

Poetry Prompts: Week 15

Giving voices to objects

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 15 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. This week's Poetry Prompt was all about giving voices to objects. Here's another poem written by Joseph Coelho, which gives a voice to an object that will be very familiar:

Read the poem:

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

PHONE

Stop shouting at me!
You really know how to press my buttons!
You're a noisy stink breath.
A constant giggle tummy-tickler.
My home in your pocket
dials up my anger.
You make me vibrate with fury.

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

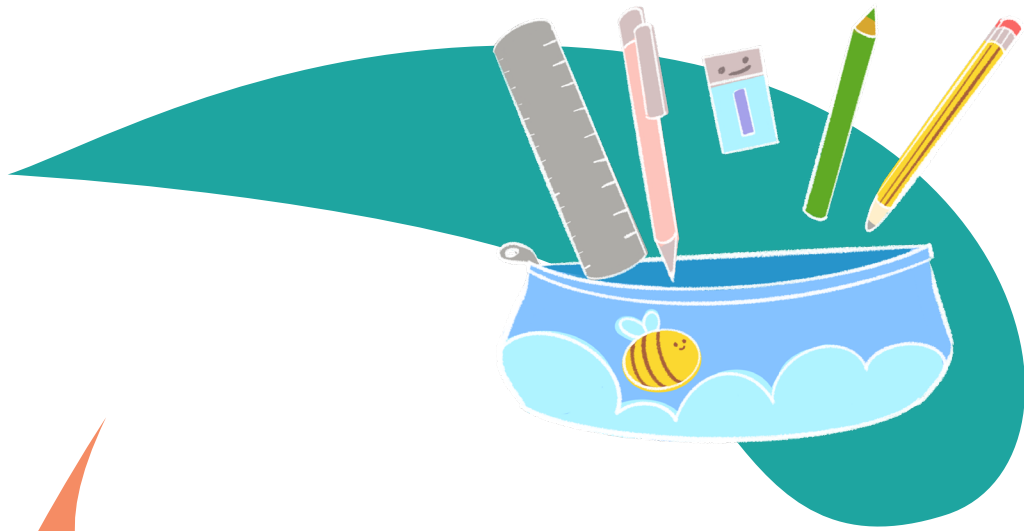
Think about the poem:

Think about the character you just heard about in the poem. What do you think you know about them? What do you think they are like? How would you describe them to someone else? What in the poem makes you think these things about them?



Think about all the different things you can do with a phone. Make a list of every action you might do. How do you think people feel about their phones? Why do they feel this way? How is this different to how the phone feels here about its human owner?



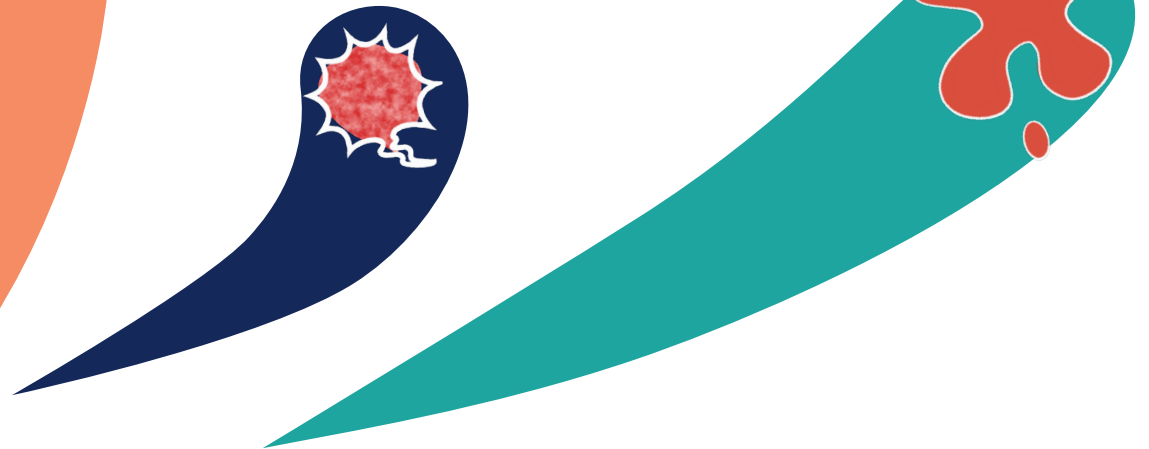


Look at the language:

- Read the poem again and **circle or underline any words or phrases** that **describe the anger** the phone feels. Why do you think Joseph Coelho might have decided to make the phone an angry character? Do you think it would be nice to be a phone? Why or why not?
- Re-read the poem again and **think about the different actions** that the phone is referring to in every line. Which phrases or lines do you think are the most effective? Why do you think this is?
- Re-read the poem one more time. **What do you see in your mind's eye** as the poem is read? **How do you picture the phone?** What does it look like? What is it doing? How might you **capture the emotions** it is feeling? Gather together some paper, pencils and colouring pencils, crayons or pens and **have a go at creating an illustration** to accompany this verse.

Perform the poem:

- The poem **shares the personal reflections and expressions** of a character. How could you **perform this poem** in a way that brings this **character to life** for an audience, sharing the way they feel? How can you **bring out the personality** of the character that has been created in Joseph Coelho's words?
- Try out **different ways of using your voice** to read the poem. Make sure you **keep your words clear** as you perform, so your audience can understand them. How could you **use your voice in different ways** to bring out the frustration and anger of the character? Will this be at a constant level or will it rise and fall? 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. Could they sense the feelings of the character in your performance? What did they think was **most effective** about your performance? Do they have any suggestions for **how it could be improved?**



Write your own!

- Think about other common **objects you could give a voice to**. You could walk around the room you're in, or somewhere else nearby, looking for objects that might inspire you. Consider how the object is used by other people, how it might behave, or what it might do or say if you brought it to life. What do you think it might say if it could speak? What might it talk about? What kind of personality might it have? How might it feel or behave? Why might it feel or behave in this way?
- You could **start by drawing a picture** of your object, and give it a face, arms and legs to begin to bring it to life. You could then **add things it might think or say** in thought or speech bubbles around the drawing, to begin to give you some ideas for your writing. You could also add descriptions of what this item does or what it is used for.
- When you have some ideas, **start to compose your verse**, writing in the first person as your object. **Think about how punctuation** is used in the original poem to emphasise the feelings of the phone – the first two lines end with an exclamation mark. Could any type of punctuation help emphasise the feelings of your character?
- When you have some ideas on the page **try reading your verse out loud**, taking on the voice of the character you have created, to see how the words sound off the page, whether you've created the right feelings and emotions for your character and how the punctuation supports your reading. Make any edits you feel you need to when you hear how it sounds.
- When you're happy with your poem, **write or type up a final version**. You might also want to **illustrate it with a drawing** of the character you have created.

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

Find and explore more poems which include personification 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.