

Poetry Prompts: Week 23

Write a clerihew

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 23 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. Today's Poetry Prompt showed you how to write a clerihew about a well-known person. Here's another clerihew, written by Joseph Coelho, about a very famous scientist. See if you know who they are...



Read the poem:

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

Einstein

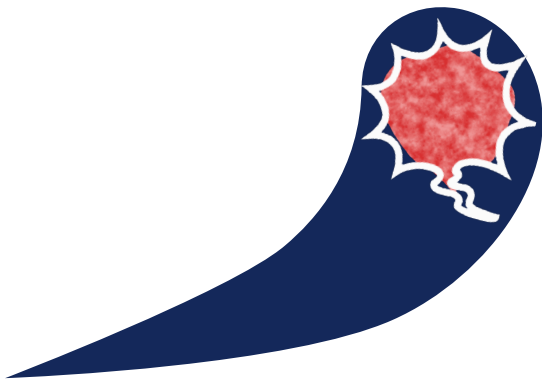
Albert Einstein

Had an explosive mind

And hair to make people scared

But none can ignore the genius of $E=MC^2$

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



Think about the poem:

Find some books or do some research to find out more about Albert Einstein. Any encyclopaedia should contain an entry about him, or you might be able to find a specific book about him in a bookshop or library, like **Albert Einstein** in the Little People, BIG DREAMS series, from Frances Lincoln Children's Books. You can see some pages from the book here: <https://littlepeoplebigdreams.com/book/albert-einstein/> You could also look on an online encyclopaedia, such as this entry in Britannica Kids: <https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Albert-Einstein/353089> What do you think has made him famous enough to be the subject of a poem?

Think about the subject of the poem, Albert Einstein. Have you heard of this person before? What do you already know, or think you know about him? From reading this poem, what questions do you have about him, or what might you like to find out about him?



Look at the language:

- Read the poem again. **Circle or underline any words** that you think might **tell us something specific about Albert Einstein**, his appearance, character or achievements. What **words stand out** to you as you read it? What might these words be **telling us about him**, or how might they **link to the achievements** you read about in your research?
- Look at some of the **specific language choices** Joseph Coelho has made here and consider how these might link to Einstein's achievements. Why do you think he chose to describe him as having **an explosive mind**? Why do you think he made reference to his hair? What does the equation **$E=MC^2$** relate to?
- Think about the cleriheh form that Joseph Coelho introduced you to in this week's video, remembering what he told you about them: **A cleriheh is just four lines. The first line is the person's name you want to write about. The second line rhymes with the first line, and the third line rhymes with the fourth line.** Look at the Einstein poem. Does it **fit the cleriheh form**? Can you see the half-rhyme in the first and second lines, and the rhyme in the third and fourth lines? **Circle the rhyming words** in a different colour.

Perform the poem:

- Think about how to bring the **characteristics and achievements** of Albert Einstein to life in a performance of the poem. How can you **use your voice** in different ways to **bring out the meaning** behind the language choices and how these link to Einstein's character or achievements? Will some parts be louder or quieter, faster or slower, higher or lower?
- Because of the rhyme patterns, there is a **natural rhythm to the cleriheh form**. **Read it aloud** a few times to find and become aware of this rhythm as you read. How could you **use the rhythm** of the cleriheh form to support your performance?
- The poem plays with words, which makes it **amusing and fun** for the listener. How could you **bring the wordplay** in the poem out in the way you express yourself using your **facial expression and voice** as you read? How will you make sure this **adds to the performance**, rather than detracting from it?



Write your own!

- Consider **someone famous who you could write a clerihew about**. What do you **already know** about this person that could be interesting to share with other people? Take a sheet of paper and **write the person's name** in the middle. Then, **around the outside** write words, phrases, sentences or facts to share **what you already know** about them, including **why you chose them**. Is it because they are clever like Einstein? Or are they skilled or talented in a particular field? Have they done something brave or remarkable? Have they succeeded in the face of adversity?
- Now, **conduct some extra research** about this person, to **build your knowledge** of them. Use reference texts you have already, or from a library or online, being careful to check that **anything you use is credible research**. Look for **trusted sites** like known encyclopaedias, galleries or museums. **Add anything you find interesting** to your sheet of paper in a different colour.
- Now, **try drafting some lines**, remembering the structure of the clerihew form. The **first line is easy as it's just the person's name!** Then try to think of a second line, which **shares something about them** in a line **that rhymes**. If you're finding this tricky, a rhyming dictionary might be useful. If you don't have one of these, you can find one online: <https://www.rhymezone.com/>. **Remember – you could use a half-rhyme too**, as Joseph Coelho did in the original poem. Then try to think of a **third and fourth line that rhyme** too.
- 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 drawing or photograph** of the person you wrote about.

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

Find and explore more clerihews 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.