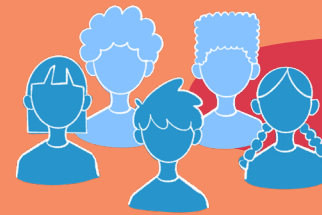


Poetry Prompts: Week 76

Before and Now

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 76 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. In this week's poetry prompt, Joseph Coelho created a poem by adding a word to each new line. In this poem by Joseph Coelho, one of the verses uses this technique. See if you can spot it as you read...



Look at the poem:

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

She Comes in Alone

Fingers
singly typing,
playing online.
Alone.

Before.
She'd cascade in here
with a swarm of friends,
crowding around the computers,
arguing over the boxsets,
discussing the latest series.

Now
she sits
in her corner,
thinking reading and listening.

Alone.
On her phone.
Alone.

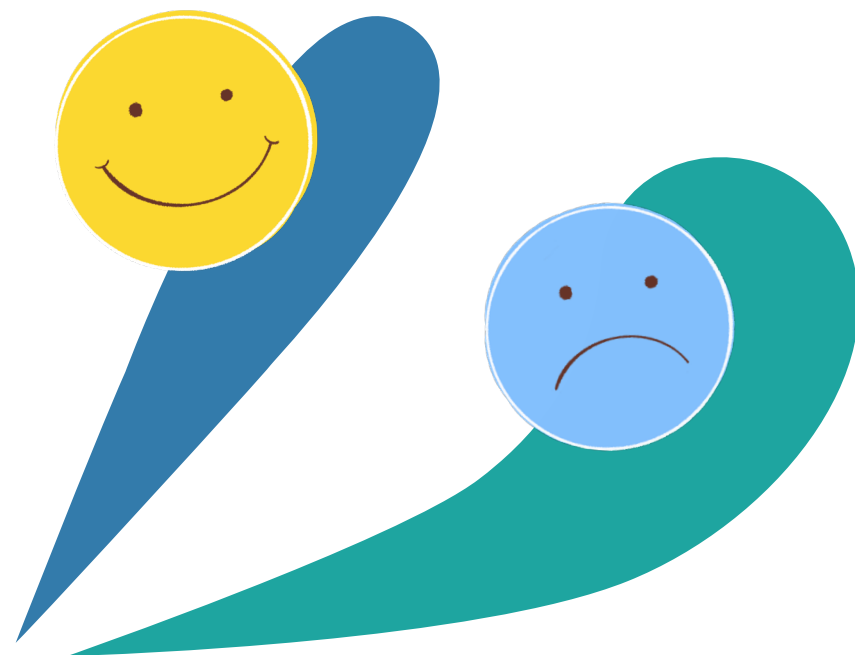
From *The Girl Who Became a Tree* by Joseph Coelho
(Otter-Barry Books, 2020)

Think about the poem:

Consider the poem you just heard or read. What do you know or think you know about the narrator of the poem? What are they like? How do you think they might be feeling? Why might they be feeling this way?



Think about the words that are used to start the second and third verses: '**before**' and '**now**'. What do you think this character might have been like '**before**'? What makes you think this? How do you think it compares with how she is '**now**'?



Look at the language:

- Read the poem again and **circle or underline any words which tell you about the character**. Are any words repeated? Which ones? How many times do they appear?
- Think about the word that is repeated the most times: **'alone'**. **What does this word mean to you?** Do you think the fact that she is alone makes her lonely? Why or why not? Do you always have to be around other people? Can you be alone without being lonely?
- Think about **how the character feels about school in the poem**. At what point do their feelings change? What do you think changed their feelings?

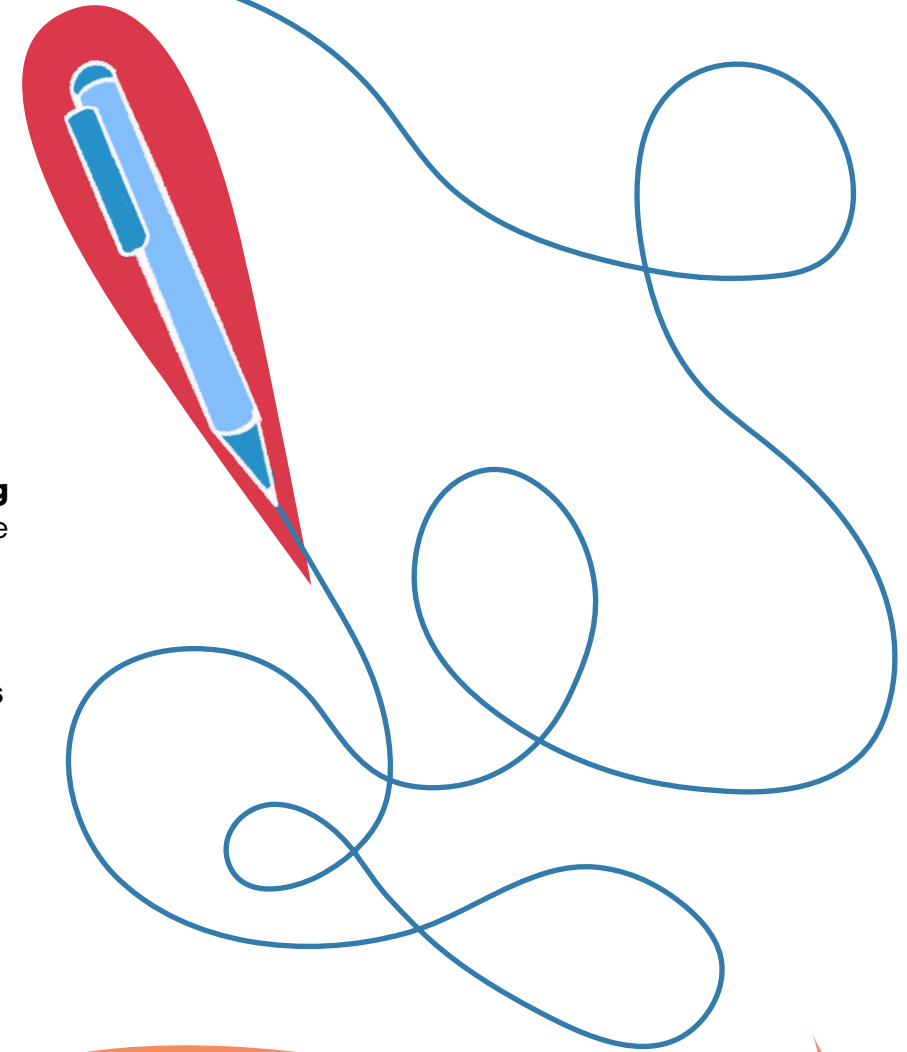
Perform the poem:

- Read the poem once more. **How will you share what this character is like in a performance?** How can you show the shift in feeling from how she is described **'before'** to how she is described **'now'**? Will some parts be louder or quieter, faster or slower, higher or lower? 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**. What sense of the character do they get from your performance? What did they think was most effective?



Write your own!

- This poem describes the change in a character from what they were like '**before**' to what they are like '**now**'. Use experiences from your own life or other things you have seen, in books, films or in other people, to **come up with ideas for a poem of your own to describe a change in someone**.
- First, **think of a word to describe** how your character will be now, and then how this compares to how they were before. Perhaps they change from being shy to confident, boisterous to well-behaved or vice-versa.
- Then think of **ways to describe what they are like or what they do now, and how this compares to what they were like or did before**. Think about what Joseph Coelho did in the original poem that was effective in **building a picture of the character**. You may want to repeat a key word to reinforce a character trait. You may want to build a verse which adds one word to each line to build a picture of them. You might think about how to break up the lines and verses and how to place the words on the page.
- When you have something written down, **read it aloud to hear how it flows off the page**. Does it paint a clear picture of your character? Can you feel the change in them?
- Make any changes you need to, then **write or type up your finished poem**. Give it 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.