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Dear Mr Richards

Thank you for your letter dated 19 March 2014. I am very sorry that you feel unable to accept the positive intentions behind our Poetry Library Word Search.

Word Search was first published in 2007 and revised to include Michael Rosen's work in 2008. The section on the Skate Park is the same in both versions. The agreed alteration of the tense in John's lines reflects the fact that the children doing the activity are looking at the Skate Park in real time while reading the lines. This is therefore not a paraphrase or misquote as you suggest.

We understand that it is not with John Agard but with Southbank Centre that you have a quarrel but I would mention that John has had a close relationship with us since he was our writer in residence in 1993. This continues to the present day. John confirms that he wrote "delinquent swans" to reflect the beauty in skateboarders.

I do not share your fear that teachers may rely on a dictionary definition of the word 'delinquent'. Any teacher of poetry or creative writing would be very familiar with the poetic device at work here, whether as a standalone phrase or as part of the whole poem. Likewise I am sure you know that poems are often published in more than one version.

However, I realise that you are determined to see a negative intention behind this very well-used teaching resource. I fear that there is nothing I could say which would improve this perception.

Yours sincerely,



Shân Maclennan
Creative Director, Learning & Participation