

Teeny tiny creatures

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 75 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. Special guest, wildlife conservationist, TV presenter and poet Chantelle Lindsay joined Joseph Coelho for this week's poetry prompt. Together they were writing poems about teeny tiny creatures. Here's another poem by Joseph Coelho about a teeny tiny creature that causes big trouble!

Look at the poem:

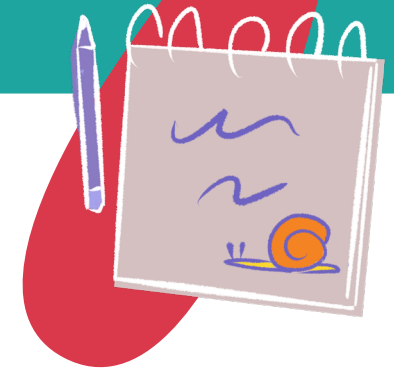
Read the poem aloud. You might do this yourself, with a friend or someone else could read it to you:

Signed by a Snail

In a landscape of poster paint
they gather in the centre,
their droppings betraying their route.
Black at the tank I left open,
multi-coloured in the pile of artworks
where Miss Irwin found them.

Their wet mouths have premasticated the edges,
digested holes in mini Pollocks,
chewed over the next Rothko,
re-arranged a Picasso-in-waiting.

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



Full and sated they retract.
A herd huddled in Year 4's work.
Silvered slime trails webbing the brush strokes.
Each painting graffiti'd in the course of a night.
Signed by a snail.



Think about the poem:

Consider the poem you just heard or read. What was the story behind the poem? What did the snails do? When did they do this? Where does this take place?

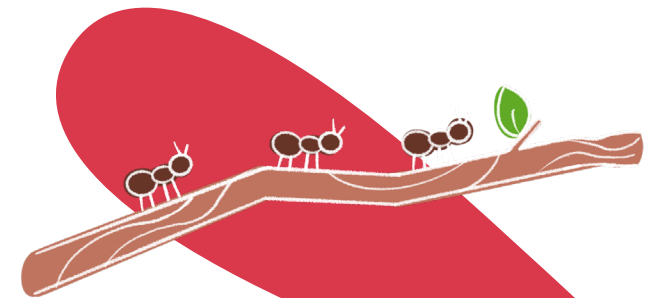
Re-read the poem again. What did the poem tell you about snails? Did you find out anything about them that you didn't know before?

Look at the language:

- Read the poem again. **Circle or underline words or phrases that tell you about the snails or their behaviour.** What kinds of words are these? Are they verbs that describe their actions like '**gather**', adjectives that describe them like '**full**', or noun phrases that describe something about them like '**silvered slime trails**'? Were there any words you didn't know the meaning of? Are there any words that you haven't heard before? What do you think they might mean? What makes you think this? **Use a dictionary**, either a physical one if you have one to hand, or an online one like: <https://kids.britannica.com/kids/browse/dictionary> to confirm the meaning of any words you are unsure of.
- Look at the **specific words that describe what the snails did** to the children's artworks: '**premasticated**', '**digested**', '**chewed**'. Did you know that snails ate paper before reading this poem? You can find out more about this in this news story from ITV: <https://www.itv.com/news/westcountry/2015-11-24/snail-mail-womans-post-eaten-by-hungry-critters>.
- You might also want to **find out more about the artists** mentioned: Jackson '**Pollock**', Mark '**Rothko**' and Pablo '**Picasso**'.

Perform the poem:

- Think about **how to best convey the story of the snails' adventures** that's told in the poem. How might you show this in a performance of the poem? How will you bring out the actions and behaviours of the snails? Will some parts be louder or quieter, faster or slower, higher or lower? How will you pace your performance or use facial expression to bring out the emotion or tell the story? 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**. What did they think was most effective about your performance?



Write your own!

- Take some time to **go outside and look for teeny tiny creatures**. Take a piece of paper with you. When you spot one, really closely observe their characteristics and behaviours. What do they look like? What are they doing? Do they have any special traits? **Write down as much information about what you see as possible**. You might also find it useful to sketch a picture of them.
- Take some time to **think about how to write about the creature in a poem of your own**. Will you focus on what the creature did in the time you were observing them? What they looked like? Interesting behaviours that they displayed?
- Think about the language Joseph Coelho used in the original poem, for example, verbs, adjectives and noun phrases that give a clear picture of the snails and their behaviour. **What words best describe the appearance, traits, actions and behaviours of your tiny creature?** Will you make these into a story as Joseph Coelho did in his original poem?
- When you're happy with what you have drafted, **write it out in your best handwriting or type it up** to share with someone else. When you've finished, you may also want to **illustrate your poem** with a drawing of your creature.



Find all Poetry Prompts as well as more information about Joseph Coelho at 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.