

Poetry Prompts: Week 77

Kennings

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 77 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. In this week's poetry prompt, Joseph Coelho was exploring kennings. A kenning is a two-word expression which describes something by naming its qualities. This often consists of a noun and a verb made into a noun using an -er ending. For example, a cat might be a mouse-catcher. In this poem, Joseph Coelho uses a series of kennings to describe a character as they go through an emotional time.



Look at the poem:

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

Follow the Ringing

**I am rage,
stone-cracker,
soil-despoiler,
copse-corpse maker.**

**So why is my stomach
frozen leaf mulch?**

**I am frenzy,
field-bomber,
hill-raker,
mountain-puncher.**

**So why are my eyes
winter mist?**

**I follow the ringing
in my head.
A sound too familiar.
Dial my regret
into my fury,
drop-call my sadness
into my temper.
Cold-call my guilt
and let it ring
as I pursue the ringing.**

From *The Girl Who Became a Tree* by Joseph Coelho
(Otter-Barry Books, 2020)

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?



Read the poem once more.
What do you think was
happening? What do you know
or think you know about the
narrator of the poem? How are
they feeling? Is it one feeling or
are they going through a range
of emotions? Why do you think
they might be feeling this way?



Look at the language:

- Circle or underline any **words that directly tell you how the narrator of the poem is feeling**. Look at these words again. What do they mean? Have you ever experienced these feelings before? What might someone think or do as a result of these feelings?
- In a different colour, **circle or underline the kennings** that Joseph Coelho uses to describe these feelings. Do you know the meanings of all these words? If you're not sure, what do you think they mean, in the context of the poem? **Find a dictionary**, either a physical copy or an online dictionary like: <https://kids.britannica.com/kids/browse/dictionary>, and check whether your predictions were correct.
- Look at the kennings again. Which do you think **most powerfully share the feelings of the narrator**? Why do you think this is?

Perform the poem:

- Read the poem once more. How would you **describe the emotions of the character in each part of the poem**? Does the emotion stay the same? Does it change? Does it switch back and forth? In what way?
- Now, think about how to **bring the emotions of the character out in a performance** of the poem. Will some parts be louder or quieter, faster or slower, higher or lower? How will you show the contrasting emotions seen? How will you use actions or facial expression? How will you make sure any actions you choose to incorporate **add to the performance**, rather than detract from it?
- Rehearse your performance a few times until you are happy with it, **then perform it to someone else**. Could they sense the emotion of the narrator from your performance? What did they think was most effective?



Write your own!

- Write down as many **different names of emotions** as you can on a sheet of paper. Try to include a range of different emotions.
- Now, choose one of these and **think of other words that are connected with this emotion**, for example: Happy – joy, cheer, content.
- Now see if you can **write a verse which describes your emotion** using kenning. For example: ***I am joy, I am sun-bringer, smile-bringer, heart-lifter.***
- When you have something written down, **read it aloud to hear how it flows off the page**. Do the kennings help your reader to understand the emotion you are describing more clearly? Make any changes you need to then **write or type up your finished verse**. You could go on to pick other emotions to describe in kennings in a series of verses.
- Give your finished **poem to someone else to read**. You may even wish to perform it to them.

Find all Poetry Prompts as well as more information about Joseph Coelho at 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.