

‘Through our actions freedom spoke  
For me to say stop fighting  
We are all brothers and sisters’

**Bairoh, year 9**

**Surroundings**

**Eelyn Lee Productions'** approach involves putting together bespoke teams of practitioners for each project in response to the needs of the school. Our response to this commission was to bring together a performance poet, an environmentalist, a web designer and a free-runner as well as a team of filmmakers to work in partnership with the school.

We took a staggered approach to beginning the project and started with weekly parkour sessions in the gym led by Urban Freeflow, a major UK parkour team. Without knowing that much about the new sport, a group of year 9 PE students volunteered to participate in the sessions.

Using role play and discussion, we transferred some of year 9's recent learning about causality by exploring what causes people to move from one place to another. Small groups of students formed film production teams and interviewed a selection of local people on camera.

After exploring the major issues around climate change with leading environmentalist Nigel Lowthrop, science students were involved in a range of activities. The highlight was a trip to Hill Holt Wood in Lincolnshire to witness a sustainable rural lifestyle.

After the spring half term the music students began working on environment inspired compositions and the English department came on board. Students were now drawing on what they were doing in PE, history and science to inform their work in music and English.

Performance poet Adisa the Verbaliser worked alongside English students to create a series of poetic reflections on their journeys to school. Tragic events during the half term holiday had left the whole school in mourning for a 15 year old student who had been shot dead. Gang-related violence had begun to creep through the school gates with its impact weighing heavy on young minds. The poems reflect these sad and difficult times.

ICT students advising on the design of the website wanted a web address that was evocative. Disregarding short snappy names and anything that sounded like the title of a school project they opted for one boy's suggestion that was different and had depth – [www.answertotheearth.co.uk](http://www.answertotheearth.co.uk)

Working alongside professional filmmakers, nine young poets performed their work to camera, drew storyboards and filmed their ideas. The parkour team transferred their gym training to the fabric of the school building over the course of a one day shoot to complete the filming.

We now had parkour sequences, film poems and interviews with local people to edit to a soundtrack created by the music students. The music had a cinematic and foreboding feel, which set the mood to what has become a powerful and moving short film.

Editing the film, we became aware of the poignancy of the piece in light of recent tragic events. Within the fractured footage was a heart-felt message from young voices that are all too rarely heard.

On the first screening to the core group of year 9 students, there was a passionate response. After deriding each other throughout the film about how they looked on camera, there was silence for the ending as a moment of realisation swept through the room. They had made something powerful, with a message. Something they were proud of, in a way they were proud to be represented. They immediately wanted the world to see it.

Having facilitated numerous film projects with young people, working with students from Archbishop Michael Ramsey Technology College has inspired me to see some familiar things in new ways. In many ways the students' responses were no different to most young people's responses to seeing their own work projected on a big screen. However, in light of the tragic loss of young life this year alone, the response was more weighted, more urgent, with higher stakes.

There is a simplicity in giving young people opportunities to express themselves and allowing them to see themselves reflected back; through their own work and the work of others.

I work in an industry that is responsible for creating the images of our heroes and monsters in the public eye. Hopefully this film will find a space to inspire a different view of young people and urge audiences and image-makers alike to question why we fail to represent them properly.

**Eelyn Lee**  
October 2007



**hmm**  
Creative Partnerships