

Poetry Prompts: Week 22

World Book Day

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 22 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. This week, the Poetry Prompt celebrated World Book Day. Here's another poem by Joseph Coelho that talks about the power of books on our lives.



Read the poem:

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

Books Have Helped Me

**Books have more images between their words
than any smart phone could hold.
More flavours than a thousand jelly beans.
More lives for you to live
than any computer game.**

Books have helped me.

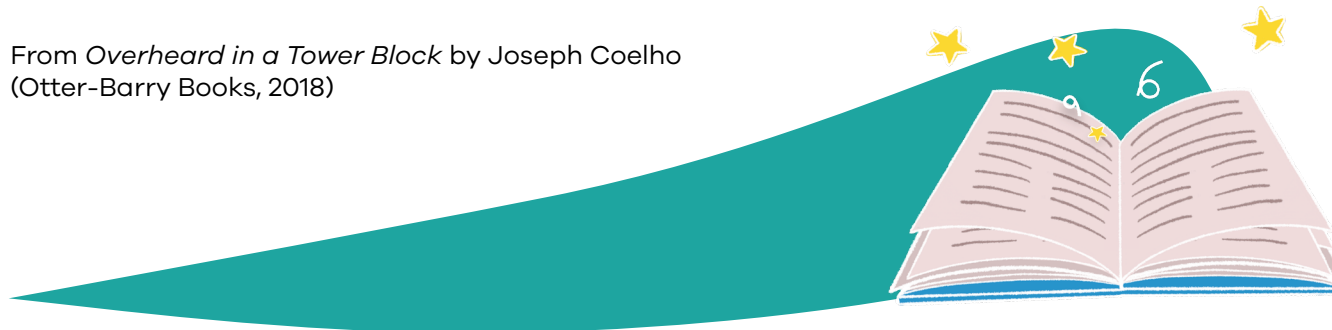
**I've read about characters
who have laughed, cried and sighed like me.**

**Characters who have battled
monsters larger than any I could imagine.**

**Characters who have travelled distances longer
than there are miles between me and the sun.**

**When I thumb through a book
their pages whisper to me
that I'll be all right.**

From *Overheard in a Tower Block* by Joseph Coelho
(Otter-Barry Books, 2018)



Think about the poem:

Think about the title Joseph Coelho has chosen for the poem. Why do you think he might have chosen this title? What other thoughts or feelings does it give us, both about books and about the narrator of the poem?

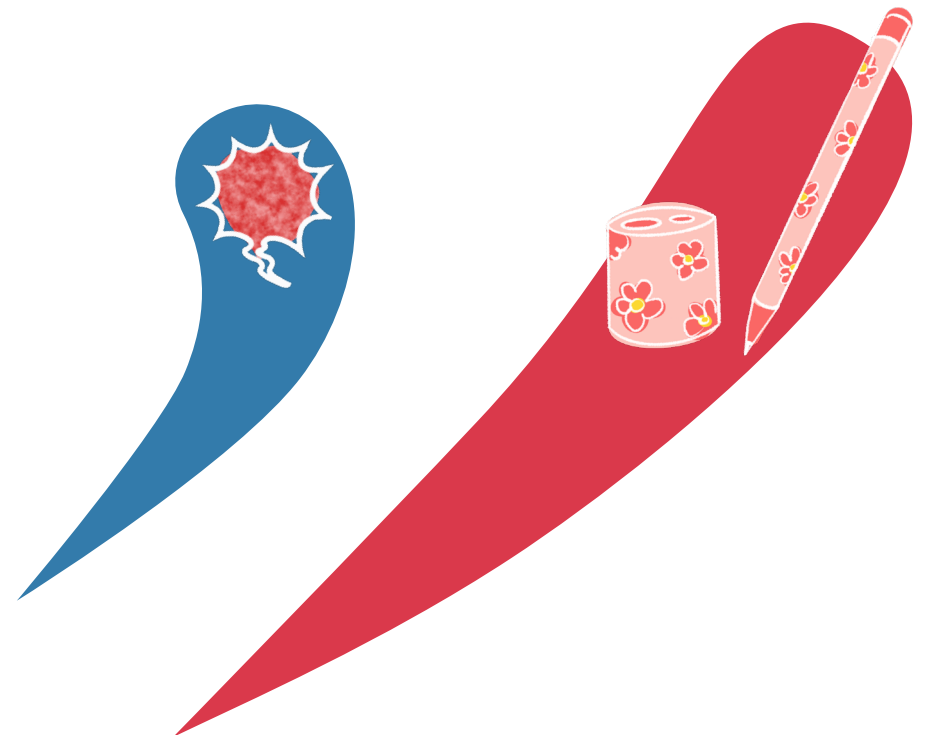
Consider the meaning of the poem and what the narrator, or 'I' in the poem is telling you. What do you think the poem tells you about them and their relationship with books? What have they chosen to illustrate that books are better than? Why do you think these specific things have been chosen?

Look at the language:

- **Read the poem again.** What does it make you **think about**? How does it make **you feel**? What makes you think or feel this way? **Circle or underline any words or phrases** that evoke particular thoughts or feelings for you. What is it about these particular words or phrases that **evokes these thoughts or feelings** in you?
- Consider **your own relationship with books**. Do you feel the same way about books as the narrator or differently? Do you like to read? If yes, **what is it you like about reading**? What are **your favourite books or other texts** to read? **Why** is this? If you feel differently, what is it that **stops you reading**? Do **you prefer** some of the things that Joseph Coelho compares books with, like going on a smartphone or playing video games?
- Take a **piece of paper and fold** it in half so that it looks like an open book. On the **first side** of the page, write down words and phrases to **describe your immediate feelings about books and reading** and on the **second side**, write down what it is exactly that you **love about reading and about particular books**, or what you **don't like**, or what **stops you from reading**. Close the pages together and turn to what would be the front cover. Write the word **Books** and then consider **how you might finish the sentence** to describe your own relationship with books, as the narrator did with the title **Books Have Helped Me**.

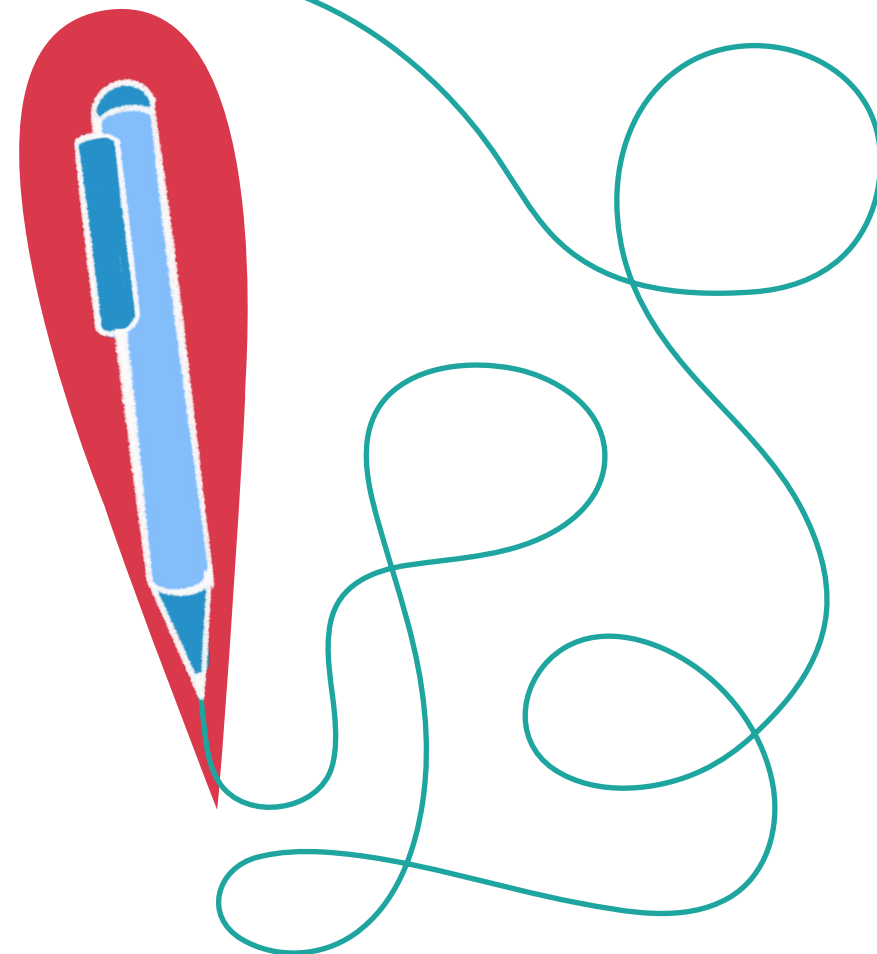
Perform the poem:

- Think about how to **bring the narrator's enthusiasm** for books and reading to life **in a performance** of this poem. How can you **use your voice in different ways** to bring out the narrator's feelings throughout the poem? Will some parts be louder or quieter, faster or slower, higher or lower? How will you **tell the stories** of the characters described in your performance? How will you **pace your performance** to weave the excitement and contemplation together?
- **Rehearse your performance** a few times until you are happy with it, then **perform it to someone else**. What sense did **your audience get about books** and reading from the way you performed the poem? What did they think you did that was **most effective**?



Write your own!

- Think about how you might bring across **your own feelings about books and reading** your own poem. Go back to the **ideas you put to paper** before and try to think about the overall **feeling you want to capture** to express how you feel about books and reading. Perhaps it's a positive relationship like the narrator in this poem, or perhaps you find reading difficult and you want to express a different kind of feeling in your poem to **try to express why**. Perhaps you have favourite books or maybe you can't find the kind of books you really want to read.
- Look at the **initial thoughts and feelings you wrote** and start to **craft these into some lines and verses** that express your feelings to others. Look at how Joseph Coelho has **sometimes kept lines short** and to the point, and has **sometimes expanded** on ideas in longer lines and verses. **Try this in your own writing** and see what effects and feelings you can create.
- When you've finished, **try reading your poem aloud** to explore how to **use your voice and any actions** to bring out your thoughts and feelings in a performance. Think about **how you used your voice in performing the original poem**, to give you ideas for performing your own.



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 books and reading 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.