

Poetry Prompts: Week 36

Plastic Pollution

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 36 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. The focus for this year's World Environment Day is on Plastic Pollution. The poem below is a riddle linked to this subject, written by Joseph Coelho. A riddle is a type of word puzzle where ambiguous clues to an object or person's identity are offered, challenging the reader to puzzle over what the subject is and to find the answer. See if you can work out the answer, looking carefully for the clues that might help you!

Read the poem:

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

Near You

I'm clear when I'm empty
see-through when I'm full.
My insides taste of nothing
yet you want me.
Need me!
I'm full of leaks and gulps.
my brothers choke the oceans.

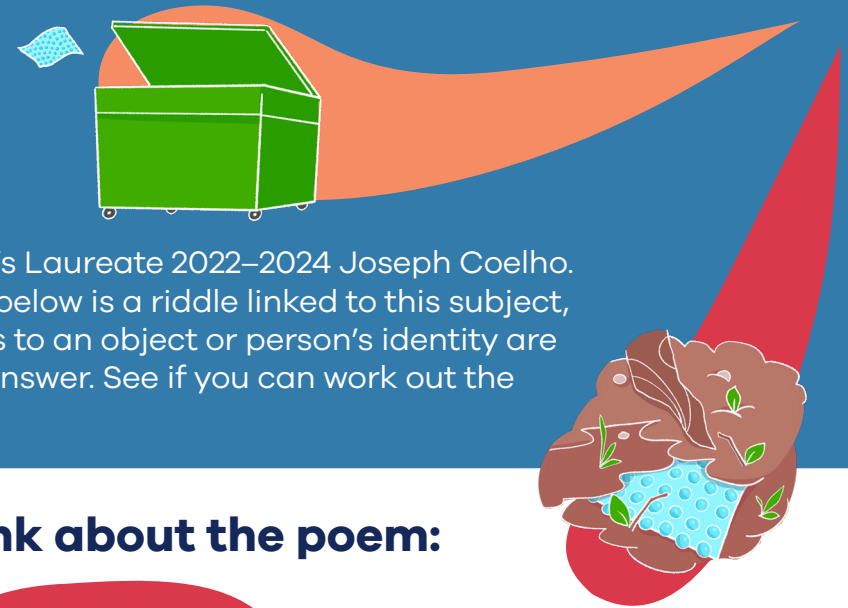
From *Poems Aloud* by Joseph Coelho
(Wide Eyed Editions, 2020)

Think about the poem:

Think about the riddle you just read or heard. What do you think it was about? What clues were there about the subject of the riddle?

Read the riddle once more. What did it make you think about? How did it make you feel? What made you feel this way?

Consider the title of the riddle, **Near You**. Why do you think Joseph Coelho might have chosen this as the title? What might he be trying to say about the subject of plastic pollution?





Look at the language:

- **Read the riddle again** for yourself. Look again at each individual line and think about what the line is **specifically telling you about the water bottle**. What does a line like '**see-through when I'm full**' mean? What is a water bottle usually filled with? What do we know about water? **What makes this a good clue?**
- Look at some of the **language choices** Joseph Coelho has made in the poem. Some of the words have **similar meanings** but are chosen for **specific reasons**. What is the **difference** between '**clear**' and '**see-through**'? Why do you think Joseph has chosen '**clear**' for the first line? Does this word have **more than one meaning** which makes it fit here?
- Think about the **other messages** in the riddle. What is the water bottle narrating the riddle **trying to say to the reader**? How does the **message change** throughout the poem? Which lines are **persuading the reader** to use the bottle and which are **discouraging them** from using it?
- **Re-read the final line** of the poem. What **feeling** does this line leave you with?

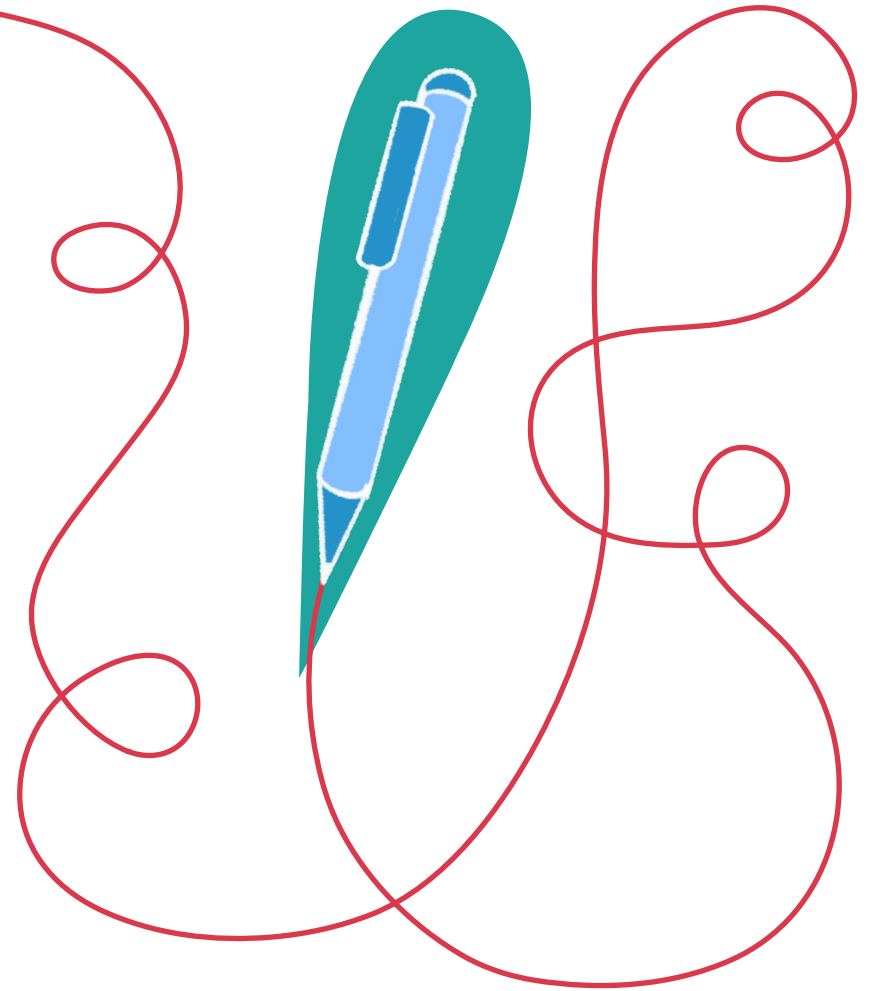
Perform the poem:

- Consider how you could bring the character of the **water bottle to life in a performance** of the riddle for an audience. How will you use your **voice, your facial expressions and your body language** to show the bottle's character? How will you **change** from **persuading your audience** that they need you to **discouraging them** from using you? 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 were they **left feeling** about the bottle? Was this **what you wanted** them to feel? Was it the **feeling that you think Joseph Coelho wanted** to leave his audience with?



Write your own!

- Think about how you might **write your own riddle or poem about an aspect of plastic pollution**. You could write a riddle about **a reusable bottle**, persuading a reader that they are **a better choice**, you might write about another **disposable plastic product** that is readily available and easily disposed of, **causing pollution** like the water bottle, such as a plastic bag.
- Consider the **message or feeling you want to leave your audience with**. How can you **convey this** to them? Will you **choose a powerful closing sentence** like Joe did?
- Think about the **type of poem** you want to write. If you want to write a **riddle**, how will you make the **clues cryptic** enough so that the audience don't guess what your riddle is about too easily? What can you tell them that **suggests enough to help them?** You might choose to **write about the subject in a different way**, using some of the **forms explored in the other poetry prompts**. Will you **follow a rhyme pattern?** Will you **write in free verse?** The **form is up to you**, the important thing is that your **reader is left with a clear message** about plastic pollution and the **right emotions** to think carefully about the subject for themselves.



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

Find and explore more about riddles and other poetic forms and devices 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.