

## Poetry Prompts: Week 5

# Halloween

This sheet is to accompany the fifth Poetry Prompt video featuring Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. This week, Joseph describes some of the other wonders of this time of year, including a reference to Halloween – see if you can spot it!



### Read the poem:

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

### October

The October leaf fall  
was full of fireworks.

The sweet chestnuts gave up their fruits  
but cloaked their spines  
in leaves,  
turning the grass outside our flats  
into a field of trick n' treat,  
nut or spine.

Mother took me toddling  
between the trunks  
as the October sun shone cold.

Wrapped in a jacket of missing buttons,  
neck scarved in winds,  
hands gloved in nips.

The leaves were piled  
bonfire high  
whizzing russets, shooting oranges, exploding yellows  
that she scooped  
in armfuls  
and cascaded over me  
in a dry-leaf firework display  
of love.

From *A Year of Nature* by Joseph Coelho (Quarto, 2019)

### Think about the poem:

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

What images of October did the poem put into your mind? What did it tell you about the weather, the seasonal changes that are happening and what the people in the poem were doing and feeling?

If you were to illustrate the poem, how would you do this? Did one particular part catch your attention, or will you try to include more of the things described? Gather any art materials you have available to create some of your ideas.

### Look at the language:

- Read the poem again and **circle or highlight any words** and phrases that are particularly effective in **making you feel** a certain way or that paint a vivid image in your mind.
- Look back at all the words and phrases you have circled. What do you think it is about these words and phrases that are effective? **Can you see any verbs** that describe how things behave? Can you find adjectives that add detail to descriptions?
- The poem is **written in the past tense**, as if the person is looking back on a previous experience. How old do you think they might have been when this memory happened? What makes you think this?

## Perform the poem:

- The language in the poem paints a wonderful picture a particular person's **thoughts, feelings and experiences** of October. How might you convey these feelings in a performance of the poem? How can you use your voice in different ways to bring out the meaning of the words? Can you use **facial expression or actions** to emphasise this? Will some parts be louder or quieter, faster or slower, higher or lower? How will you make sure your actions **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**. Ask them how the performance made them feel. **Talk to them** about this time of year and what their favourite things about it are.

## Write your own!

- Now, take some time to **think about your favourite things** about this time of year. Do you have a **specific memory** that you can draw back on, as in the original poem? **Make a note of all the things you associate with October**. Look out of the window to see what the weather is like, and what is happening in the environment, take time to remember and think about the activities or special days you've been involved with in this month.
- Now **look back on your notes** and think about what might be good to explore as a poem. It might be one specific event, like Halloween, or it might be a memory of being out in the environment at this time of year.
- **Think about the language** you liked in the original poem. You might choose to use verbs to describe how things behave or words to describe how things look or make you feel to **help paint a picture in the mind** of your reader or to evoke particular thoughts or feelings.
- Think about **how you will present your poem** on the page. Where will you break the lines? Will there be more than one verse? You could also **have a go at illustrating your poem**.

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

You can explore a range of children's poems like this 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 [www.clpe.org.uk](http://www.clpe.org.uk).