

Poetry Prompts: Week 59

Dragon

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 59 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. In this week's poetry prompt, you were introduced to a fantastical creature – a unicorn. Here's another poem by Joseph Coelho about a different fantastical creature; a dragon with a very long tail...

Look at the poem:

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

The Dragging Dragon

There was a dragon
with a very long
very bothersome tail
and it dragged-on behind him.

His tail was long,
long and thin
and it dragged-on behind him.

He dragged it over mountains
where the moss-rocks turned it green.
as it dragged on behind him.

He dragged it through the forests
where leaves caught in his tail's scales
as it dragged-on behind him.

He dragged it through wildflower fields
where the pollen speckled it bright
as it dragged-on behind him.

He dragged it between the cities' shops
where it tangled around buns and ladies' frocks!
As it dragged-on behind him.

There was a dragon
with a very long,
very wonderful tail
that he would curl all around him.

A tail soft with the mountain's moss,
a tail sheaved with the forest's leaves,
a tail that had thrust through a flower's dust,
a tail that had shopped a city's shops,
and the dragon curled it up around him.

He curled it up,
his wonderful tail
the dragon curled it up
around him.

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



Think about the poem:

Consider the poem you just heard or read. What do you find out about the dragon from the poem? How do you feel about him? Why do you think this is?

Re-read the poem again. Which words, phrases or ideas stay in your mind after reading? Why do you think this is? If you were going to create an illustration for this poem, what might you draw and why? Take a piece of paper and some drawing equipment and have a go at illustrating it. What words or ideas in the poem do you think influenced your illustration?

Look at the language:

- The poem contains lots of adjectives and verbs, which describe the dragon's tail – what it looks like, how it moves and what it does. **Take a pen or pencil and see if you can find these and circle or underline them.** What impact do you think this tail has on the dragon? How do you think the dragon feels about its tail? Do the dragon's feelings stay the same throughout the poem or do they change?
- Now, **look back at the adjectives and verbs in the last three verses.** How do these compare and contrast with those in the other verses? How do the word choices show us what the dragon is feeling, even though we aren't directly told?

Perform the poem:

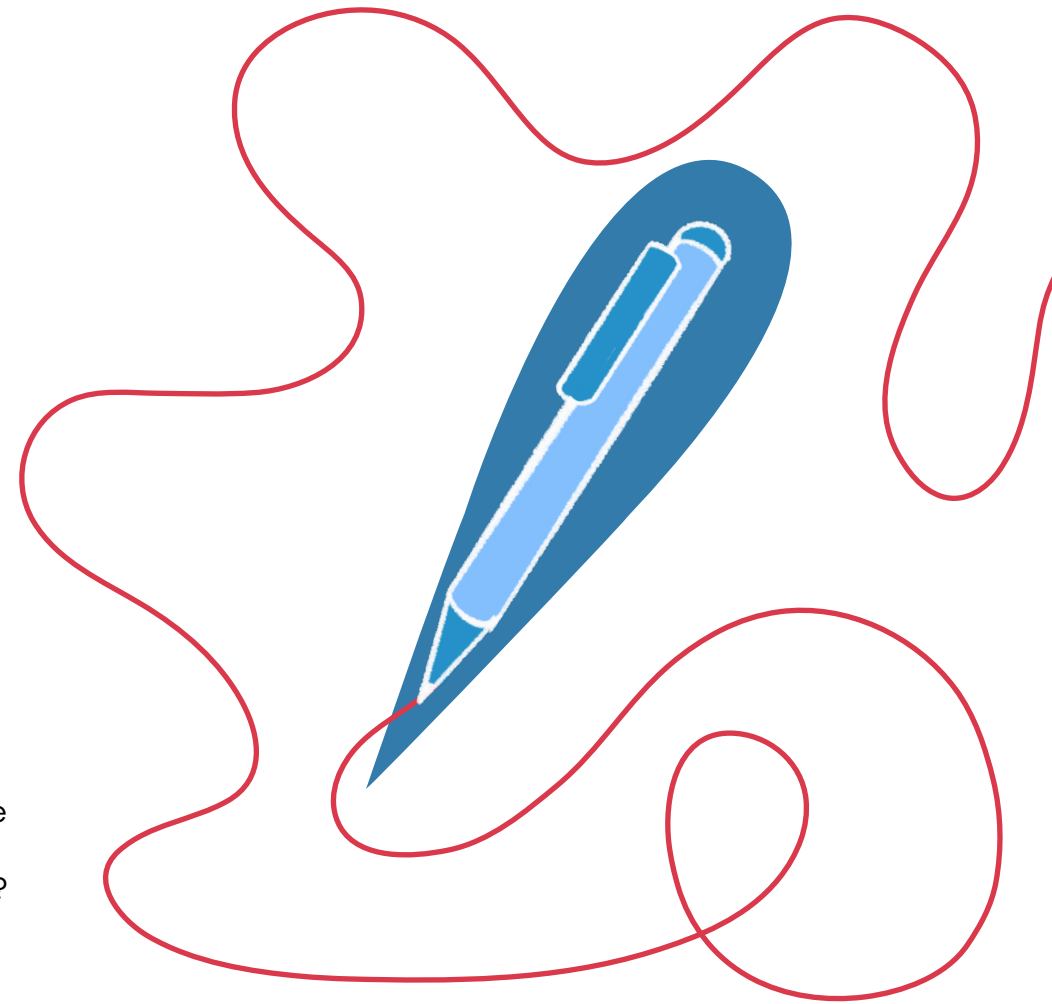
- Consider how to **bring out the changing feeling about the tail in a performance** of the poem. How will you contrast the final verses, where the tail switches from being cumbersome to being an asset? How can you use your voice in different ways to convey the emotion in the words? Will some parts be louder or quieter, faster or slower, higher or lower? How will you make sure any actions you may include add to the performance, and the listener's understanding of the situation and the emotions associated with it, rather than detract from it?
- Rehearse your performance a few times until you are happy with it, then **perform it to someone else.** What were they left thinking and feeling at the end of the poem? Was this different from how they felt in the rest of the poem?



Write your own!

- Think about **how to write your own poem about a fantasy character**. It might be a unicorn, like Joseph wrote about in this week's video, a dragon, as in this poem or another creature entirely, like a troll, fairy, goblin, mermaid, werewolf or phoenix.
- **Find some pictures of the mythical creature** you've chosen to look at – as these creatures are mythical, these are likely to be models, costumes or illustrations. You could **draw a picture of the creature yourself**. Around your drawing, think about adjectives to describe its appearance and verbs to describe how it moves or what it does.
- Start to **use these words to write a poem that describes your fantasy creature to someone else**. You could think about whether your creature might have a particular feature it sees as a problem, like the dragon's dragging tail, and whether this might eventually become an asset.
- Put your ideas together in a draft of a poem and read it to yourself. Think about whether you need to add or change anything before **writing it out in your best handwriting or typing it up** for someone else to read. You could **present it alongside your illustration**. Did the poem give your reader a clear picture of your character? What did they learn about your creature from the words you chose and used?

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.