

Poetry Prompts: Week 24

Creating atmosphere

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 24 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. Today's Poetry Prompt was all about how to read poems to create atmosphere. Joseph Coelho showed you how to use a whisper voice to make a poem sound creepy. The next poem is about taking a deep breath to find a moment of calm, which would also be good to read in a quiet voice to bring out the meaning of the words.



Read the poem:

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

Take A Deep Breath

Close your eyes,
imagine the sea.

Take a deep breath...
and let it out.

Close your eyes,
imagine the waves splashing your feet.

Take a deep breath...
and let it out.

Close your eyes,
imagine your toes in the sand.

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

Take a deep breath...
and let it out.

Close your eyes,
imagine the sun on your face.

Take a deep breath...
and let it out.



Think about the poem:

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

Think about the actions behind the words. When might it be useful to read or remember this poem? Is there a feeling or event you've experienced, where taking a breath or finding a moment of calm would have been useful?

Look at the language:

- **Read the poem again.** What do you picture in your mind's eye as the poem is read? Take some paper and some drawing equipment – a drawing pencil and some coloured pencils or crayons would be perfect – and **sketch out what you imagine** as you read or hear the poem being read.
- Now go back to the poem and **circle or underline any words** that you think **inspired your illustration**. Why do you think Joseph Coelho might have chosen seaside words and phrases to create the imagery for this poem? What other things might you choose to **connect with feelings** of calm and relaxation? What places, actions or images create a sense of calm for you?

Perform the poem:

- Consider how to create a sense of calm and relaxation in a **performance of the poem**. Think about the **feelings you want to communicate** and how you might **use your voice** to do this. Think about the **volume** and **tone** of your voice, and also the **speed** you might read at.
- Look at the repeated lines: **Close your eyes** and **Take a deep breath** and **think about the rhythm** this repetition gives to the performance. Might you do some **actions to accompany** these lines? How will you make sure these **add to the performance**, not detract from it?
- Rehearse this a few times then **perform it for someone else** to listen to. **How did they feel** as you performed the poem? What was it **about your performance** that made them feel this way?

Write your own!

- Think about **things that make you feel calm**. When you want to feel this way, are you transported to a certain place, like the beach in the original poem? What other places might **provoke feelings of calm and relaxation**? Are there certain activities that might make you feel calm, like swimming in a pool, stroking a cat's fur or painting a picture? What is it about these places or activities that might make someone feel calm? What could they imagine **to help them to relax**?
- Now think about how you might **use some of these things to build your own poem** about calming down. You **could use the same repeating lines** as the original poem or you might **think about other actions** that might help someone relax. Can you **think of any actions or strategies** that help you to calm down? Perhaps you count to 10 or take some time out? Or, you **might choose a different form for your poem**, and not have repeating lines at all.
- Now **try drafting some lines** of your own. **Repeating lines**, like in the original poem, is a helpful scaffold to start with, or you **might be inspired to write your poem in a different way**. The important thing is for the **rhythm and imagery** in the words to provoke **feelings of calm** in your reader, so **keep reading and re-reading it** as you write to check your words do this.
- When you've finished, you could **handwrite your final poem** in presentation handwriting or **type it up on a computer**. You might also want to **illustrate it**, with a suitably relaxing image. You could also **perform it**, considering how you created feelings of calm when performing the original poem.

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

Find and explore more water poems on CLPE's website and see what feelings they provoke in you.

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.