

Exploring Contemporary Canadian Voices

the spoken word

Robert Priest



- Also known as CBC's Dr. Poetry.
- Author of 14 books of poetry.
- Has performed his poems and songs all over the world.
- His words have been debated in the legislature, posted in the Transit system, quoted by politicians, turned into a hit song and widely published in textbooks and anthologies.
- Won the Acorn People's Poetry Award for his now classic *Mad Hand*.



Before Viewing

Robert Priest

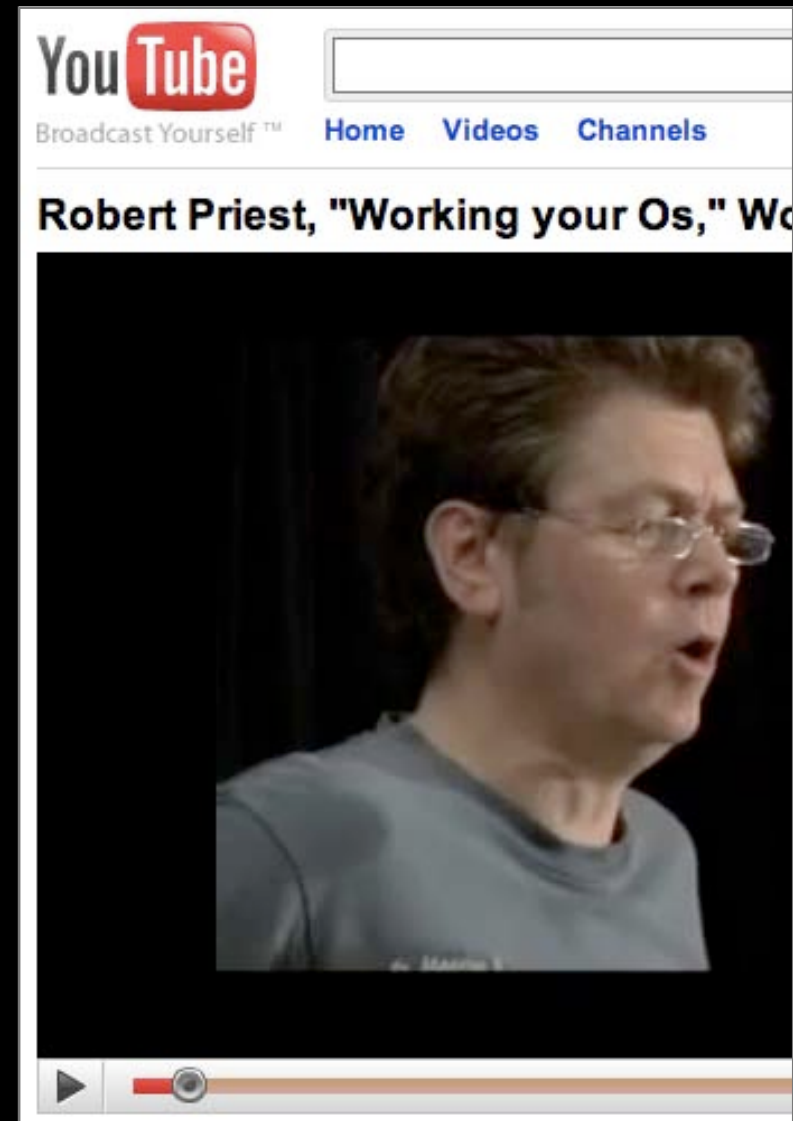
Before viewing *Working your O's*:

- What is your favourite letter (or your least favourite) in the alphabet?
- Why is it your favourite (or least favourite)?



View *Working your O's*

4 minutes, 54 seconds



After Viewing

Robert Priest

After viewing *Working your O's*:

- Give five different ways, or circumstances in which, you can say O?
- How did Priest keep your attention? What persona does he take on?
- This piece is both humorous and clever. What is the difference? Give examples of each.



Activities 1

Robert Priest

- PICK a letter of the alphabet and write a piece about it. How many different ways can you say it? Describe what the letter is like or what it means to you. Describe how it sounds, how it might taste, what it would be like to touch. Does it have a smell?
- COME UP WITH your own impressions of different ways to say O. Present this to the class and have them guess under what circumstances you were saying O. Explain it if no one can guess.
- PICK another letter and perform different ways of saying it. Let the class guess what you mean.

more activities on next slide...



Activities 2

Robert Priest

- WRITE an alphabet poem in which each line starts with the letters of a word, your name or even the whole alphabet, in order. For example:

Possibilities

Open the heart.

Everything

Today, even the

Rain, says

Yes.

- WRITE an “abecedarian poem,” that is, a poem using all the letters of the alphabet, either as the first letter in the line, or in other combinations (e.g., backwards, alliterative lines).



Before Viewing

Robert Priest

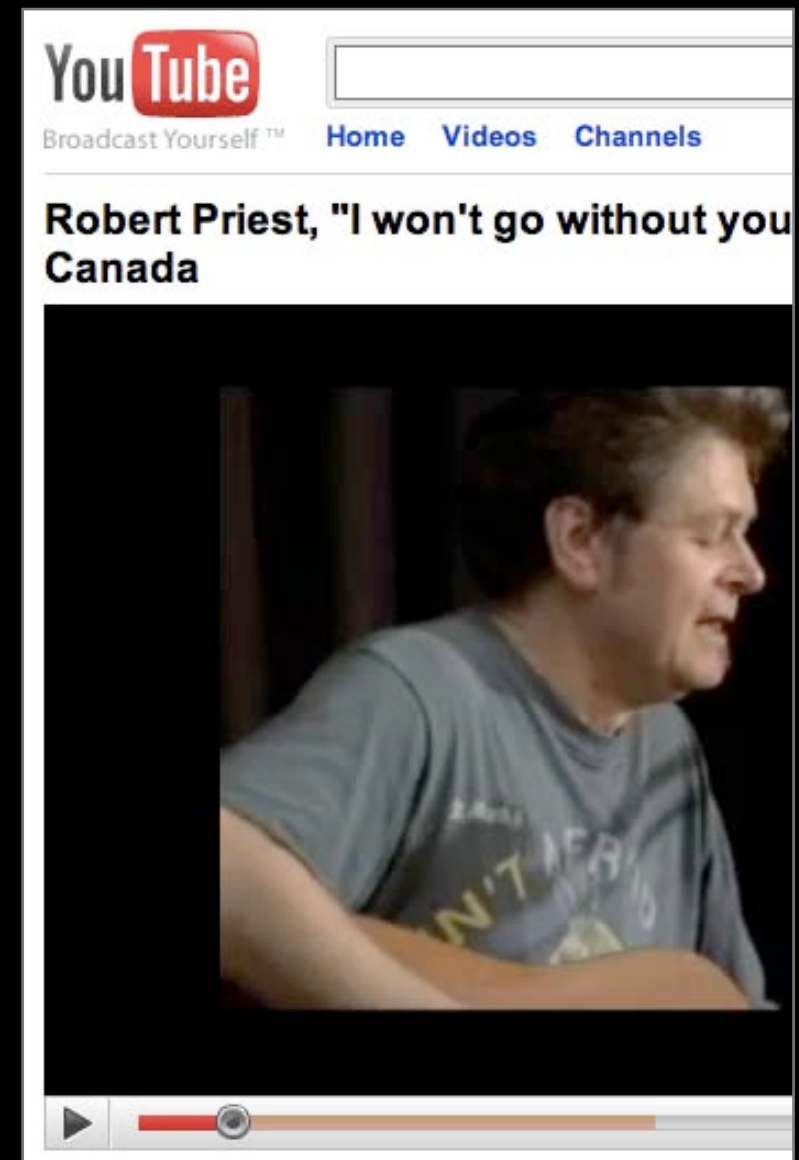
Before viewing *I Won't Go Without You*:

- What is your favourite love song?
- What draws you to it, or makes it stand out among all the others you know?



View *I Won't Go Without You*

2 minutes, 48 seconds



After Viewing

Robert Priest

After viewing *I Won't Go Without You*:

- How does this love song compare to others you have heard (good, bad, average)? Give reasons for your opinion.
- What do you think the “new land” represents?
- Why do you think he doesn't want to go without the woman he loves?
- What do you think the purpose of this love song is (e.g., trying to regain love, trying to get love to come with him)?



Activities

Robert Priest

- WRITE your own love song or poem.
- DRAW a picture of what you think your new land would look like, or the new land that Priest describes. Write an accompanying paragraph describing it in more detail, including how you would get there.
- WRITE a journal entry comparing this song to your favourite love song.
- FOR another song by Robert Priest, check out “Who the f**k knows.” It’s performed with the Toronto Slam Team. Very engaging – discretion is advised because it contains the F-bomb.



Before Viewing

Robert Priest

Before viewing *Rosa Sat*:

- Do you have any heroes? What makes them heroes in your eyes?
- Ask if anyone has heard of Rosa Parks and what she is known for. Why is this historically significant?
- Robert Priest wrote his *Rosa Sat* for children. Do you have a favourite poem or poet from your childhood? What or who is it? Do you still have these poems in your head? Can you quote a few lines? What makes children's poetry so memorable?



View *Rosa Sat*

1 minute, 37 seconds

The image shows a screenshot of a YouTube video player. At the top left is the YouTube logo with the tagline "Broadcast Yourself™". To the right of the logo are navigation links for "Home", "Videos", and "Channels". Below the navigation is the video title: "Robert Priest, 'Rosa Sat,' Words Alou". The video player itself shows a man with short brown hair, wearing a light blue t-shirt, speaking. Below the video frame is a standard video player control bar with a play button, a progress slider, and a volume icon.

After Viewing

Robert Priest

After viewing *Rosa Sat*:

- Do you think Rosa was a hero? Why or why not?
- Why is it important to tell children about heroes?
- What literary devices did Priest use in this poem that make it work particularly well for children? (e.g., repetition, rhyme, assonance, alliteration)



- WRITE a poem or song for children. Pick someone of historical significance that you admire and write about what they did that impressed you.
- DRAW a picture, comic strip or cartoon of Rosa on the bus (e.g., getting on and making the decision to sit; sitting even though a white man stood in the aisle).
- WRITE a journal entry about your experiences with poetry as a child.



Before Viewing

Robert Priest

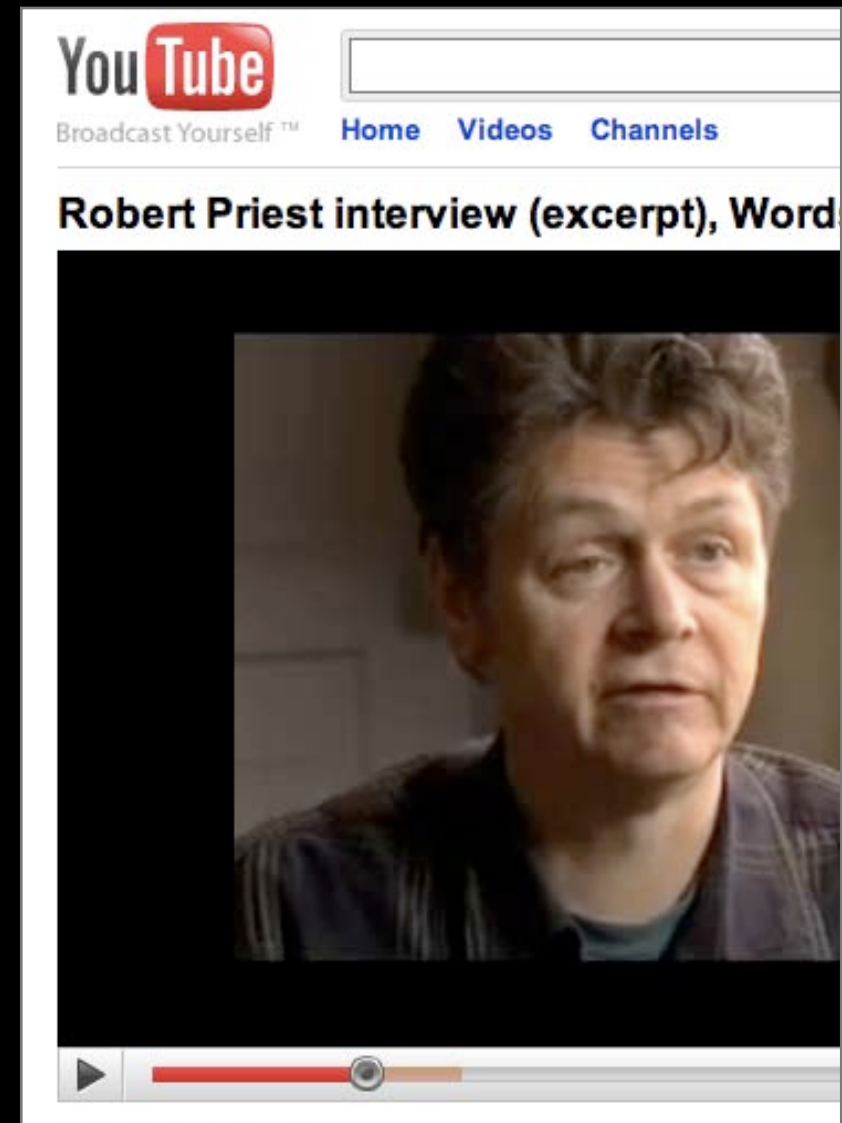
Before viewing *Interview with Robert Priest*:

- What kind of things would you be interested in writing? What styles interest you?
- What do you think would be the toughest part about writing?



View *Interview with Robert Priest*

9 minutes, 40 seconds



After Viewing

Robert Priest

After viewing *Interview with Robert Priest*:

- Summarize Priest's view of writing.
- Why was his writing argued about in legislature?
What is your opinion of that situation?
- What does Priest suggest you do to start writing?
- What does he say you should be aware of if you decide to be a writer?



Credits

Videos – Filmed at the 2007 Words Aloud 4 Spoken Word Festival based in Durham, ON. The videos were produced/directed by Liz Zetlin and Myke Dyer.

Words Aloud 4 Festival 2007 – Presented by the Words Aloud Poetry Collective in collaboration with the Durham Art Gallery.

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