

# Benjamin Zephaniah

## Fact File

**Full Name:** Dr Benjamin Obadiah Iqbal Zephaniah

**Date of Birth:** 15<sup>th</sup> April 1958

**Place of Birth:** Birmingham, England

**Famous For:** Writing and performing many poems, books, songs and plays.

Benjamin's dad was originally from Barbados and was a postal worker. His mum was originally from Jamaica and worked as a nurse. Benjamin spent a lot of time living in London but he now lives in China.



## Poems

Benjamin is famous for his poems and the way that he reads them out. Benjamin performs in a way that is called 'dub poetry'. Dub poets change the speed and sound of their voice so that it sounds like music when they read poems out loud. Benjamin didn't like the idea that poems were only for people who went to school or university. He thought that poems should be for everyone to enjoy. Because of this, he performed his poetry so that everyone could hear and enjoy it.



## Causes

Benjamin writes poems about things that he believes in. He has written many poems against racism and slavery. In the early 1980s, he argued against homelessness and other problems that he saw in Britain through his poems. He performed these poems outside police stations and during demonstrations. He also writes lots about the way that we treat animals and he works with lots of groups who help animals.



# Benjamin Zephaniah

## Books

Benjamin has written many books of poetry for adults and children. He has also written several fiction books for teenagers. His first book of poetry for children was called 'Talking Turkeys' and told people that they should be nice to their turkeys at Christmas. This book was so popular that all of the copies sold out in only six weeks and more had to be printed!



## Fun Facts



- In 1991, Benjamin performed his poetry on every continent in only 22 days!
- Benjamin loves to watch football.
- Ealing Hospital in London have named part of their building after Benjamin.

## Today

Benjamin is still writing and performing poems today. He spends lots of his time living in China but still travels to lots of different countries. He is still inspiring young writers and singers to create poetry and music about things they believe in.



# Questions

- What is Benjamin Zephaniah famous for? Tick one.
  - playing football
  - writing and performing poems
  - having a pet turkey
  - travelling all over the world
- Number the sub-headings from 1-4 to show the order that they appear in the text.
 

<input type="checkbox"/>	Poems
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fact File
<input type="checkbox"/>	Causes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Books
- Which building has part of it named after Benjamin Zephaniah?
  - a football ground
  - a swimming pool in Birmingham
  - his house in China
  - Ealing Hospital in London
- Draw four lines to complete the sentences.

Benjamin enjoys	dub poetry.
Benjamin performs	'Talking Turkeys'.
Benjamin wrote a book called	watching football.
Benjamin now lives in	China.

- Look at the section with the sub-heading **Books**.

Why has the author included a picture of a turkey?

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- Who does Benjamin think should be able to enjoy poems?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Benjamin writes his poems about topics he has strong beliefs about. If you had to write a poem about something you have strong beliefs about, what would your poem be about?  
Explain your answer.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Answers

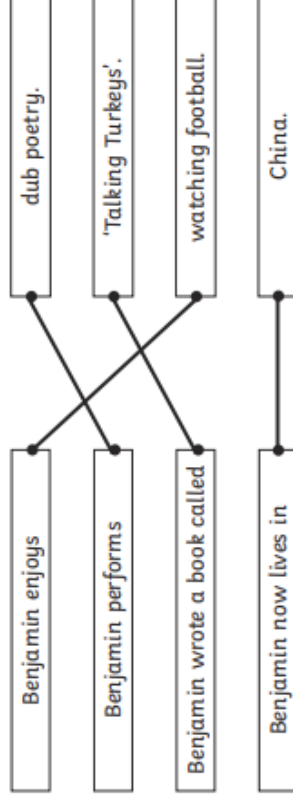
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- 2** Poems  
 **1** Fact File  
 **3** Causes  
 **4** Books

- Which building has part of it named after Benjamin Zephaniah?

- a football ground
- a swimming pool in Birmingham
- his house in China
- Ealing Hospital in London**

- Draw four lines to complete the sentences.



- Look at the section with the sub-heading **Books**.  
 Why has the author included a picture of a turkey?  
**The author has included a picture of a turkey because Benjamin's first book of poetry for children was called 'Talking Turkeys'.**

- Who does Benjamin think should be able to enjoy poems?  
**Benjamin thinks that poems should be for everyone to enjoy.**
- Benjamin writes his poems about topics he has strong beliefs about. If you had to write a poem about something you have strong beliefs about, what would your poem be about?  
 Explain your answer.  
**Pupils' own responses, such as: I would write my poem about testing products on animals because I don't think that it's fair for humans to test things on animals without their permission.**