

Poetry Prompts: Week 19

Haiku

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 19 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. This week's Poetry Prompt focussed on Haiku. Haiku are traditionally inspired by observing moments in nature. Here's another poem by Joseph Coelho that describes a moment in nature, which could inspire a haiku.



Read the poem:

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

Pigeons

**Pigeons fly and swoop and soar
land and peck
and peck some more.**

**Their feathers hide a cunning secret.
A fantastic surprise can you see it?
Some say their feathers
are grey and black,
but look again – it's a colour attack!**

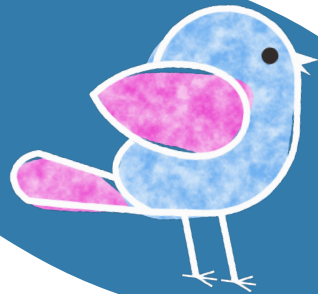
**Their feathers are green and purple
silver and pink,
A rainbow of feather-colour shines
as they peck and drink.**

From *Blow a Kiss, Catch a Kiss* by Joseph Coelho
(Andersen Press, 2022)

Think about the poem:

Haiku are seventeen-syllable poems with the following structure: Line 1: 5 syllables, Line 2: 7 syllables, Line 3: 5 syllables. As the form has evolved, many of its regular traits – including its famous syllabic pattern – have been routinely broken. However, the philosophy of haiku has been preserved: a focus on a brief moment in time; a focus on the subject of the natural world, a use of provocative, colourful images; an ability to be read in one breath; and a sense of sudden enlightenment. Would the moment observed here fit the haiku philosophy? What elements of the philosophy are present? What would you need to do to adapt this poem as a true haiku?

Listen to and read the poem for a second time. What do you think and feel about the pigeons? Why do you think this is? Have you seen a pigeon in real life? Which elements of the poem do you recognise in the pigeons you've seen?



Look at the language:

- Read the poem again and think about **how you could adapt it to become a haiku**. What might be the sense of sudden enlightenment at the end? How will you take your reader into the natural world at the start? What images would you give them?
- **Circle or underline words and phrases** that could be drawn on to write a haiku about this same moment. For example, ***A colour attack!*** gives a sense of sudden enlightenment and has 5 syllables: A co-lour a-ttack!, so this would make a fantastic last line. As you look, consider words and phrases that might **introduce the subject** or **help us to imagine the birds**. You might **pick out the verbs that describe** their movements, like ***swoop*** or ***soar***; **nouns that describe** their features like ***feathers***; **adjectives that describe** specific details like the colour words used or phrases that place pictures in your mind like ***a rainbow of feather-colour shines***.

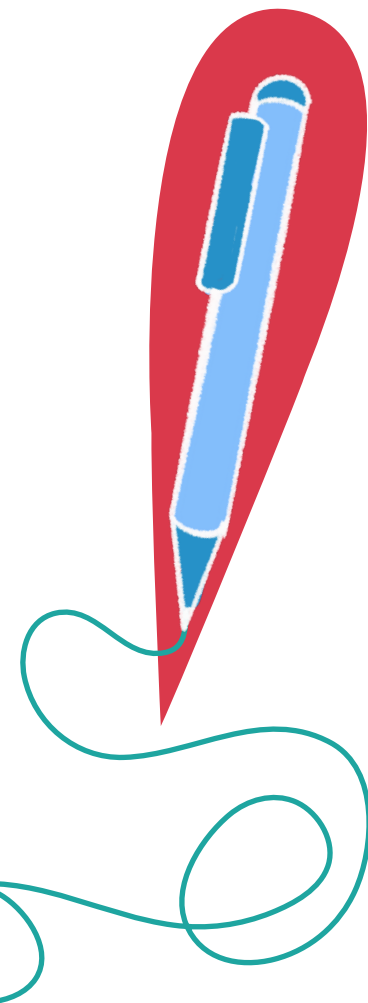
Perform the poem:

- Now, think about how you'll **use your voice to perform** 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 draw the audience into this moment and leave them with a sense of awe and wonder? 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**, and the listener's understanding of what is happening, rather than detract from it?
- **Rehearse your performance** a few times until you are happy with it, then **perform it to someone else**. As you reflect on your performance, which words or phrases stick in your mind? Why do you think this was?



Write your own!

- Now, **think about how to write a haiku** about the pigeons Joseph Coelho observed in his poem. Use his words and phrases, **adapting them to fit the haiku syllable pattern**. As you think about how to strip this moment right down, really **think about the important things you want to communicate** about the pigeons. How might you introduce them? What detail might you want to include? What moment of enlightenment do you want to share?
- Draw on the **list of words and phrases you highlighted** in the original poem and start to **play with different ideas** for lines, **counting out the syllables** in the words as you go, to check they fit the haiku pattern. If you've seen pigeons before, you could **add your own thoughts and ideas** as well.
- When you've found some lines that fit the pattern, **read them aloud** to yourself to see how they sound off the page. Check once more that the **syllable count for each line fits the 5-7-5 pattern**. Now read your poem once more with the haiku philosophy in mind. Is there: a focus on a **brief moment** in time; a focus on the **subject of the natural world**; a use of provocative, **colourful images**; an ability to be **read in one breath**; and a **sense of sudden enlightenment**? Does your poem now fit every element of the haiku philosophy?
- You could go out into the environment near you and **look for other features** to write haiku about. Take a notebook and pen with you and **write down all your thoughts and ideas** about things that capture your attention – a tree, a cat, a plant, a puddle, crows – anything that catches your eye. Then come back and look at how to **pare these thoughts** back to fit the haiku pattern and philosophy, like you did with the pigeons.



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

Find and explore more about haiku 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.