

4. Here are the first lines of the five verses that make up Benjamin Zephaniah's poem, *Talking Turkeys!* Decide what the content of the rest of the verse might be by answering the questions in your own way.

Be nice to yu turkeys dis christmas

Why should you be 'nice to your turkey this Christmas'? How would you do this?

I got lots of friends who are turkeys

What do the turkeys ask Benjamin? What has the farmer to do with it?

Turkeys jus wanna play reggae

What else do turkeys want to do at Christmas? How do they want to be entertained?

I once knew a turkey His name was Turkey

What questions did Turkey ask Benjamin? What have businessmen to do with Christmas?

So, be nice to yu turkey dis christmas

How are you going to be nice to a turkey? What can you give them?

Language Note

Benjamin Zephaniah writes in a style which reflects the way that people on the Caribbean island of Jamaica speak English. You have already noticed above that 'yu' = 'yours', 'de' = 'the', 'jus' = 'just' and 'wanna' = 'want to'. What do you think the following words in italics would be in standard English? (The trick is to hear the sound in your head).



cos turkeys jus wanna have fun
an every turkey has a mum
all of *dem* fear christmas time
dey say ...
dose humans destroyed it
out of *dere* mind
nothing to do *wid* Christ Mass
mek new friends

Now listen to or watch the poem being read by the poet, or read it for yourself.

After Reading Activities

1. These lines were in the poem:

".....I am not too sure turkey
But it's nothing to do wid Christ Mass
Humans get greedy an waste more dan need be
An business men mek loadsa cash'

- a. Benjamin Zephaniah thinks that Christmas is a time of greed for people, and is simply a commercial opportunity for businesses. Do you agree, or does Christmas still retain some traditional values? What do you think these traditional values are, or were?
- b. What other festivals in the year can you think of have become simply an excuse for shops and other businesses to make money?

2. a. The **rhythm** and the **rhyme** of the poem are quite simple. The rhythm might be thought of in musical terms as in 3 time - like a quick waltz!



Be nice to you tur - keys dis christ-mas

Each verse consists of 8 lines, but only lines 2 and 4 are made to rhyme (and some of these rhymes are half rhymes):

fun / Mum
time/ mind
hip-hop/chop
please/trees
greens/beans

Which ones are half-rhymes?

Some lines have rhymes, or repeated words, within them. Find some.

b. Can you compose a poem using a similar structure about someone or something that needs help to have a good Christmas? How about Santa, or your sister or brother, or the family pet, or even your teacher? Use one of these, or invent your own character!

3. Here are three sources of information. The first is a report on factory farming of turkeys in the UK from the BBC. It is a neutral piece of reporting. The second is a video from a vegan organisation in the USA which is opposed to factory farming of turkeys. The third is from the website of the biggest producer of turkeys in the UK and is supporting factory farming of turkeys. Access all the information, and do some of your own research too, to prepare yourself for either a discussion on the pros and cons of factory farming of turkeys, or to write a balanced argument outlining both aspects.

How turkey farms work

More than 22 million turkeys are produced for meat in the UK each year. Most are reared intensively on farms like that pictured opposite.

Conditions

Day-old chicks or poults supplied by hatcheries are transferred to the windowless rearing sheds, where they will spend their lives. Some smaller units use pole barns, where the top half of the wall is made of fencing to allow in extra light and air, but keep out wild birds. A litter of wood shavings and straw, which covers the floor to absorb spilled water and faeces, will not be changed during their lives, but may be added to or dried out if necessary.

Lighting is kept dim - in some cases four times lower than a street lamp - which is said to avoid aggression. Some birds are debeaked to stop them pecking each other.



Feed

The birds are fed cereals, vitamins and amino acids. In Britain, no meat and bone meal from poultry, cattle or any other animal is fed to poultry. Fishmeal is sometimes added. The British poultry industry is the biggest user of British wheat, consuming almost one fifth of the total annual UK wheat crop.

Intensively reared birds are bred for fast weight gain, which can cause health problems. The British Poultry Council says turkeys are reared to 13kg at around 20 weeks. The RSPCA says that depending on breeds, a modern male turkey may reach up to 25kg at 20 weeks.

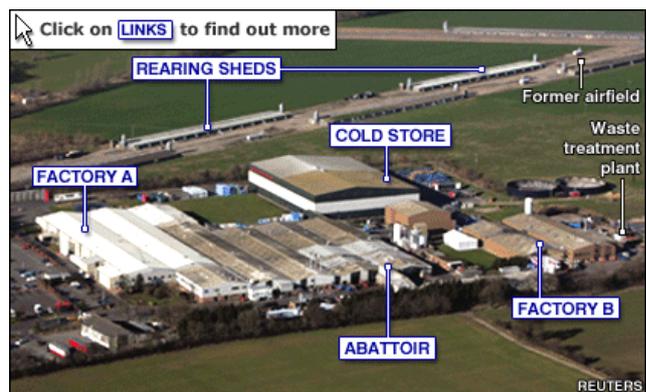
Space

The poults are fenced in around brooder units with heat lamps when young to keep them warm. As they grow, they roam about the shed, eating and drinking on demand from automated feeders. Towards the end of their lives, as their weight and size increases, numbers will be "thinned" to allow more space.

The Bernard Matthews site at Holton has 22 rearing sheds on the old runways of the former Halesworth airfield. The 500m-long sheds start with about 7,000 birds in each.

Stocking density can vary according to the age and weight of the birds. Industry and government standards use a formula based on the weight of the birds. They recommend a minimum floor area per bird, in enclosed housing, of 0.026 square metres per kilogram - a maximum stocking density of 40kg per square metre. The RSPCA Freedom Food scheme turkeys, for example, are stocked up to a maximum of 25kg per sq m.

The birds are checked by stockmen two to three times a day. If birds are found to be injured they can be isolated or put down depending on the seriousness of the injury.



Bio-security

Biosecurity measures are taken to control anything entering the sheds - including staff, feed and litter. Staff must wear protective clothing that is adaptable to biosecurity measures and cleaning. This is usually a process of scrubbing with disinfectant and foot dips on entering and leaving each shed, and between different sheds.

The feed is heat-treated and stored in secure bins and checked and change between flocks. The litter is also removed and the sheds are cleaned and tested for pathogens such as salmonella and E-coli after the turkeys are removed for slaughter.

TURKEY LIFE CYCLE



Abattoir

Turkeys can live up to 10 years in the wild. Indoor-farmed turkeys are usually slaughtered between 12 and 21 weeks. Many free-range operations insist on a minimum of about 20 weeks. Teams of "catchers" are used to collect the birds from the sheds for slaughter. The birds are put into crates for transfer to the abattoir - which may be on the same site.

If not, the crates - or modules - are loaded onto lorries. Each module has a roof and there must be side curtains on the lorry to protect them from the elements. Out of the 850 million birds transported each year, the mortality rate is less than 0.19%, according to the British Poultry Council. Lorries must be sprayed down after each operation. The birds are inspected by a government vet before being killed.

Processing

The birds are taken from crates and hung upside down in shackles on a moving chain. Some plants dip the birds into an electric bath to stun them before they are killed. Other premises, such as the Bernard Matthews site at Holton, use gas to stun them first.

The carcasses are dipped into a scald tank of hot water to help loosen the feathers. Then they move to mechanical plucking machines, where revolving rubber fingers remove the feathers.

The British Poultry Council says the carcass and intestines of each bird are examined to check for signs of disease. Suspicious carcasses are rejected.

The carcasses are then washed using clean water and chilled down to 4C by cold air jets or cold water sprays.

The birds are left for a period to ensure the meat is tender before being automatically weighed and sorted. Some may be packed as whole oven birds or go on to be cut into portions

Adapted from BBC article http://news.bbc.co.uk/uk_news/6333073.stm



The birds are hung on shackles to be stunned, killed and plucked (photo: British Poultry Council)

2. This [short film](#) was made by Vegan Soap Box, a US based group that campaigns against cruelty to animals. (Click the link above to access the film via the Vegan Soap Box, and the picture below to access the film on the WordPowered website)



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Farms and Welfare

Farming is at the heart of our business. From the very start, we put 100% into the rearing and caring of our birds to produce the highest quality, tastiest turkey.

Nearly all our eggs are laid by turkeys from our very own breeder flocks in Norfolk, and hatched at our own hatchery in Great Witchingham. The remaining 1% of our turkeys are specialist breeds, such as Bronze Turkeys, which come from carefully chosen suppliers in the UK.

We rear nearly 7 million indoor and free range turkeys every year, on our own 56 turkey farms located across Norfolk, Suffolk and Lincolnshire. They are perfectly located to make the most of the calm climate and the wealth of agricultural resources the region has to offer.

Most of the time we are able to accommodate fluctuations in demand for our British turkey. However, on very rare occasions, when demand rapidly increases, we do not have the flexibility to meet this due to the long planning cycle of turkey rearing. In these instances we source turkey from other British suppliers. The standards to which these other British suppliers work are fully in line with those of Bernard Matthews. We also ensure they are Quality British Turkey and Assured Food (Red Tractor) certified.



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Our turkey welfare

All our turkeys are fed on a nutritious cereal-based diet, the majority being wheat which we source locally – around 130,000 tonnes per year. We also prepare most of their food at our own mill near Kings Lynn, in Norfolk, ensuring excellent farm-to-fork traceability, and ensuring our food miles are some of the lowest in the food industry.

All our farmers are highly experienced and care passionately about farming. In fact 11% have been farming turkeys with us for over 30 years. The welfare of our turkeys always comes first and supported by a range of specialist agricultural teams, welfare officers and independent vets, our focus is on caring for all our birds.

Our turkeys are central to our business and healthy turkeys support a healthy business. In fact, whether free range or indoors, turkey welfare is an absolute priority.



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Turkey welfare and standards

We adhere strictly to certified high standards for rearing turkeys and maintain excellent welfare standards across every farm. We are [Quality British Turkey](#) ("QBT") and Assured Foods (Red Tractor) certified and work closely with the [Humane Slaughter Association](#).

Our farming practices are also in line with the DEFRA's code of practice, the Farm Animal Welfare Council's Five Freedoms.

Five Freedoms:

- Freedom from hunger and thirst
- Freedom from discomfort
- Freedom from pain, injury or disease
- Freedom to express normal behaviour
- Freedom from fear and distress

Our farms and factories are open to regular unannounced inspections from independent bodies such as Defra, Trading Standards, the RSPCA and representatives of all major UK supermarkets.

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you feel unsure of, please [contact us](#) and we will be very happy to help.



To see footage of our indoor and free range turkeys, please click the videos to the right.



Poults



Indoor Turkeys



Free Range Turkey

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Turkey production and quality control

Every turkey product we deliver has full traceability from farm to fork. From the eggs laid by our special breeder turkeys, to the delicious turkey products we deliver.

With careful management of the whole turkey production supply chain, we guarantee the exceptionally high levels of quality, health and safety our customers have come to expect from our 100% British turkey.



4 A Short Biography of Benjamin Zephaniah



His background doesn't seem likely for a poet: a dyslexic who left school at 13, unable to properly read and write, Benjamin Zephaniah was born in Birmingham in the English Midlands and his teenage years of minor crime ended up with him in prison.

But he has ended up the people's poet, and has been awarded a clutch of honorary degrees. In 2008 he appeared in *The Times* list of top 50 post-war writers.

Zephaniah's work is often described as dub poetry, a form of oral performance poetry that is sometimes staged to music and which typically draws on the rhythms of reggae and the rhetoric of Rastafarianism. His poems are often inspired by political causes. Zephaniah has said that he 'lives in two places, Britain and the world', and his collections highlight domestic issues from institutional racism (*Too Black, Too Strong*, 2001) and the murder of Stephen Lawrence to conditions in war-torn Bosnia, the plight of occupied Palestine (*Rasta Time in Palestine*, 1990) and global environmental issues (see, for example, *Talking Turkeys*).

Unexpectedly perhaps, for a poet associated with protest literature, many of Zephaniah's poems are tempered by hope, humour and laughter. For example 'I have a Scheme', a parody of Martin Luther King's famous Civil Rights speech of 1963, dreams of a world 'When all people, regardless of colour or class, will have at least one Barry Manilow record'. Parody is one of Zephaniah's trademark devices. In his collection *Propa Proaganda* (1996) 'Terrible World' plays on Louis Armstrong's 'Wonderful World', and opens with the words: 'I've seen streets of blood ...'.

Many of Zephaniah's poetry collections are written specifically for children (*Talking Turkeys* and *Funky Chickens*, 1996), and he has recently written a number of very successful novels for young people. *Face* (1999) is a set in London's multicultural East End, but its focus is on a white character, and of one boy's struggles to face his badly disfigured body following an accident

In his highly regarded second novel, *Refugee Boy* (2001), Zephaniah tackles the theme of political asylum. Alem, the novel's Ethiopian protagonist, thinks he is taking a brief holiday with his father in London. Everything is magical in the capital until he wakes up one day and discovers his dad has deserted him. Gradually, through a series of letters, he learns they are not on vacation at all, but fleeing the political situation in Ethiopia.

In his next book, *Gangsta Rap* (2004) we follow the downward trajectory of Ray, a disaffected teenager who falls out with his family, and is excluded from school before finding fame and fortune in a rap band. If Ray's life seems to have changed very much for the better, it is not long before his problems resurface and he is caught up in shootings, and gang rivalry: an unsavoury underworld of male violence that eventually claims the life of his girlfriend. Male violence, and its victims, are also the central theme of Zephaniah's latest novel, *Teacher's Dead* (2007). *Teacher's Dead* explores the difficult topic of a teacher being killed, a narrative told through the sensitive eyes of a 15 year old boy, Jackson Jones.

Like *Gangsta Rap*, *Teacher's Dead* offers an anatomy of violence for today's youth, revealing its complex causes in ways that trouble the boundaries between criminals and victims. More broadly though, and what characterises all of Zephaniah's writing to date, is its stress on the redemptive forces of love, laughter, and peace.