

Poetry Prompts: Week 40

Abercedarius

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 40 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. This week's Poetry Prompt focussed on the Abercedarius; a poem that uses the entire alphabet, with each new letter starting a new line. In this poem by Joseph Coelho, we're going to look at how he takes one letter from the alphabet and uses it in many different words throughout a poem...



Read the poem:

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

Timmy Tell-Tale

Timmy Tell-Tale
would tip tap on teacher
with the tip of two fingers
and tell terrific tales
of Tara and Tia talking
when teacher was teaching
or Taylor and Todd typing
when teacher told them not to.

Timmy Tell-Tale
would thunder "I'm telling"
when Tina tickled Travis
and tell teacher he would
with the tip tap of two fingers
and a terrible tale of...

"Teacher I told them not to tickle
throughout all your teaching
and I told them I'm telling."

Timmy Tell-Tale
told so many tales
of talkers and ticklers
and tiptoeing tricksters
that teacher got so tired
of Timmy's tall tales
that when Timmy told them...

Teacher told Timmy a tale
of Timmy in TROUBLE!

From *Werewolf Club Rules* by Joseph Coelho
(Frances Lincoln, 2014)



Think about the poem:

Think about Timmy's actions in the poem. How do his actions affect others in the class, including his teacher? Why does telling tales end up getting him into trouble?

Consider the words that you just heard or read. What do you think you find out about Timmy from reading the poem? What do you think he is like? How do you feel about him when you read the poem?

Look at the language:

- This poem is full of **words that begin with the letter 'T'**. **Circle or underline** all the words that start with this letter. Look at the words you've identified. Does the letter '**T**' make the **same sound in all these words**? When words that **start with the same sound are repeated** in a poem, this is called **alliteration**. Many of the words in this poem **start with the /t/ sound**, but some **start with /th/**. Can you **find examples of each**?

Perform the poem:

- Think about how you might **perform the poem** to bring this story to life for an audience. How could you **show the character of Timmy**, and how **his actions affect others** in your performance? How can you **use your voice in different ways?** Will some parts be louder or quieter, faster or slower, higher or lower? How will you **make sure any actions add to the meaning**, rather than detracting from it?
- Rehearse your performance a few times until you are happy with it, then **perform it to someone else**. What did **they think or feel** about Timmy from your performance? What did they think **you did that was most effective?**



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

Write your own!

- Think about how you can **use words which begin with the same letter of the alphabet** to write your own **alliterative poem**. Perhaps you want to **create a character** with an **alliterative name**, like '*Timmy Tell-Tale*'. Maybe you want to set your poem in an **alliterative place** like the *Wild and Windy Woods*.
- When you've decided on a focus for your poem, think of as **many words as you can which start with your focus letter**, which you might be able to incorporate into your poem. You might find a dictionary helpful as you collect words. Remember, alliteration is about the **sound of the initial letter repeating** throughout the poem, **not just the letter itself**, so ensure you are choosing words where the letter **makes the same initial sound**.
- Look at how these words might **help you to build a story** of the person or place you are describing. How can you give a **sense of what the character is like**, or what it's like **to be in the place?**
- As you write, **pick words that help to build a picture**, don't just choose words that begin with the right letter. The poem has to make sense. **Keep looking back to Joseph Coelho's original poem** for ideas.
- When you have finished, **read your poem out loud** to see if you can **hear the repeated sounds** at the start of words.



Find and explore more about alliteration and other poetic devices 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.