

# Period Poetry Competition



## Background

Period poverty is an issue that affects millions of women and girls throughout the world, and it has been receiving an increasing amount of attention over the last few years. In the UK organisations like Bloody Good Period and The Red Box Project have done amazing work to not only highlight the need for free period products but also to raise the profile of period poverty in the UK. Other organisations like City to Sea have also been working hard to encourage people to think about the environmental impact of disposable period products and encouraging women to look at reusable options instead, whilst also promoting a good understanding of periods and menstruation in general. Charities have also increasingly started fundraising to support women and girls affected by period poverty, and it's not uncommon to see an advert on the back of a toilet door at a service station encouraging donations towards alleviating period poverty.

In 2013 WASH United arranged the first Menstrual Hygiene Day, a day that has become an annual "global platform that brings together non-profits, government agencies, individuals, the private sector and the media to catalyze advocacy and action towards a world where women and girls are no longer limited because of their periods." <sup>1</sup> To mark MH Day in 2019, Women and Girls started a poetry competition for young people and we are excited to be running the competition again this year.

Some of the schools that took part in the competition in 2019 told us that they built a

scheme of learning around the competition to help their students understand more about the issue. This is a topic that has relevance for a wide range of school subjects. For example:

- **English:** comprehension, vocabulary, inference and other associated reading skills plus creative writing
- **Humanities:** the specific issues surrounding menstruation based on social and physical geography, religious and cultural beliefs and the role of women in history and society
- **Science:** biology and the reproductive system, the environmental challenges of disposable products v. the hygienic maintenance of reusable products
- **PSHEE/Citizenship:** lessons around puberty and menstruation and the sociological dimensions of period poverty

The enclosed resources have been produced to support teachers in providing a learning framework for the Women and Girls period poetry competition. The competition and these resources are free to use and access, and they can be amended to suit the age and ability of your students. However, we would ask that when using these resources both teachers and students are aware that they have been produced by Women and Girls, a charity that provides reusable, hygienic sanitary protection to women and girls in India which lasts for at least 2 years and costs just £5 per pack.

<sup>1</sup><https://menstrualhygieneday.org/about/about-mhday/>

## Tasks

In addition to the period poetry competition, this resource pack includes the following activities:

**1. Period Poverty in India:** Facts and Stats, a worksheet including analysis and evaluation.

### 2. Comprehension questions based on “My Period”:

1. Describe what Sushila does for a job.
2. How old do you think Sushila is? Why do you think this?
3. In what ways is Sushila’s life different during her period?
4. What do you think happens to Sushila’s sister during her period?
5. Sushila never says “period”. What is the phrase she uses instead? What does this tell you about attitudes towards periods in India?
6. At the beginning of her story, Sushila says they take in rubbish from the rag pickers. Find out what a rag picker is in India and what their life is like. How do you think a rag picker would manage their period?

### 3. Creative:

1. Women and Girls only provides reusable products and these products have been made so they can be washed in dirty water but still remain clean, safe and hygienic to use. Design a poster to promote Women and Girls to someone in the UK who wants to support a charity. You can use the Women and Girls website ([womenandgirls.org.uk](http://womenandgirls.org.uk)) and social media channels to find further information about the charity and pictures for your poster.
2. Part of Women and Girls’s work is to encourage women and girls to be #periodproud – being comfortable and confident in talking about periods. Create a piece of artwork to express this message.
3. Watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKHIEQyv7k> and write your own script for this short film to explain what is happening.

### 4. Numeracy:

1. If a woman were to use tampons, she might change her tampon every 6 hours. If her period lasts for 5 days and she always changes her tampon every 6 hours, how many tampons will she using during her period?
2. A disposable sanitary pad can contain the same amount of plastic as 4 supermarket carrier bags. If a woman uses 32 pads for each period and has 500 periods during her lifetime, how many carrier bags of plastic has she used?
3. 88% of women in India use homemade alternatives to sanitary protection and there are an estimated 350 million women in India. How many women are using homemade alternatives to sanitary protection?
4. If a girl in India misses 5 days of school every time she has a period, and she has 13 periods a year, how far behind the boys in her class could she be by the end of the year?
5. If a woman earns 7,000 rupees a month and buying disposable pads for one period will cost her at least 400 rupees, what percentage of her monthly salary would she spend on pads?

**5. MH Day Themes:** examples of themes with a task for students.

### 6. Essay questions:

1. “Menstrual Health Day” is a better term than “Menstrual Hygiene Day”. Discuss.
2. Menstrual education is pointless if it’s only the girls and not the boys who receive it. Discuss.
3. Period poverty will stop a woman or girl fulfilling her potential. Discuss.
4. A reusable, hygienic sanitary product is the best solution for those living in poverty in India. Discuss.