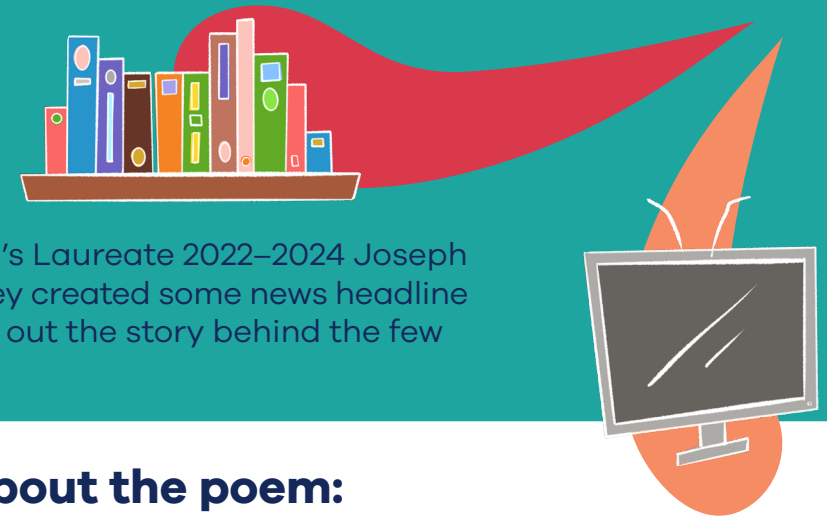


Poetry Prompts: Week 43

News headline

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 43 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. In this week's poetry prompt, Joseph Coelho was joined by Chris Smith. They created some news headline poems together. In this poem by Joseph Coelho, we're going to see if we can work out the story behind the few words we are given in the poem that report the action...



Read the poem:

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

Caught

Our guilty knees shake.
Footsteps down the corridor.
"But it wasn't me."

From *Overheard in a Tower Block* by Joseph Coelho
(Otter-Barry Books, 2017)

Think about the poem:

Consider the poem you just read. What sense of the story do you get from the words you read or heard? What do you think happened? Who do you think might have been involved?

Think about the one-word title of this poem. What image or thoughts does this place in your mind? What does it make you think about the characters involved? What do you think they were '**caught**' doing? Who do you think '**caught**' them?

Think about the poem from your own perspective. Have you ever been caught doing something you shouldn't have been? Or have you ever caught someone doing something they shouldn't have? What happened? How did it feel? How did you resolve it?



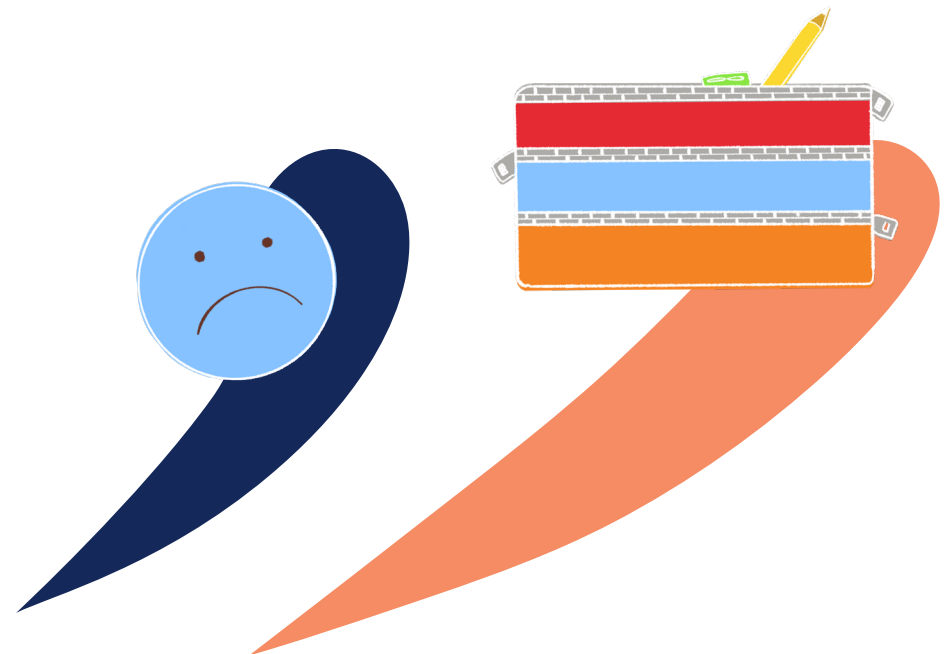
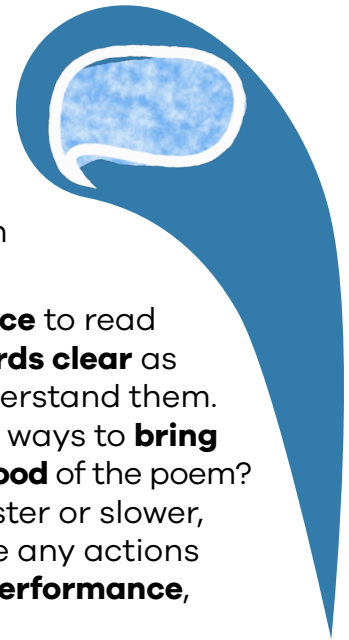


Look at the language:

- Listen to the poem being **read again**. Each word in the short three lines has been **chosen carefully** to paint a picture of this moment. What do you **think about and feel** as you read the words again? What makes you think or feel these things?
- Read the words **again to yourself**. What words and phrases in the poem make the **most impact** on you or make you think or feel certain things about the **situation or the people** involved in it? **Circle or underline these**. Look at some of these **phrases again** and **think about what they mean**. What does the choice of the word '**guilty**' make **you think or feel**? Why do you think **their knees were shaking**? **Whose footsteps** do you think came down the corridor? Where do you think **this corridor was**? Who do you think is saying, "**But it wasn't me**"? Why do you think they have chosen these words? Do you **believe them**?

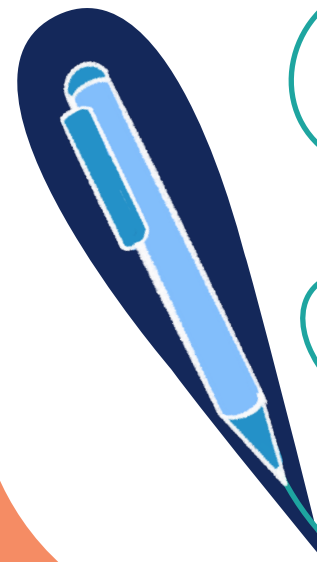
Perform the poem:

- Think about how you might **bring this moment** and **the story behind it 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!

- Think about how you might be able to **use words to report on an event** you've experienced **in real life**. It might be an event that was **surprising, joyful, celebratory, or full of guilt and intrigue** like the one in Joseph Coelho's poem above. If you're struggling to think of an idea, you could **take a story from the printed or TV news** as your inspiration.
- Picture this **event in your imagination**. You may even want to **draw it** to take you inside the moment. Consider **what was happening**, how anyone involved was feeling and **what made them feel this way**.
- Think about how the **title of the original poem** worked similarly to a **news headline to capture our interest** and intrigue as readers. We immediately want to know **who or what was caught**, what they were **caught doing** and **who caught them**. Can you think of a **one-word title** that does the same thing **linked to the event** you want to write about?
- The beauty of the original poem is that it **makes us do lots of the thinking** about what might have happened. It uses **very few words** to **paint a picture** of the event, making us **think or feel a certain way** about it. What **words or phrases** might you choose to use about the event you experienced? How will you **show how the people involved are feeling**? Will anyone say anything? What will they say?
- First, **jot down all your initial ideas**, then look at **how to work these up** into lines. You might want to explore whether you want to make your **poem as short** as the original poem or if **you will expand and give more detail**.
- When you have a draft of your poem, **read it aloud to check it flows** and **makes sense**, then **type it up or write it out** in your best handwriting to **share with others**.
- You might also want to **perform it** to see what it makes an **audience think or feel** as they hear the words.



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

Find and explore more poetry 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.