

Reading a poem really fast

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 17 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. In this week's Poetry Prompt, Joseph Coelho set the challenge of reading a poem really fast. The speed you read at can add to the meaning or mood of a poem. Here's a poem where your voice could be used in different ways to enhance the meaning and mood.



Read the poem:

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

Space is...

Space is high
and large
and wide and black and star-filled
and we are in it.

Space is big
and deep
and long and empty and planet-peppered
and we are in it.

Space is above
and below
and inside and outside and galaxy-salted
and we are in it.

Space is slow
and fast
and bumpy and odd and spaceship-filled
and we are speeding through it.

And the quicker we go
the slower we grow
and the faster we speed
the faster all else runs to seed.

For space is strange
and weird
and wonderful and Home and adventure-packed
and we are in it.

Think about the poem:

Think about the poem you just heard. What did it make you think about? How did it make you feel? What made you feel this way?

Listen to the poem once more. This time, you could close your eyes to focus on the sounds of the words and the pictures they paint in your mind. When you hear the words read or read them to yourself, what did you see in your mind's eye? Gather together some paper, pencils and colouring pencils, crayons or pens and have a go at creating an illustration to accompany this verse.

Look at the language:

- Read the poem again and **circle or underline** any words or phrases that you think **inspired you** when you created your illustration. What was it about these words and phrases that captured your interest?
- Now, in a different colour, **highlight any words** that directly describe space. Look at the words you've identified. What do you **notice about them?** Consider the opposition in some of these words. How do **you think space can be both** above and below, inside and outside, fast and slow?

Perform the poem:

- **Consider the words** in the poem that might make you think about how it could be performed. How might you **use your voice to emphasise the meanings** of the words and the ideas explored about space in the poem?
- Try out different ways of **using your voice** to read 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 bring out the **meaning of the words** and the feelings involved in this memory? 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**, not detract from it?
- **Rehearse your performance** a few times until you are happy with it, then perform it to someone else. What did they think was **most effective** about your performance? What advice could they offer to **improve it**?

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

Write your own!

- Think of something **you are interested in**, as Joseph Coelho did with Space in this poem. How would you **describe this thing to someone else**?
- Write the name of the thing in the **centre of a piece of paper** and then, around it, write all the **words and phrases** you can think of about this thing, your **thoughts and feelings** about it, and things you **know about it**.
- Use these to start to **build your own poem** about your chosen thing. You can lean on the structure of the original poem to help you, **starting each verse with the lineis** and **creating a repeated last line** for each verse to **describe your feelings** about the thing.
- When you've worked up the words, **think about how you might read it aloud**. How can you use your voice in different ways to **bring out the meaning** of the words and the **feelings involved** in this memory? Will some parts be louder or quieter, faster or slower, higher or lower?

Find and explore more poems about space and the solar system 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.