

# List poems

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 79 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. This week, Joseph Coelho was creating list poems in his poetry prompt. A list poem does exactly as described and collects content in a list form. List poems don't have any fixed rhyme or rhythmic pattern and the order of the list can either provide additional detail or show the narrator's state of mind. See if you can see what the narrator of this list poem by Joseph Coelho is thinking and feeling as they prepare to go back to school...



## Look at the poem:

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

## School tomorrow – excuses for Mum

Back at school tomorrow.

Not tomorrow!

One more day off please.

I'm sick.

I'm not ready.

I haven't done my homework.

We don't do much the first week back.

Miss won't mind if I miss one day.

My uniform is dirty.

I can't remember where the school is.

I want to stay home with you.

We should spend more quality time together.

I need a few more days to grow up.

I won't know anyone – they'll all be older.

The school fell down during the summer.

The school has flooded.

The school ran away.

The school is still on holiday.

I can't go to school tomorrow...

My foot hurts.

My leg hurts.

My arm hurts.

My face hurts.

My belly hurts.

I have the runs.

I have heat stroke.

I have the plague!

*The poem continues on the next page*



I'll stay home and clean and cook.  
 I'll pay the bills,  
 sort out the tax,  
 handle the builders,  
 get the shopping.  
 I won't see my friends.  
 I'll miss that topic about the Romans.  
 I won't find out my results.  
 I won't get to laugh in assembly,  
 or joke with Mr Lindon.  
 I won't play football.  
 I won't make a circuit.  
 Or get to quote Shakespeare...

Where's my uniform?

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

## Think about the poem:

Consider the poem you just heard or read. What do you think was happening? What do you know or think you know about the narrator of the poem? How are they feeling? Why do you think they might be feeling this way? Do they feel the same throughout the poem, or do their feelings change?

Think about how the poem connects to your own experience. Can you recall a time when you haven't wanted to go to school? If this hasn't happened to you, can you think of another time when you haven't wanted to do something? What excuses did you give to try to get out of it?



## Look at the language:

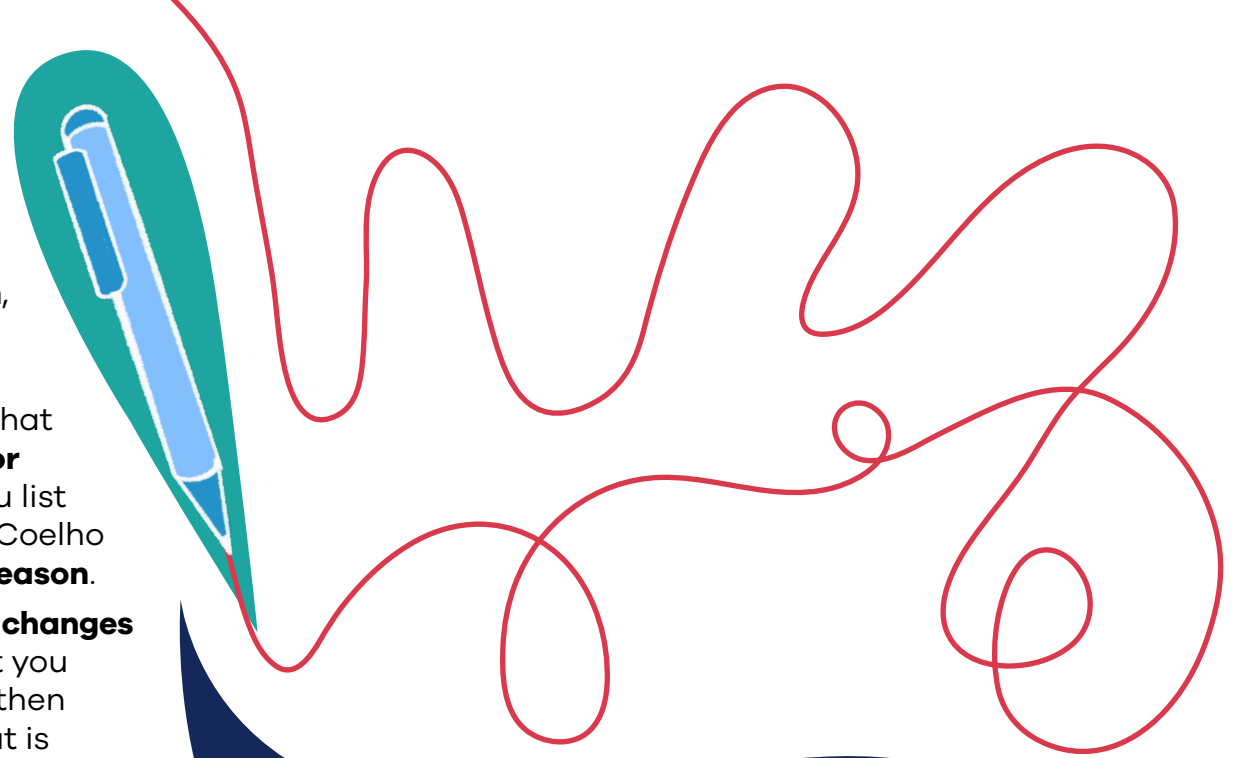
- Read the poem again and **circle or underline which you think are the most powerful or convincing excuses**. Why do you think this is?
- Think back to all the excuses you read. Can you think of any more of **your own to add to the list**?
- Think about how the **narrator feels about school** in the 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 the feelings of the narrator throughout** the poem in a performance? How can you show the shift in feeling from the beginning to the end of the poem? 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**. Could they sense the emotion of the narrator from your performance? What did they think was most effective?

## Write your own!

- In this poem, the narrator used lists to show why they didn't want to do something. Take some time to think of something **you either really don't or do want to do. Use this to introduce your poem**, as Joseph Coelho did in the opening line of this poem: '**Back to school tomorrow**'.
- Now see if you can come up with lists of reasons that might **convince someone else of why you should or shouldn't do this thing**. Try to make the things you list as powerful or convincing as possible, as Joseph Coelho did in the original poem. **Use a new line for each reason**.
- Think about whether **your mind stays the same or changes throughout the poem**. Perhaps you really thought you wanted to do something, like ride a rollercoaster, then you realise that you don't want to do it at all! What is it that changes your mind?
- When you have something written down, **read it aloud to hear how it flows off the page**. Are your reasons convincing? Do they give the reader a sense of how you feel?
- 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](https://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](https://clpe.org.uk).