

Poetry Prompts: Week 41

Being an engineer

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 41 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. This week Joseph Coelho was joined by engineer Shini Somara for his poetry prompt. They wrote a poem all about being an engineer and how they can change the world. This next poem by Joe focuses on future ambitions...

Read the poem:

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

Eastbourne

Kicking the pebbles along Eastbourne beach
as the orange-pink of sunset
plays with the ebbing tide,
my mother asks...

"What do you want to do when you're older?"

There is every colour of pebble beneath my feet,
grey lumps of flint winking their sharp, shining
cores,
gritty ovals of sandstone pregnant with fossils,
worn amulets of glass of every sparkle.

They crunch and shift under synced steps
as we stroll, towels wrapped around sand-dusted
bodies.

The sea sings with the pebbles,
knocking a tone from each,
forming a hushing melody.

Sunbursts dip into the wispy clouds,
bounce from the greens, blacks and purples of the
rock pools,
shine red and gold and white from the sea.
There is every colour in the sun.

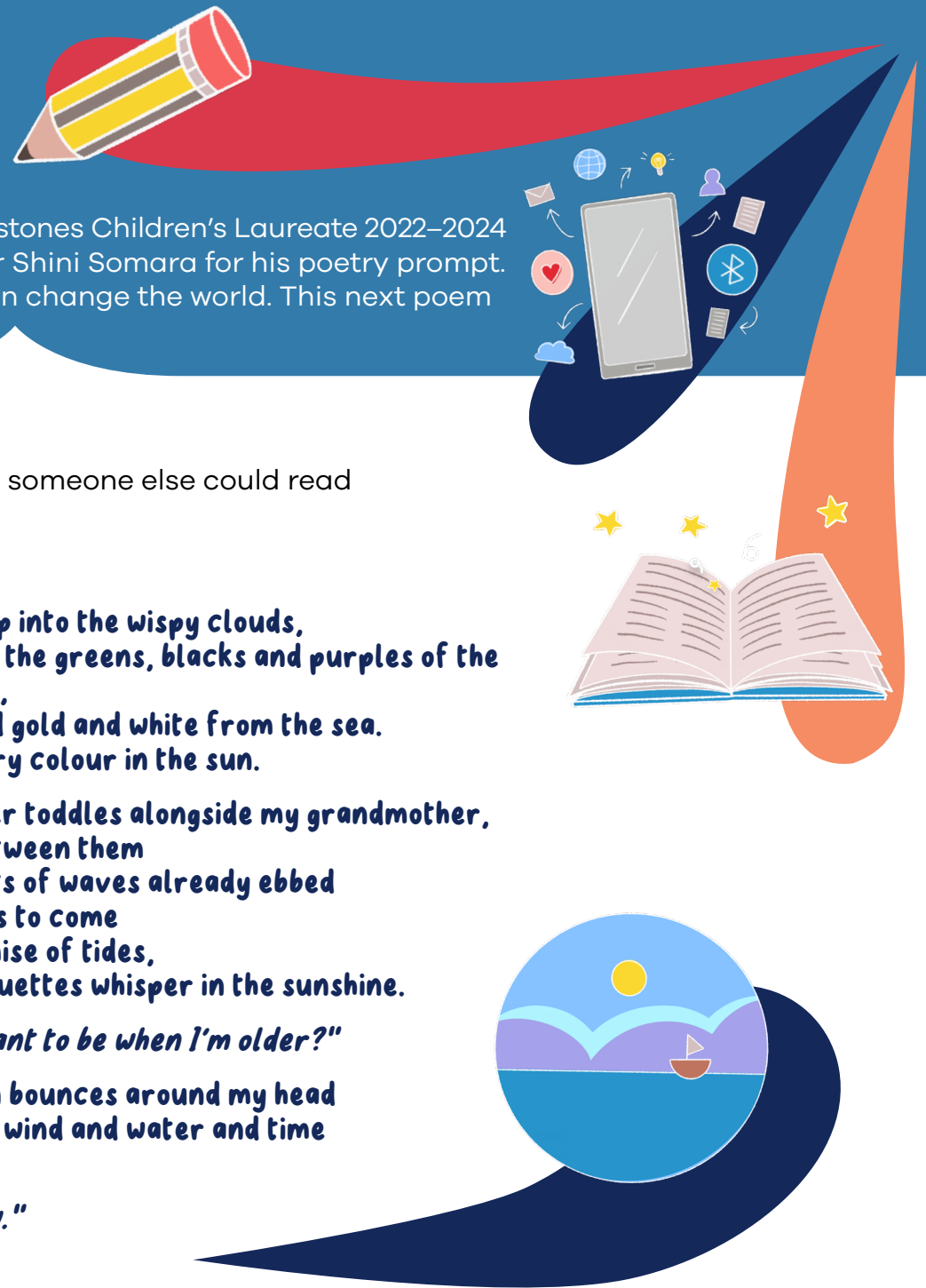
My baby sister toddles alongside my grandmother,
the years between them
like the ghosts of waves already ebbed
and the years to come
like the promise of tides,
as their silhouettes whisper in the sunshine.

"What do I want to be when I'm older?"

The question bounces around my head
like light and wind and water and time
and I smile...

"I don't know."

From *Overheard in a Tower Block* by Joseph Coelho
(Otter-Barry Books, 2017)



Think about the poem:

Consider the poem you just heard or read. What did it make you think about? How did it make you feel? What made you feel this way?

Now, think about the poem in relation to your own experiences. Have you thought about what you might want to be when you are older? Do you have any idea of what job you might want to do? Do you have any ideas of what you might want your life to be like?

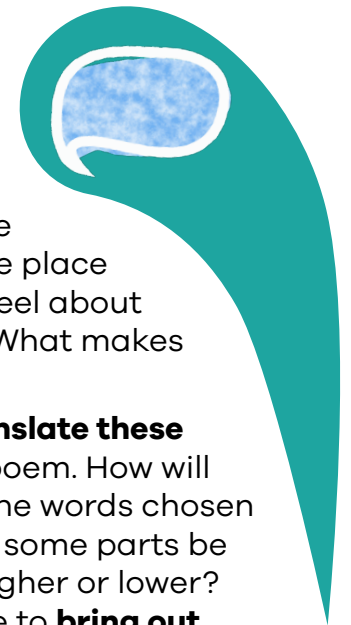


Look at the language:

- Read the poem again. **Circle or underline** any words or phrases that **draw you into the moment** that is being described. Why do these particular words **stand out to you**?
- Before he was a poet and performer, **Joseph Coelho studied archaeology**. Archaeology is the study of the buildings, graves, tools, and other objects that belonged to **people who lived in the past**, in order to **learn about their culture and society**. **Read the poem once more**. Can you see any words or phrases that **link to the area Joseph studied**?

Perform the poem:

- Think about the **feelings associated** with this poem. How do you think the **narrator of the poem feels** about the place they are in? How do you think they feel about the **question being asked of them**? What makes you think this?
- Now think about how you might **translate these feelings into a performance** of the poem. How will you **bring out the meaning** behind the words chosen for the audience watching you? Will some parts be louder or quieter, faster or slower, higher or lower? How will you pace your performance to **bring out the emotion or tell the story**?
- Rehearse your performance a few times until you are happy with it, then **perform it to someone else**. What **sense did your audience get** about this moment from the way you performed the poem? What did they think you did that was **most effective**?



Write your own!

- Come back to think about **your ideas for your own future**. If someone asked you the question, **“What do you want to do when you’re older?”** what would you say? Would **you be like the narrator** of the poem and not be sure, or **do you have any ideas of what you want to do?** Has anyone asked you this already? **Who was it** and **where did it happen?**
- Use these ideas to **draft a poem of your own**. You could draw on the idea of the original poem and **imagine someone is asking you this question** now, or you could just **write your own poem about the job you want to have in the future**, if you have one in mind. Consider how Joseph Coelho used **language linked to a subject he studied** and was **passionate about**. If you have an idea of what you might want to study or what you might want to do, **could you include some subject specific words and phrases?** Can you **give a sense of how you feel** in the poem – either how you **feel about being asked** the question or how you **feel about what you want to do?**
- Have a go at **writing some lines of your own**. When you’ve written your first ideas, **read these aloud** to yourself to see how they sound. Think about how you might **arrange the words on the page**. Where will you **start new lines or verses?**

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

Find and explore more poems on CLPE's website.

This sequence of activities was designed in partnership with CLPE. CLPE is a UK-based 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.

