

All About Benjamin Zephaniah



Benjamin Zephaniah

Benjamin Obadiah Iqbal Zephaniah was born in Birmingham on 15th April 1958. He is a British **poet**, **novelist** and **playwright** for both adults and children.



novelist - A writer of novels (long books).

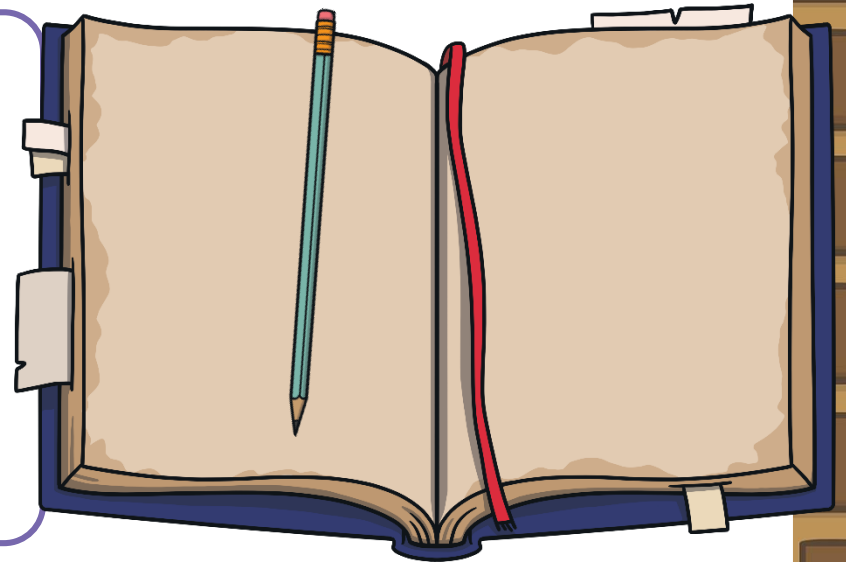
poet - Someone who writes poetry.

playwright - Someone who writes plays.

Early Life

Benjamin started writing poems at an early age. His first public performance of his own poetry was when he was just ten years old.

Benjamin said his childhood was full of poetry. He can remember hearing his mum turn recipes into poems as she was cooking.



Dyslexia

Benjamin is neurodivergent as he was diagnosed with dyslexia. This means his brain works differently.

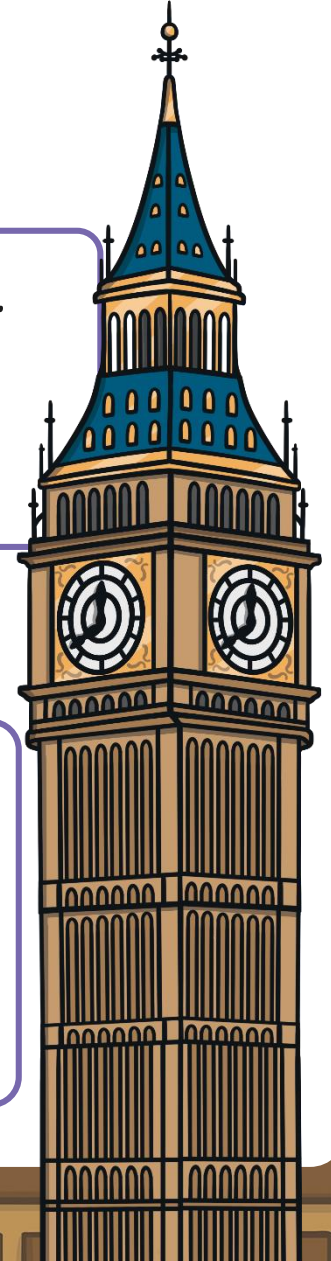
When he was young, much less was known about dyslexia. Benjamin left school when he was 13 years old. He couldn't read or write.



London

When Benjamin was 22 years old, he moved to London. He wanted more people to hear his poetry and thought that moving to the capital city would give him the best opportunity.

In 1980, Benjamin wrote his first poetry book called Pen Rhythm and it was very popular. His poems dealt with issues, such as homelessness. As Benjamin performed his poetry throughout England, he became even more popular.



Music and Acting

In the 1980s, Benjamin released an album called Rasta - an album of reggae music which included him singing and playing the bass guitar. This type of guitar has four or five strings and plays very low notes.

During the 1990s, Benjamin began acting and appeared on TV shows and in films.



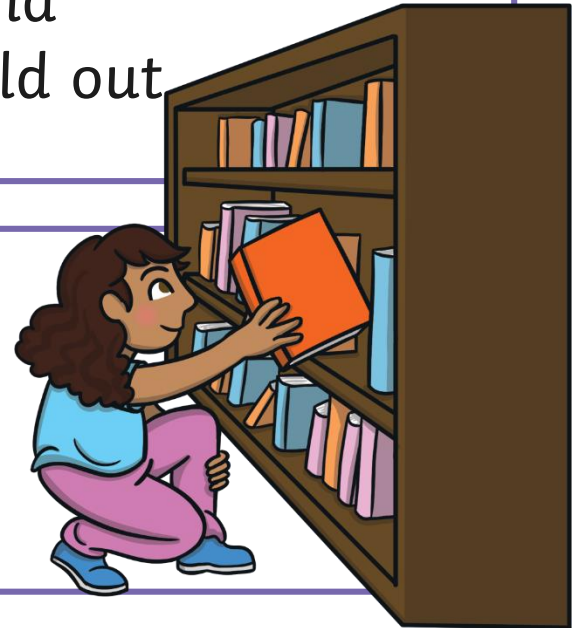
Did You Know...?

Benjamin belongs to the Rastafarian faith. This religion started in Jamaica and combines beliefs from Christianity with some African beliefs and customs.

More Writing

Benjamin wrote more books, including his first poetry book for children - Talking Turkeys. This book is a mix of both funny and serious poems. The book quickly sold out

Benjamin then began writing novels for older children. His first book was about racism and was turned into a play.



More Fascinating Facts

→ Benjamin has been a vegan since he was 13 years old. This means that he eats a plant-based diet. He also grows his own vegetables.



→ He is an animal rights **campaigner**.

→ Benjamin is a member of Amnesty International, which is an organisation that protects human rights and speaks out about **prejudice**.

