**What are we fighting for?**

by Brian Moses

What are we fighting for?

We have to do or die.

What are we fighting for?

We can’t turn a blind eye.

What are we fighting for?

To sleep safely in bed.

What are we fighting for?

To keep away fear and dread.

What are we fighting for?

To keep our children free.

What are we fighting for?

To choose our own destiny.

What are we fighting for?

Because there’s nowhere else to hide.

What are we fighting for?

Because so many have died.

What are we fighting for?

To challenge oppression.

What are we fighting for?

To combat aggression.

What are we fighting for?

To win us the war.

What are we fighting for?

So there won’t be any more.

What are we fighting for?

So that we can make sure.

What are we fighting for?

It’s a war to end war.

What are we fighting for?

So we’ll never need to say.

What are we fighting for?

Again.

Read the poem by Brian Moses, which he wrote about World War II. Read it aloud several times - you could ask someone to read it to you as you read the words - or listen to my recording (poetry is usually written to be listened to rather than read. Answer these questions: you might not be able to think of answer straight away - why don’t you email or contact a friend and discuss the answers? (I have colour-coded each question to match the line it is referring to - I hope this helps)

*What are we fighting for?*

*We can’t turn a blind eye*.

What does it mean if someone turns a blind eye?

What does this mean in the poem (turn a blind eye from what?)

*What are we fighting for?*

*To keep away fear and dread*.

Fear and dread of what?

*What are we fighting for?*

*To keep our children free.*

What did people want to keep their children from / free to do?

*What are we fighting for?*

*To choose our own destiny.*

What is destiny? What does this line suggest about people’s fears?

*What are we fighting for?*

*To challenge oppression.*

What is oppression?

What oppression were people challenging?

Why do you think the poem repeats the line *What are we fighting for?* What effect does this have on the reader or listener.

Now look at the rhyming structure to the poem: we can hear the rhyme but can you identify a pattern? For each set of rhyming words, give a letter. I have started below to show you what I mean:

What are we fighting for?

We have to do or die. **A**

What are we fighting for?

We can’t turn a blind eye. **A**

What are we fighting for?

To sleep safely in bed. **B**

What are we fighting for?

To keep away fear and dread. **B**

What are we fighting for?

To keep our children free.

What are we fighting for?

To choose our own destiny.

What are we fighting for?

Because there’s nowhere else to hide.

What are we fighting for?

Because so many have died.

What are we fighting for?

To challenge oppression.

What are we fighting for?

To combat aggression.

What are we fighting for?

To win us the war.

What are we fighting for?

So there won’t be any more.

What are we fighting for?

So that we can make sure.

What are we fighting for?

It’s a war to end war.

What are we fighting for?

So we’ll never need to say.

What are we fighting for?

Again.

It is difficult to include rhyme in a poem and ensure that it has a strong impact. A poet will sometimes create a bank of rhyming words and select words that fit best.

Your task is to write a poem. You could write it about World War II or you could write it based on your lockdown experience. I wonder what your repeating question will be? Here are some suggestions:

*What are we marching for?*

*What are we sending our children away for?*

*What are we hiding for?*

*What are we staying indoors for?*

*What are we keeping distance for?*

*What are we staying alert for?*

You could, of course, choose your own question.

Extension:

Read the lyrics to the song *War* by Edwin Starr. You can listen to the song later:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| War, huh, yeah What is it good for? Absolutely nothing Ah, ha, ha, ha  War, huh, yeah What is it good for? Absolutely nothing Sing it again, y'all  War, huh (Huh, look out) What is it good for? Absolutely nothing Listen to me  Oh, war I despise 'Cause it means destruction Of innocent lives  War means tears To thousands of mothers' eyes When their sons go out to fight And lose their lives  I said, war, huh (Good God y'all) What is it good for? Absolutely nothing Just say it again  War, huh (Woh, woh woh Lord) What is it good for? Absolutely nothing Listen to me  War, it ain't nothin' but a heartbreaker War, friend only to the undertaker  Ah, war is an enemy To all mankind The thought of war blows my mind  War has caused unrest Within the younger generation Induction, then destruction Who wants to die?  Ahh, war, huh (Good God, y'all) What is it good for? Absolutely nothing Say it, say it, say it | War, huh (Ah ha yeah, huh) What is it good for? Absolutely nothing Listen to me  War, it ain't nothin' but a heartbreaker War, it got one friend, that's the undertaker  Ah, war has shattered Many a young man's dreams Made him disabled, bitter and mean  Life is much too short and precious To spend fighting wars each day War can't give life It can only take it away  Ahh, war, huh (Good God y'all) What is it good for? Absolutely nothing Say it again  War, huh (Woh woh woh, Lord) What is it good for? Absolutely nothing Listen to me  War, it ain't nothin' but a heartbreaker War, friend only to the undertaker, oh  Peace, love And understanding, tell me Is there no place for them today?  They say we must fight To keep our freedom But Lord knows There's gotta be a better way  Ahh, war huh (Good God y'all) What is it good for? You tell me Say it, say it, say it  War, huh (Good God y'all) What is it good for? Stand up and shout it, nothing War, huh (It ain't nothin' but a heartbreaker) |

I wonder how you might perform these lyrics? Think about your tone and volume - you might even include actions. Practise performing - you could record your voice or even film yourself performing it - I wonder if your performance will be similar or different to the way that Brian Moses reads his poem in the YouTube clip above. **If you email a video or audio recording then your parent must include a message to say that they give permission for the video or audio recording to be posted on our class website.**

Now listen to the song being sung by Edwin Starr: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQHUAJTZqF0>

How does this compare with your performance?

There are many contemporary (modern) songs about war - often called ***protest*** or ***resistance*** songs. What does this imply about the nature of the songs?

Here are some:

John Lennon: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yRhq-yO1KN8>

- Marvin Gaye: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-kA3UtBj4M>

- Pink Floyd: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HrxX9TBj2zY>

- Bob Marley: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5FCdx7Dn0o>

- Bob Dylan: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWwgrjjIMXA>

- The Specials: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3NJwyzFlTE>

- Peter Gabriel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ncVyxQRw70>

Your task now is to write your own protest / resistance song. It could be about war or about COVID-19 and lockdown. Can you compose a tune for your song? Perhaps you have family members who could help you.

Email me the lyrics to your song. You could send an audio recording or a video of you singing or performing it - perhaps you have a dance to go with the song. Remember, **if you email a video or audio recording then your parent must include a message to say that they give permission for the video or audio recording to be posted on our class website.**