

Poetry Prompts: Week 8

Similes

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 8 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. In this week's Poetry Prompt, Joseph Coelho focussed on using similes to compare one thing with something else. Here's another poem written by Joseph Coelho in which he uses similes. See if you can hear and see the simile as you listen to and read 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.

I hate spiders

**I hate spiders
with their legs like spines,
bodies like drops of madness,
their webs as inescapable as a maze of
torn net curtains.**

**One day I lost my grandmother's ring,
the one she gave me years ago.
A special ring with a black bead centre
and diamonds like silk.**

**Then I saw it hanging gingerly in a spider's web
right over my bed
as if placed for me to find.**

**I love spiders
with their legs like my grandmother's
knitting needles,
bodies like the beautiful black pearls that
hung around her neck.
Their webs as cocooning as a grandmother's
last hug.**

From *Werewolf Club Rules* by Joseph Coelho
(Frances Lincoln, 2014)

Think about the poem:

When you heard the poem, how did it make you feel? Did you already have a certain feeling about spiders? Did anything in the poem match your own feelings? Did anything make you think differently about them?

Think about the story within the poem. What made the narrator, or the 'I', in the poem feel differently about spiders? Do you know of any other ways in which spiders are useful or helpful to us, or any observations or facts about them which could make people think differently about them?

Look at the language:

- Read the poem again for yourself. This time, **circle or underline the similes in the poem**, where Joseph Coelho **uses 'like' or 'as'** to compare elements of the spider to something else.
- Look carefully at the similes you've found. How do the similes used in the **first verse make you feel about the spider?** What specific words make you feel this way? In the **last verse, do the similes make you feel the same way or differently** about the spider? Why do you think this is?
- Think about the similes Joseph Coelho uses in the last verse. Why do you **think he might have chosen to make the similes here comparisons** to something that connected with the grandmother?

Perform the poem:

- Read the poem again. **Look at how the mood shifts** from the beginning of the poem to the end. Next to the poem, **write words that describe how you think the narrator might be feeling** at different points of the poem.
- Use these words 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 shift in mood? Where can you slow down or speed up, make your voice louder or quieter? 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 narrator's feelings in your performance? Is there anything you might do differently?

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

Write your own!

- Think about **how you could use similes** to share your thoughts and feelings about something. **You might think of something that you either really like, or something that you dislike** to get your ideas started. What is it about this thing that you really like or dislike? What could you compare aspects of it with? You might like a chocolate cake because it's as fluffy as a cloud or you might like a cat because its fur is as soft as silk. You could compare it to something that belongs to someone you love, like in the original poem. The chocolate cake could be as sweet as your mother's smile, or deep, dark brown like your father's eyes. The cat's purr might be as comforting as a lullaby sung by your granny.
- You might then want to **write a longer poem**, exploring how your **thoughts and feelings change** about this thing. What might lead to this change? How would you describe it in the opposite way using simile? The chocolate cake might make you feel sick and the icing might be as sticky as tar. The cat might hiss at you like a snake and show its teeth as sharp as needles.
- **Work up your thoughts and ideas into a poem** on the page, thinking about **how to lay it out** and **how to break the lines** and verses if you choose to make your poem longer.

Learn more about poetic devices, including simile, and see these used in a range of different poems 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.