

Poetry Prompts: Week 33

Poet-tree

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 33 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. In this week's poetry prompt, Joseph Coelho created a poet-tree; a poem about a tree. Here's another poem about a tree by Joseph, see if you can picture the tree in your mind from the way he describes it in the words...

Read the poem:

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

November

**Leaning at the point of toppling,
branches reaching
for the sun they can never hold,
a sun that would melt their wood
and boil their carbon.**

**Sky river branches achingly twist
their nakedness
into winter missing the modesty of leaves
and the shimmer of their song.**

**Their dance done
they stand under the sky's gaze
the winter sun's leering eye.
Beech's crown finally in winter's grasp.**

From *A Year of Nature* by Joseph Coelho
(Quarto, 2019)

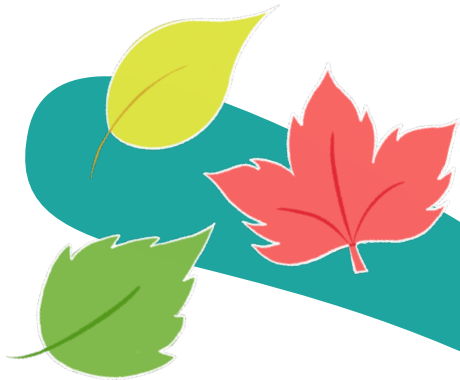
Think about the poem:

Think about the time of year this might be set in. What season do you think the poem takes place in? Why do you think this is? How is the tree affected by the season? What has happened to it?

Consider the poem you just read. What images of the tree were you left with after reading? What do you think the trees looked like?

Relate the poem to the trees you have in your local environment. How do the trees in the poem compare with the trees you can see outside now? Are they similar to the trees described or are they different? In what way?



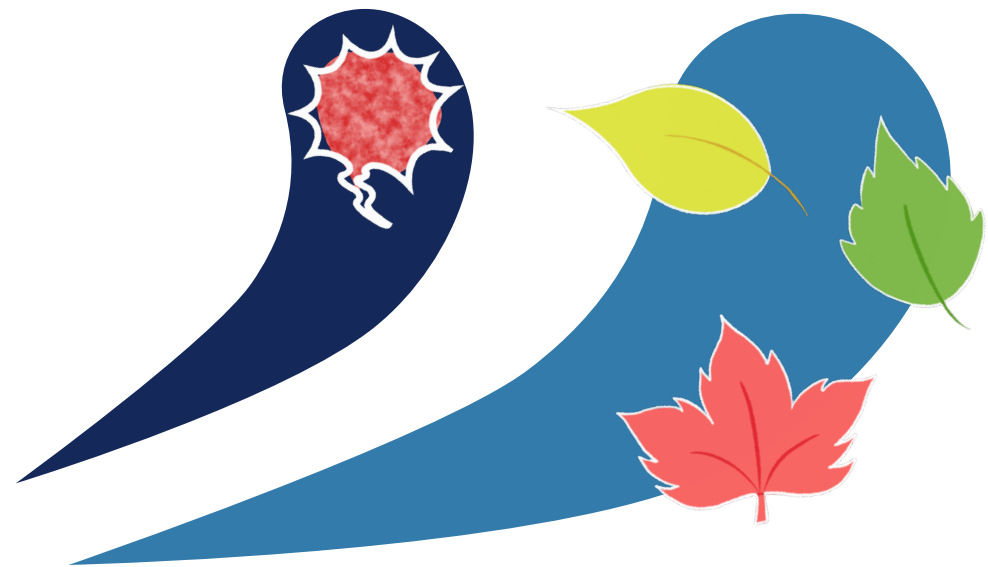


Look at the language:

- Listen to the poem being read again. You might want to close your eyes to **really focus on the words**. Look back at the poem and **circle or underline any of the verbs** that tell you something about the tree, like *leaning, tipping, reaching, stand*.
- Think about **how you might draw or paint the trees** that are being described. How will you **represent each part** of the tree? What do you **know about the branches?** What else might you **see in the background?** What **colours** might you use? Gather together some paper, pencils and colouring pencils, crayons, felt tip pens or paints if you have them and **have a go at creating an illustration of the trees**.
- Read the words again to yourself. What words and phrases in the poem do you think **helped you to create your illustration?** **Circle or underline these**. Look at some of these phrases again and think about **what they mean**. What **thoughts or feelings** do they give you about the trees?

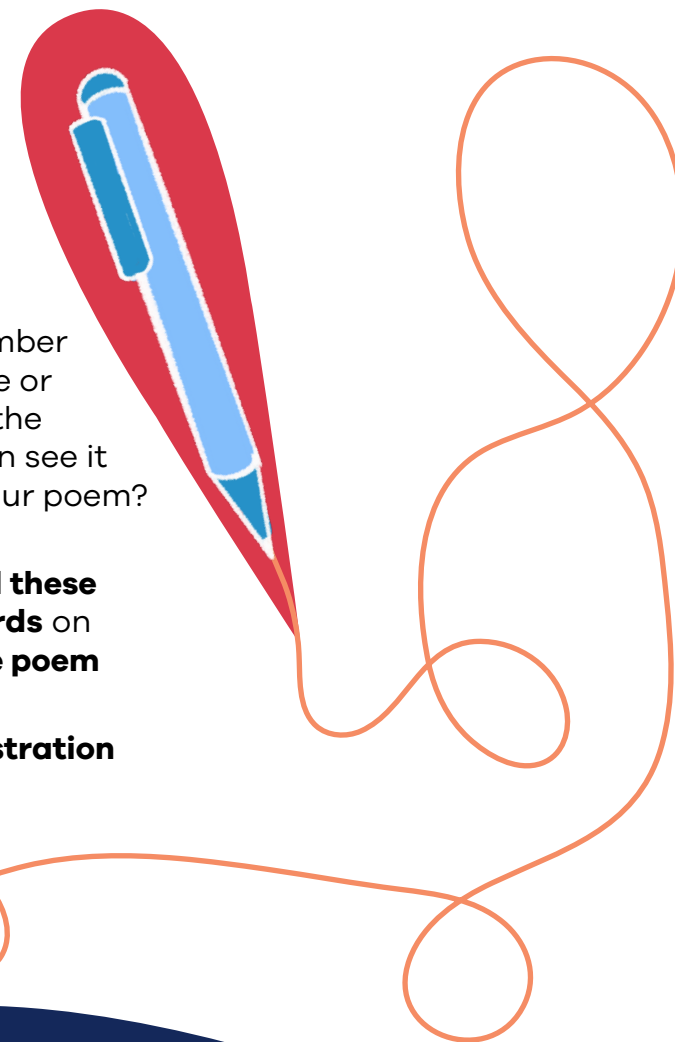
Perform the poem:

- Think about how you might **bring the trees to life** in a performance of the poem. What is the **overall mood of the poem?** How can you **create this for your audience?**
- 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 **mood of the poem?** 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 successful** about your performance? Do they have any suggestions of **how to improve it?**



Write your own!

- Look at the trees **in your own local environment**. You might be able to see some from your window, or you might have to walk to your local park. **Take time to observe** the trees carefully. What do they **look like**? How could you describe their **branches**? The **trunk**? Can you see any **roots**? Are there any **leaves on the trees**? Make notes of the **words and phrases that come to mind** as you look at the trees. You might even want to **draw the trees** so that you can remember them clearly, or **take a photograph** of them.
- Use these thoughts and ideas to **write your own poem** about the trees you saw. Remember how Joseph Coelho used lots of **interesting verbs to describe the behaviour** of the tree or its parts. Can you do this in your own poem? Think about **what the tree looked like** at the time of year you saw it. How will you **describe this in words** to someone else so they can see it clearly **in their mind's eye**? What **other elements of the season** might you include in your poem? How might you **describe how the tree is affected by the seasonal change**?
- Have a go at **writing some lines of your own**. When you've written your first ideas, **read these aloud** to yourself to see how they sound. Think about how you might **arrange the words** on the page. Where will you **start new lines or verses**? Will you **make them into a concrete poem** representing the trees, as Joe did in the video?
- When you've **written or typed your final version**, you might also want to **create an illustration** of the trees to go alongside your words.



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

Find and explore more poems about trees and nature 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.