

ECONOMIC (IN)JUSTICE

FACTSHEET - TACTIC

Name	Rowan McCabe
Details, area of experience	Door-to-door poet
Interview date	December 2020
Issues addressed	Poetry as a tactic; community cohesion, Romani and Syrian communities, war, class, challenging unconscious bias
Injustice category (linked to economic injustice)	ability <input type="checkbox"/> age <input type="checkbox"/> class <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> faith <input type="checkbox"/> gender <input type="checkbox"/> neuro-diversity <input type="checkbox"/> race <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> sexuality <input type="checkbox"/>
Dates mentioned	2015-2020
Locations referenced	All over the UK
Historical context	Poetry traditionally thought of as upper class, not for working class
Tactics	Put your participants first; treat people with dignity and respect; don't let people bring you down; talk to people; never generalise.
Key words	Poetry Community The Arts Talking Respect
Key points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poetry is also for working class.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Poetry can be used to galvanise the community. ● Poetry can be used to learn about different communities. and give people a voice. ● Everybody is unique and should be treated with respect.
Stand-out quotations	<p>“I’m here to make poetry exciting, like bungee jumping but less frightening.”</p> <p>“Wherever I went ... someone always said it’s not going to work for one reason or another ... and every single time I found a handful of people who are interested and who would stop to tell me about their lives and tell us what was important to them.”</p> <p>“The most important thing I learned was when you get out and start talking to individuals, everyone has their own story, everybody is unique and it’s very difficult to generalise. The closer you look, the more complicated it becomes, but I find that really exciting.”</p>
Story summary	<p>Rowan McCabe is the UK’s first door-to-door poet. He talks about the tactics he uses to engage with people – knocking on doors all over the country, asking members of different communities what they care about, and what subjects he should write and recite poetry about.</p> <hr/> <p>The poems he creates can be on a huge subject – something maybe quite political – or something seemingly insignificant, but always a subject important to the person he was speaking to. The idea behind the door-to-door poetry was to see if strangers were really as scary as they were made out to be and to challenge our pre-convictions about communities and certain places.</p> <p>To engage with people Rowan has a poem he’s written that starts like this:</p> <p><i>“I’m a door-to-door poet and I know that sounds crazy but this could be worse though, I could be the Avon lady. In school they taught us poetry is bust, wrote by toffs who turn to dust on country manors, deathly shrouds, serious lords and fluffy clouds [...] I found it quite hard to relate. I grew up on a rough estate ...”</i></p> <p>After speaking with someone about what’s important to them, Rowan goes away and writes a poem for them. It may take him two weeks before the poem is complete.</p> <p>He hopes that door-to door poetry will help people express their opinions and beliefs, propagate kindness and understanding and increase a sense of community between people of diverse backgrounds.</p>

Main themes for learners	<p>How to increase a sense of community: listen to and learn from members of different communities</p> <p>The arts can be used to enact social change and challenge our assumptions about groups of people</p> <p>Talking to people is a form of activism</p>
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