

ACTIVITY 01

Language for Empowerment

LEARNING AREA:	English
YEAR LEVEL(S):	10

CONTENT DESCRIPTIONS	CONTENT ELABORATIONS
Language for interaction: understand how language can have inclusive and exclusive social effects, and can empower or disempower people AC9E10LA01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifying language that seeks to align the listener or reader; for example 'of course', 'obviously', 'as you can imagine' identifying the use of first person ('I', 'we') and second person pronouns ('you') to distance or involve the audience identifying language used to reference or indicate shared assumptions identifying language that appeals to shared cultural knowledge, values and beliefs Identifying examples of language that are inclusive or marginalising

LEARNING INTENTION/S

I will analyse a text to identify how it uses language with the aim of involving and empowering people.

SOURCES

['Why Deaf People Must Write'](#) by Karen Lloyd (1980s)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Download *Handout 1 - Language for Empowerment*.
- Introduce the context of the text – Karen Lloyd and other deaf people in the 1980s started to develop their writing so that deaf perspectives could be shared more widely. You can do this by having students watch the first curator video of the story “Deaf Writers’ Group”, or beginning with a teacher-led explanation of the context.
- Students read the text individually.
- As a class, discuss any questions about the vocabulary or meaning.
- In groups of 3 or 4, students discuss:
 - What is Karen’s motivation? Her aim?
 - What language does she use to achieve her aim?
 - What shared assumptions does she draw on? That deaf people are reluctant to write? That our history won’t be accurately recorded by others? Do you think these are true?
 - Why does Karen say “WE MUST WRITE”? What will happen if we don’t write our own stories?
- Report back findings to the class as time allows.

Why Deaf People Must Write, by Karen Lloyd

WHY DEAF PEOPLE MUST WRITE

Deaf people in Australia are becoming more organised, more visible and vocal, we are becoming a 'movement' like women and Aboriginals, a force to be considered and reckoned with. We are beginning to realise we cannot sit back and let hearing people speak out for us, we must speak out for ourselves, and more and more deaf people are showing a willingness to take on the responsibility for our own destiny. That's what being vocal means: making decisions about what we want, and by making those decisions knowing, being responsible for what happens to us.

As a group we have now come too far to be able to turn back the tide to the old days of hearing people making decisions for us and speaking out for us. We must continue along our path to greater assertiveness and freedom. Part of that assertiveness and freedom is establishing a 'voice'.

Any organisation or group of people, to be effective and to be heard, must have a voice. By 'voice' I do not mean that thing we use to make noises in our throats; I mean voice in the figurative sense. By 'voice' I mean the written word. The spoken - and signed - word is gone in a moment and forgotten. The written word endures, it becomes a permanent record of our thoughts, it becomes our recorded history.

Australia doesn't seem to have much of a recorded history of the deaf. Deaf people have not been encouraged to be vocal and to write. Most of what has been written about the deaf has been written by hearing people. Although there are hearing people who do understand a great deal about deafness and the deaf, nothing they write about us can ever be quite as authentic as the same thing would be if written by a deaf person. We must record our own thoughts, stories, history, in our own way.

What we write tells something about us. So does the way we write. So does the simple fact that we are writing. Writing takes courage and belief in ourselves. When we write we lay a little of ourselves out for readers to see. Just by writing we are telling each other and the world that we believe we have