find
The serene of green.
Now I can be the best I can be.

A kaleidoscope of sights and sounds:
The ringing bell, the laughter, the pounding feet,
The most vibrant rainbow there could ever be.
Running to the end of it, I find my gold.
No trophy, or medal, or coins to hold,
But just a shower of colour reminding me that,
Despite not always fitting in,
Or that crushing feeling of pressure rising,
I've got this, I can cope,
Because there will always be that ray of hope.
So each school day,
Whether battling through the rain,
Or smiling under the shining sun,
I'm all set to learn and play,
So, ready or not, here I come!