



# Reading poems in different voices

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 10 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. In this week's Poetry Prompt, Joseph Coelho focussed on reading poems in different voices. Here's another poem by Joseph, in which the way you use your voice to read the poem is really important to enhance the listener's understanding of the subject, mood and atmosphere.

### Read the poem:

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

### To the Countryside

THE BEEPING OF THE TRAFFIC  
BEEPBEEBEEP!

Roars in our ears.

THE BELCHING OF THE FACTORIES  
CLUNKCLUNKCLUNK!

Shudders in our ears.

THE HUFFING OF THE PEOPLE  
HUFFHUFFHUFF!

Mumbles in our ears.

As we leave  
the roaring, shuddering, mumbling city  
behind us.

The whizz of the motorway cars  
weee-ooowww-weee-ooowww-weee-ooowww  
hums in our ears.

The whoosh of crops in the field  
swish-swish-swish  
plays in our ears.

The pebble-roll of the sea on the shore  
hushes in our ears.

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

As we play the hum of hushes of...  
noise no more  
noise no more  
noise no more  
in the countryside.



### Think about the poem:

What does the poem  
make you think about?  
How does it make you  
feel? What makes you  
feel this way?

Have you ever been to  
a city before? What was it  
like? What did you see and  
hear while you were there?  
What did it feel like to be  
there? Have you been to the  
countryside or seaside? What  
was that like? What did you  
see and hear while you were  
there? What did it feel like  
to be there?

### Look at the language:

- Read the poem again and **circle or underline any words** that describe the different sounds in the poem. **What do these sound words mean to you?** How might you make these sounds using **only your voice?** Are they loud or quiet?
- Think about the whole poem. **What do you notice about the sounds** at the start and end of the poem? How does this **change the mood and atmosphere?**
- Think about what you have heard and read in the poem and your own experience of being in a city or in the countryside. **What are the similarities and differences between these environments?**

## Perform the poem:

- **Read the poem again.** Look again at how the **sounds, mood and atmosphere change** from the beginning of the poem to the end. Use this to help you to think about how you might perform the poem. How will you use your **voice, facial expressions and actions** to convey the change? Where can you make your voice louder or quieter? Where might be good to **speed up or slow down**? How will you make sure any facial expressions or actions **add to your performance**, rather than distract from it?
- **Rehearse until you are happy** with how it sounds, then **perform the poem** to someone else or record your performance to watch back for yourself. Did you manage to show the change in the **sounds, mood and atmosphere** in your performance? Is there anything you might do differently?

## Write your own!

- **Think about places that you have been** that are loud and quiet. They could be really local to you, like comparing the playground with the library, or you might think broader, like Joseph Coelho did in the original poem, comparing the city with the countryside.
- Make a note of all the things you might **hear in these two environments**. Now try to think of **words that describe the sounds** these make and how you might write these.
- Take some time to **put these ideas into a poem** which describes the journey from one place to the other. Consider how you'll **lay the poem out** on the page, how you can **write the words to describe the sounds you hear** along the way and how you'll break lines and verses, **looking back to the original poem for ideas**.
- When you've finished, **try reading your poem aloud** to explore how to **use your voice to bring out the mood and atmosphere** of the places described and the journey between them.

Find all Poetry Prompts as well as more information about Joseph Coelho at [booktrust.org.uk/childrens-laureate](https://booktrust.org.uk/childrens-laureate)

Explore a range of children's poems that can be learnt and performed on CLPE's website.

This sequence of activities was designed in collaboration with CLPE. CLPE is a UK 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](https://clpe.org.uk).