

Animal poems

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 49 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. In this week's poetry prompt, Joseph Coelho explored how to write poems about different animals, using different poetic forms and devices, like kennings and rhyme. This next poem by Joseph uses rhyme to draw attention to the name of the animal. I wonder if this is a creature you've heard of or seen before...?

Look at the poem:

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

Aye-Aye

I once saw an aye-aye
such a creepy little aye-aye
staring at me with her eye-eye.
I left with a quick bye-bye.

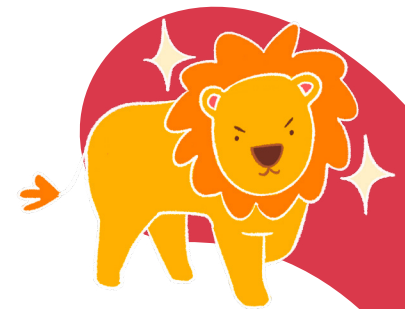
Around every corner there's that aye-aye
she's following me, but why-why?
such a creepy little aye-aye
I wonder if she's a spy-spy?

I run around town as I try-try
to lose this private eye-eye
but wherever I go she's nearby-by
that creepy little aye-aye.

From *Smile Out Loud* by Joseph Coelho
(Wide Eyed Editions, 2022)

Think about the poem:

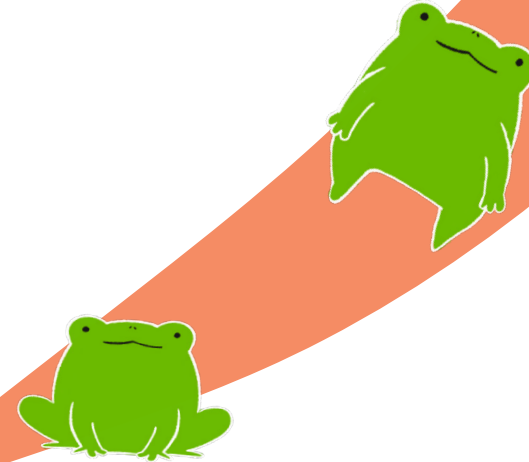
Take some time to consider the animal you just heard or read about. Have you ever heard of or seen an aye-aye before? If you have, what do you already know about it? If you haven't, what do you think you might know about it from the poem? What do you think it looks like? How do you think it behaves?



Watch this video clip, from CBBC's *Deadly 60*, to find out more about this fascinating creature: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/watch/p0152r2y> What more do you learn about the aye-aye? How would you describe it – both how it looks and how it behaves? How does this link to the way in which Joseph Coelho has described it in the poem?

Look at the language:

- Read the poem again. Look carefully at the words and phrases that Joseph Coelho has used to bring this animal to life. Circle or underline any words that tell us something specific about this creature - either how it looks or how it behaves. You might notice adjectives, like '**creepy**' or verbs, such as '**staring**'. What do these word choices make us think or feel about the aye-aye?
- Now, look at the images that Joseph Coelho has put in our mind by making comparisons with the aye-aye and other things, like a '**spy**' and a '**private eye**'. What do these comparisons make us think or feel about the aye-aye?

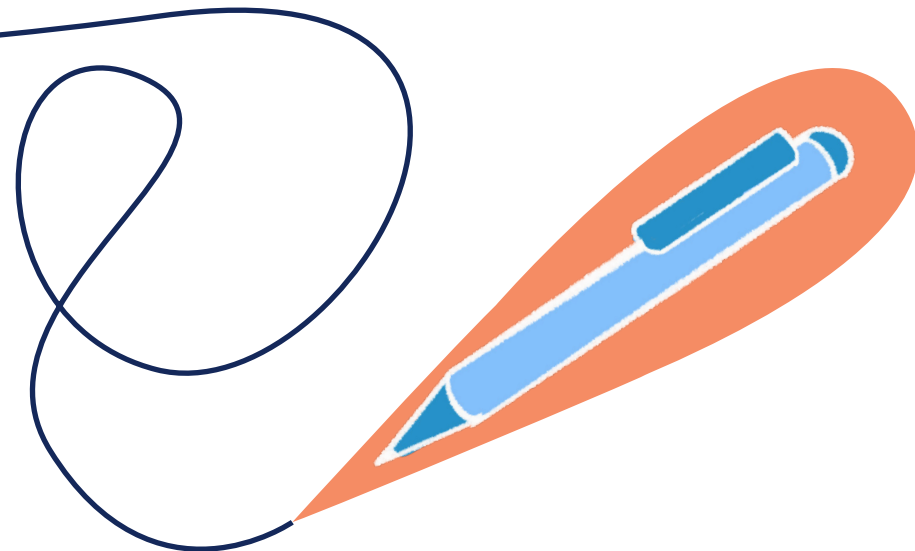


Perform the poem:

- Think about how to perform this poem to give an audience a sense of what this creature is like. How will you create a sense of **atmosphere** to share the habitat of the creature? How will you **use your voice** to describe the moment of watching the aye-aye so that your audience know **what they are like** and **how they behave**? Will some parts be **louder** or **quieter**, **faster** or **slower**, **higher** or **lower**? How will you **pace your performance** to build a sense of the moment described? 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 sense did your audience get about this creature from the way you performed the poem? What did they think you did that was **most effective**?

Write your own!

- Now, **think about an animal or creature** that particularly interests you. It might be a mammal, a fish, an insect – any creature you like. You may want to **draw a picture** of the creature so that you can picture it clearly, or look up some photographs or a video of the creature. **What words or phrases come to mind** to help you describe this creature for someone else? **What does it look like? How does it behave? What characteristics does it have?**
- Write down as many words and phrases to **describe the creature** and what it is like on a piece of paper. You might make comparisons to this creature with something else, like Josep Coelho did with a spy and a private eye to convey the secrecy of this creature. You might **think of adjectives to describe what it is like, or verbs to describe its movements and behaviours**. Think about which of these words and phrases you might be able to use in a poem of your own.
- Think about how you might bring across a sense of awe and wonder about the creature, and **how you feel** as you see it, as Joseph did in his 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 want your reader to feel about this creature. Then consider what you could say about the moment to **capture the experience** for someone else reading your poem. You might want to **include some rhyming phrases**, linked to your creature's name, like Joseph Coelho did in the original poem. What words will you use to **enable your reader to be able to gain a sense of the creature?** What might you compare it to? How will you **share the feelings you have about it** to someone else, without using emotion words directly?
- When you've had a go at writing, **read it through to yourself**, to check it makes sense and to **see what feelings you've created**, then **type or write it up** in your best handwriting to show or **perform to someone** else. **What did they learn or feel** about the creature from your poem?



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

Find and explore more poems 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.