

Poetry Prompts: Week 62

Kindness

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 62 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. In this week's poetry prompt, Joseph Coelho was exploring acts of kindness, writing a poem about different ways of being kind to others. Sometimes, however, people aren't always kind to each other. If you haven't been kind to someone, or someone hasn't been kind to you, it's always important to reflect on this, and to consider what might be done to make this right. Sometimes it's as simple as the person who hasn't been kind realising the impact of their actions and saying sorry, as Joseph Coelho shows in this poem.



Look at the poem:

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

Sorry

**I was a bit mean to a friend
I said a few things to offend
if I can, then I must
re-sow this lost trust
and pray that our friendship can mend.**

From *The Girl Who Became a Tree* by Joseph Coelho
(Otter-Barry Books, 2020)

Think about the poem:



Consider the poem you just heard or read. What happened in the poem? What do you think might have led up to this moment? How do you think the narrator was feeling in this moment?

Re-read the poem again. What does it make you think about? How does it make you feel? What makes you feel this way? Think about the connections you could make with real-life experiences. Has there ever been a time when you or someone else haven't been kind to someone, or someone hasn't been kind to you or someone else around you? What led up to this? How do you think each person felt? How was the situation resolved? How do you think each person was left feeling?



Look at the language:

- This is a short poem, where the words are chosen very carefully to give us a window into a specific moment and the feelings of the narrator involved. **Re-read the poem again and circle or underline any words that show you that the narrator really is sorry for what they have done.** Which words show how strongly they feel about the need to put things right?
- You might have noticed the modal verbs '**can**' and '**must**', and the precise choice of the verb '**pray**'. What do **these words show us about the narrator's feelings**, without Joseph Coelho having to use a word to directly describe their emotion?
- Joseph Coelho has also chosen to use rhyme in this poem. **Using two coloured pens or pencils, underline words that rhyme in the same colour.** What do you notice about the way these words are spelled? Are the spelling patterns in the rhyming parts of the word the same or different? What part of the word '**friend**' might be easy to miss when you spell it? Can you think of any ways to help you or others remember how this word is spelled?

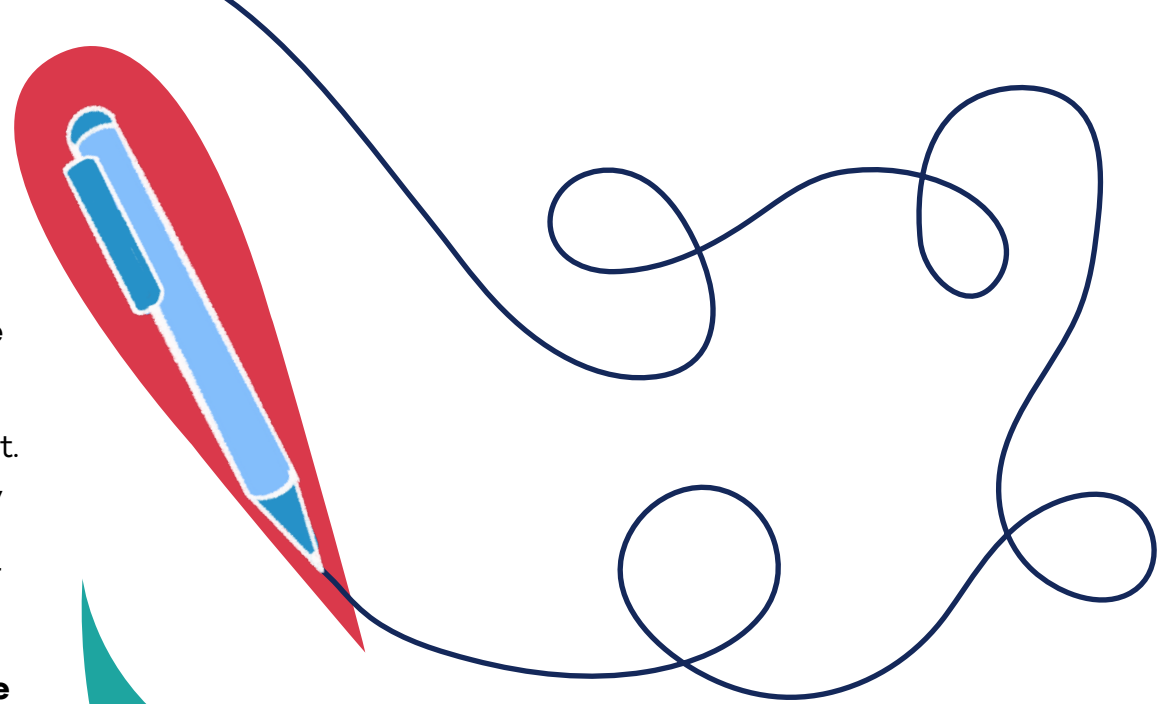
Perform the poem:

- To perform the poem well, **you will need to be able to use your voice, facial expression and body language to share what the narrator is thinking or feeling in this moment.** How might they act or speak or act if they know they have done something wrong? How might you use your voice to share their determination to put things right? How will this affect the pace of your performance? **How might you draw on this as you perform?** Will some parts be louder or quieter, higher or lower, faster or slower? Consider the verbs used in the poem. These might direct you in how you choose to use your voice or in considering actions to include. 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 sense did your audience get about this moment from the way you performed the poem? What did they think you did that was most effective?



Write your own!

- Writing a poem can help us make sense of experiences and express our thoughts and emotions. When writing poetry, we can write by drawing on our own direct experience or from things that we have seen – either in real life or in a book, film or TV programme. **Take some time to consider a time when someone has felt guilty about something they have done, and think about the internal thoughts** they might have as they work out how to put it right.
- In the original poem, **we never find out what was actually said, or what happened when the narrator said sorry.** The whole poem is focussed on the narrator realising their actions and the possible consequences and deciding how to put it right in a small amount of words. **Think carefully how you can use your words as carefully to take us inside a moment in the same way.** You might, for example, choose to show your narrator's determination using modal verbs, like '**can**' and '**must**', as Joseph Coelho did.
- When you have drafted your poem, read it again and **look at how you are showing the narrator's feelings rather than telling your audience.** Remember that Joseph Coelho never used any words to directly describe his narrator's feelings, the other words showed us this.
- Think about whether you need to add or change anything before **writing it out in your best handwriting or typing it up for someone else to read.** What sense of your narrator did your audience get? Could they tell how they were feeling from your words?



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

Find and explore more poems about feelings 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.