

Poetry Prompts: Week 13

Christmas experiences

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 13 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. This week's Poetry Prompt was all about describing your Christmas experiences in a poem. Here's another verse from a poem by Joseph Coelho, sharing a quiet Christmas memory:



Read the poem:

Read the poem aloud. You could read this to yourself, with a friend or have someone else read it to you.

Memories of Smiles

Reading by the Christmas tree
as the night rolled in.

Letting the words snowfall in my mind
to the tinkling of the Christmas lights,
as tales of ghosts and plum puddings
unwrap their gifts.

From *Smile Out Loud* by Joseph Coelho
(Wide Eyed Editions, 2022)



Think about the poem:

Think about the words you just heard. What did these make you think about? How do they make you feel? What made you feel this way? Why do you think this memory is one that is important?

Consider your own memories of Christmas. What things were most memorable to you? Were they busy times spent with friends or family, or quiet times spent on your own like in this verse?

Look at the language:

- Read the poem again and **circle or underline any words or phrases** that paint a picture in your mind about this memory. What do you see in your mind's eye as the poem is read? **What images do the words bring to mind?** How could you capture the feelings involved in this memory? Gather together some paper, pencils and colouring pencils, crayons or pens and **have a go at creating an illustration** to accompany this verse.
- Look at the words again, and see if you can **find the verbs** that Joseph Coelho uses to describe the actions in the poem. Think about these words. **How do they link to the Christmas theme** of the verse?

Perform the poem:

- The poem shares a quiet moment spent alone, with some beautiful imagery related to Christmas. **How could you perform this poem** in a way that brings it to life for an audience, but values the quiet and solitary activity described? How can you **draw your listeners** in and make them feel part of this special moment with you?
- Try out **different ways of using your voice** to read the poem. Make sure you **keep your words clear** as you perform, so your audience can understand them. How can you use your voice in different ways to **bring out the meaning of the words** and the feelings involved in this memory? Will some parts be louder or quieter, faster or slower, higher or lower? How will you make sure any actions you may decide to include **add to the performance**, not detract from it?
- **Rehearse your performance** a few times until you are happy with it, then **perform it to someone else**. How did your performance make them feel? What made them feel this way?

Find all Poetry Prompts as well as more information about Joseph Coelho at booktrust.org.uk/childrens-laureate

Write your own!

- Come back to your own memories of Christmas and consider which might be ones that **you might want to share** with someone else. **How did you feel** about this particular time? What made you feel this way? What happened at this time? Were you alone or were other people involved? Was this a quiet or fast-paced moment?
- **Jot some initial ideas** down on a page. This might **start with some words or phrases** about the particular memory and the feelings evoked by this memory. You might find it helpful to draw a picture of the moment to help you describe it in words. As you look at your drawing, **write down words and phrases that help to describe** the moment in more detail. You might talk about your memory with someone else, to help you to describe it in writing.
- Use your thoughts to try and **draft a verse of your own**, which shares a Christmas memory. Think about how to use your own words to **paint a clear picture of the moment**, as Joseph Coelho did in the original verse. You might also think about how the words you choose could link and add to the experience and atmosphere of Christmas, as Joseph Coelho did with the verbs in the verse: *rolled in, snowfall, tinkling, unwrap*.
- When you've finished, **try reading your poem aloud** to explore how to use your voice to bring out the feelings you've described. You might also want to **type it out and illustrate it to share with your family or friends** that you spent time with over Christmas, or to people you didn't get to spend time with to share your memory.

Find and explore more seasonal poems on CLPE's website.

This sequence of activities was designed in collaboration with CLPE. CLPE is a UK children's literacy charity working with primary schools to raise the achievement of children's reading and writing by helping schools to teach literacy creatively and effectively, putting quality children's books at the heart of all learning. Find out more about their work and access further resources and training at clpe.org.uk.