

Dancing in the Rain by John Lyons (Peepal Tree Press)

John Lyons provides an insight into his Trinidadian childhood in this collection which the judges described as breath of fresh air. He describes the climate, dancing in the warm rain after recognising the signs of a gathering storm in the title poem, contrasting with the cold in England in 'Monica's Winter' and 'Happy Snowman'. Nature comes to life in the words and the pictures drawn by the poet, whether it's the happy hummingbird, the marsupial Trini 'manicou with its pouchy tum', 'Tobago land crabs with a mangrove smell', 'wild and swift' 'nervous and shy agoutis' or the iguana 'this big lizard at large' who 'is talented with camouflage.' There are some striking encounters with ghosts and ghouls from Caribbean folklore such as 'Setting a Trap for Soucouyant', 'Looking for Douennes' and 'The Climbing Skeleton', shown in suitable scary fashion shinning up a tree. Sharing food brings out relationships with family and friends, especially between generations, and is where the poet often writes in the nation language of Trinidad, saying 'How ah love de sugarcake/meh Granny does mek' and 'At home wid meh sticky-mango-juice face,/meh grandma gimmeh ah good lickin/wid ah tamarind switch.'

This collection is shortlisted for the 2016 CLPE Poetry Award.

Overall aims of this teaching sequence.

- To experience poetry as pleasurable and meaningful
- To compare how a common theme is presented in poetry
- To explore the language and style of poetry through talk, performance, visual art, reading and writing
- To learn how to bring out the meaning of a poem through performance
- To learn more about writing poems (as a class, group and individually) based on observation and experience

This teaching sequence is designed for a Year 4 or 5 class.

Overview of this teaching sequence.

This teaching sequence is designed to be delivered over 15 sessions but teachers will want to use their own judgement about the length of time their class will need to spend on each of the sessions. The teaching sequence is split into three sections. The sequence is planned this way so that teachers can explore key themes central to the collection. The collection is a wonderful example of self-expression,

both emotionally and in terms of expressing a sense of identity. The first section therefore explores what we can learn about a poet from reading their poetry and looks at poetry as a means of self-expression. These sessions are designed to explore personal response and expression and to help children understand the different ways in which they can respond to poetry as well as understanding how it can be a vehicle for personal storytelling. Central to many poems in the collection is a sense of cultural identity as well as a strong sense of place. The second section therefore investigates poems in this collection which explore Caribbean culture, with a focus on carnival and calypso music. The final section investigates John Lyons' poems about the natural world and helps children to understand and experience the ways in which he uses language to describe nature and the feelings it inspires. The sequence is designed so that the children's experience of this collection, and their understanding of a poet's voice and use of language, will support them to use similar techniques, poetic devices and wordplay in their own writing.

Teaching Approaches

- Reading aloud
- Booktalk
- Responding to poetry
- Responding to visual imagery
- Visualisation
- Annotating and text marking
- Shared writing

Outcomes

- Art work
- Collaborative poetry
- Individual poetry
- Poetry performance
- Poetry journals
- Poetry anthologies

Exploring Poetic Devices

- Rhythm
- Repetition
- Rhyme
- Imagery
- Onomatopoeia

Cross Curricular Links:

Art:

Throughout the sequence, art is used as a means of visualising and representing real and imagined experiences. Using a range of materials throughout these sessions will be important as well as a focus on specific techniques for observing real objects and representing imagined experiences. Responding to the children's drawings afterwards will allow them to explore the effectiveness of techniques and materials used.

Science:

The focus on Nature in Part 3 of the sequence links to scientific knowledge in Key Stage 2 around the life cycles of plants and animals, work done in science could provide a stimulus for the poetry writing at the end of Part 3.

Geography:

Many of the poems in the collection reflect John Lyons' childhood experience of growing up in Trinidad and Tobago. The sequence could therefore provide a starting point for a cross curricular study of this region. The children could conduct a comparative study in which they compare the human and physical geography of Trinidad and Britain.

Music:

Throughout the sequence children can explore the beat and rhythm of poetry linking this to their existing knowledge of music. The sequence offers opportunity for improvisation and to compose music for a poetry performance. The focus on carnival in section 2 also offers the opportunity to explore calypso music and steel bands.

Links to other texts and resources:

John Lyons' poems for children feature in the following poetry collections:

- *A Caribbean Dozen* edited by John Agard & Grace Nichols. Walker Books (Teaching sequence available: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/resources/teaching-sequences/caribbean-dozen>)
- *Under The Moon and Over the Sea* edited by John Agard & Grace Nichols. Walker Books (The first winner of the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education Poetry Award)
- *Hello New* edited by John Agard. Orchard Books
- *On A Camel to the Moon* compiled by Valerie Bloom. Belitha Press
- *One River Many Creeks* chosen by Valerie Bloom. Macmillan Children's Books

For a more extensive list please visit John Lyons' website:

<http://www.jcmlyons.co.uk/literary.html#litpoems>

Teacher Resources:

- *Let's Do Poetry in Primary Schools! (Teacher's Guide)* by James Carter. A&C Black 2012
- *Hands on Poetry* edited by Sue Ellis with Myra Barrs. Centre for Language in Primary Education 1995
- <https://www.clpe.org.uk/aboutus/news/poetry-primary-schools-what-we-know-works>

Other resources:

- <http://www.jcmlyons.co.uk/index.html> (John Lyons' website)
- <http://www.poetryarchive.org/poet/john-lyons> (about the poet)

Before the Sequence:

Before teaching from this poetry sequence and prior to reading *Dancing in the Rain*, it would be useful to spend time exploring poetry more generally with the children in your class. If this is not part of the whole school ethos, consider immersing the school, and certainly your year group, in a wide range of poetry. Become familiar with CLPE's Poetryline website www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline and other sites that enable the children to watch poets reading their own poems. It is important for the children to see a poet perform a poem as it was intended to be read. Make available collections of poetry books; collections by the same author and anthologies, planning in regular browsing and independent reading time when the children can access the books.

Teaching Sessions:

Section 1: Poetry as a means of self-expression

Session 1: Booktalk

Discussion about books forms the foundations for working with books. The same is true of working with poems. Children need frequent, regular and sustained opportunities to talk together about the books and poems that they are reading as a whole class. The more experience they have of talking together like this the better they get at making explicit the meaning that a text holds for them.

- Begin the session by asking the children to share their favourite poems with each other, encourage the children to bring these poems into class and provide a setting in which they can explore their recommendations, such as in a poetry corner. From this starting point you can begin to explore the poems that the children are drawn to and respond to in the collection *Dancing in the Rain*.
- This will also be a useful starting point for discovering what the children like and dislike about poetry, which poems are their favourites, if they have a favourite author that they turn to when reading poetry and if they read poems outside of the school setting.
- At this point you can therefore explore what the children already know about poetry, not only to inform future planning, but also to address any misconceptions that may arise. Some children for example may think that all poems have to rhyme.
- It is useful at the start of a poetry sequence to debunk the myth that exploring poetry means only deconstructing the use of language in the poem or only looking at the poetic form and devices, as it is also about responding emotionally to a poem and the children need to be encouraged to do this.
- Pick a selection of poems to read aloud from *Dancing in the Rain* that you responded to and that interested you as a reader. Share your thoughts, feelings and responses to the children as a model of how they can join in with discussions about poetry.
- Read the poems aloud again and discuss the children's responses to the poems.
- Here you can use techniques taken from Aidan Chambers' book *Tell Me: Children, Reading & Talk with The Reading Environment* Thimble Press 2011. These questions give children accessible starting points for discussion:
 - *Tell me...was there anything you liked about this poem?*
 - *Was there anything that you particularly disliked...?*
 - *Was there anything that puzzled you?*
 - *Were there any patterns...any connections that you noticed...?*
 - *Do you notice any patterns in the language such as repetition?*
 - *Were there any memorable words or phrases that stood out to you?*
- You may wish to record the children's responses on A3 pieces of paper or on the IWB. You could then add this to an ongoing working wall or poetry display, which the children can continue to add to as the sequence continues.
- Encourage the children to return to the poems individually or in small groups, continuing their

exploration of the poems after the session.

Session 2: Reading aloud

One of the best ways of involving children in poetry is to make a habit of reading aloud to them as often as possible. The experience of being read to is likely to be the real foundation of their knowledge of poetry, and is also going to be a major influence on how they write themselves. Poetry is rooted in word games, word play, song and rhythm, and it's therefore particularly important that it should be heard as well as read.

- In this session the children are going to consider what they can learn about the poet John Lyons from his poems.
- Place the children into mixed ability groups and give the children copies of the following poems:
 - *Granny's Sugarcake*
 - *Street-Wise Pigeons*
 - *Monica's Winter and Happy Snowman*
 - *Crib Walk to Callaloo*
 - *School Dinner Swaps*
- Allow plenty of time for the children to read and discuss the poems. You may want to give the children the same prompts that you used in the previous session so that they can record their likes, dislikes, connections and questions.
- Focus the children to consider what they can find out about John Lyons and his life from the ideas expressed in the poems and to make annotations around the poems. You may also need to give the children opportunities to look up new language.
- Rotate the poems around the groups so they all have an opportunity to respond to the different poems.
- Ask the children to feed back in their groups their responses to the poems; which ones they like best and why, words or phrases they like or that add meaning or feeling, questions they have around the poems and connections with shared or real life experiences.
- Then bring the discussion back to what the children have been able to infer about John Lyons from the poetry. For example, where do they think he is from? Where has he lived? What does he like or enjoy? What was his childhood like?
- John writes on his own website that in his view *'poetry is always the discovery of possibilities in language to express my encounter, through the senses, with the living environment.'* He also writes in the book *A Caribbean Dozen*, that it was *'the desire to relive the adventures in the books I read that led me to write my first story and eventually to become a writer and a poet.'*
- You may want to share these quotes with the children and have a discussion around the reasons why people write poetry. You can also reflect on how authors can capture their own experiences in poems as well as writing about imagined experiences.

- There are also videos available on the Poetryline website in which John Lyons speaks about his writing process and his inspiration for writing. Give the children time to watch the videos and to respond to his comments. Ask the children, did the video confirm or challenge any of your ideas about him?
- At this point the children can also comment on how they feel when they write, why they write, if they write in their own time, if they write poetry, etc. You may want to encourage the children to begin their own poetry journals at this point in the sequence where they can begin to express their thoughts, feelings and experiences through the medium of poetry.

Session 3: Performance

Dramatic poetry performance can be a fruitful way of working with poetry, both in terms of encouraging and eliciting responses from children to the poems they read, and also in providing opportunities for poems to be lifted 'off the page' and brought to life.

- Return to the poems explored in the previous session and in mixed ability groups allocate a poem per group.
- Explain to the children that in this session they are going to prepare a performance of the poem. Discuss with the children the different aspects of poetry performance that enhance the experience for an audience such as tone of voice, intonation, volume, facial expression and gesture.
- Give time for the children to mark up a copy of the text in their groups, rehearse and perform to the class.
- Evaluate the performances together looking at specific performance techniques that brought the poem alive and added effect and meaning to the poem. The children could then go on to create another performance taking on each other's feedback.
- This would work best if the children have a real audience and purpose. For example, you could invite the parallel year group class in to hear their final performance, or other teachers or even their parents. As an alternative, you could go on to video the children's edited performances to share on the class page on the school website.
- To conclude the session, watch the video of John performing the poem *Granny's Sugarcake* on Poetryline www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline. Allow time for the children to enjoy the performance and savour the language. Ask the children to consider how it felt to hear the poet read the poem. What else can we learn about the poet from hearing him read this poem? How did it compare to their performances?

Session 4: Using visual images

In the best books illustration and text work closely together to create meanings. Children are naturally drawn to the illustrations in a book and are frequently far more observant than an adult reader. Children's interest in images and their ability to read them can be developed through carefully planned interventions with an emphasis on talk.

For this session you will need to colour copy the images that accompany the poems in *Dancing in the Rain* and display them somewhere so that it mimics an art gallery. These illustrations have been created by John Lyons and provide an example of different artistic styles and techniques that the children can explore and evaluate.

- Take the children to the 'gallery' that you have set up using the images of the illustrations from the anthology.
- Allow time for the children to explore the gallery. The children could respond to the pictures by writing their thoughts down on paper or on large post it notes.
- Prompt them with some questions to support their exploration. For example, what is it that they think they are seeing? Which of the images do they like the most/least? Do the images remind them of anything they have seen before? What questions do they have about the images?
- Once back in class you could have the same images on the IWB to enable a whole class discussion.
- Talk about the difference between the black and white and colour images. Ask the children which they prefer, when they would use one style and when they would use another and why.
- Now spend time looking at the illustrations in the anthology and consider how they fit in the context of the text. Consider how they are placed next to or within the text and the impact that this has on the reader's experience.
- Record the children's thoughts and responses on the class working wall or poetry display.
- Return to this discussion later in the sequence when the children come to illustrate their own anthologies.

John Lyons is also an artist as well as a writer and his website features examples of his works which you may want to show the children to extend this session. **NB: Some of his work contains adult themes so teachers would need to check all the images for suitability before sharing them with the class.**

Session 5: Creating poetry

After listening to poetry, children may want to write their own poems. Poetic form is often a big obstacle to children who are beginning to write poetry. This is because most ideas of what a poem ought to look like are based on traditional poetry, on its regular verse form and strict rhyme schemes. It is important therefore that children experience a wide repertoire of poetic forms that they can explore and experiment with in their own writing.

- In this session the children can use the poems that they have explored to provide inspiration for their own writing. Encourage the children to use poetry in a similar way to John Lyons; as a means to capture their own experiences and feelings.
- Look again at the poems to consider the ways in which they have been written. You can use the following questions to frame the children's discussion:

- *What type of poem is it?*

- Can you recognise the form of the poem? How is it laid out?
- How does the poem sound to you?
- What does the language of the poem do?
- Do you like any particular words or phrases? Why?
- Does it have rhythm? How does it feel?
- Whose is the voice of the poem?
- What is the theme of the poem?
- What does the poem say to you as a reader?
- Would you like to write a poem like this?

Questions taken from James Carter's *Let's Do Poetry in Primary Schools!* A&C Black 2012

- To begin the writing session you may want to start with asking the children to write alternative titles for the poems that they have examined. Following this you could ask the children to write another verse or two for the poem. Share these and discuss the children's choice of language, voice and structure. Draw attention to the fact that many of the poems are written in the nation language of Trinidad. Encourage the children to use their own languages (if they speak a language other than English) or their regional dialect; can they include this in their poetry to give a sense of their identities?
- The children could then be encouraged to record in writing a memory, or an aspect of life that they would like to remember. For example, they might base their poem on a favourite food made by a special person such as in *Granny's Sugarcake* or foods that evoke certain memories.
- You may want to encourage the children to use the narrative form as narrative poems tell a story, usually about a very specific moment in time. They can be written in rhyme and with strict rhythmic pattern but are most often in free verse.
- For more information about the different poetic forms the children may want to explore please refer to the Poetryline website: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poetic-forms-and-devices>
- Following this, allow the children to spend time refining, re-drafting and editing their work.
- The children could then record their poems adding music or they could illustrate them.

Section 2: Carnival!

Session 6: Visualisation

Asking children to picture or visualise a character or a place from a story or poem is a powerful way of encouraging them to move into a fictional world. Children can be asked to picture the scene in their mind's eye or walk round it in their imaginations. Finally they can bring it to life by describing it in words or recreating it in drawing or painting.

- Read aloud or watch John Lyons performing the poem *Carnival Jumbie* on the Poetryline website. Give the children time to digest what they have heard.
- Re-read the text again or re-watch the video, but this time ask the children to close their eyes and invite them to try to visualise the scene evoked in the poem. Ask the children what they

think the poem is about, what does the poem tell them, show them or make them think about? Is it a memory or a reflection on something? Ask the children what pictures or images they see when they hear the poem read aloud?

- Give the children pieces of paper and appropriate and available art materials, pastels would work well for this activity. Then ask the children to sketch the scene or image that they pictured as you were reading aloud. You could read the text again several times while the children draw their pictures.
- After they have completed their drawings the children could annotate the pictures with key vocabulary or phrases from the text which support their understanding or interpretation.
- Give the children time to share their work with one another and to compare and contrast their images. Invite children to comment on what is similar and what is different about the way they have illustrated and why they think this is.
- Ask the children to consider how the way in which they have drawn the pictures expresses the atmosphere of the scene they had in mind. Read aloud some of the children's annotations, discussing particularly effective words or phrases that either confirm or add meaning to the artwork.
- Now give the children a copy of the poem in small groups and ask them to read through it together. Extend the children's discussion by returning to the 'Tell Me' approach. Share the different groups' responses in a whole class discussion.
- Ask the children to identify any vocabulary they are unsure of and give the children time and opportunity to find the meaning of this new language for example 'jumbie' or 'jouva'.
- Discuss the meaning of the vocabulary the children have explored and reflect on what it adds to their understanding and interpretation of the poem.
- Ask the children to contrast their original interpretation of the poem and the images that they created, with their understanding now that they have explored this language – does it change their responses? Why? Why not?

Session 7: Drawing

Opportunities to draw, both before and during writing, increase children's motivation to write, and can help them to think. Drawing can help all writers to plan their writing, develop their ideas and use vivid description.

- Show the children images and videos of jumbie stilt walkers or dancers, and carnival performers.
- Supporting resources can be found on the following websites:
 - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/watch/lets-celebrate-carnival2> [Accessed 20.04.16]
 - <http://www.ncctt.org/new/> [Accessed 20.04.16]
 - <http://www.ncctt.org/new/index.php/carnival-history/trad-carnival-characters/337-traditional-mas-characters-moko-jumbie.html> [Accessed 20.04.16]
 - <http://www.gotrinidadandtobago.com/trinidad/carnival/> [Accessed 20.04.16]

- Ask the children to reflect on the colours in the images, the costumes, the shapes, the movement and the sounds that they have seen and heard.
- Re-read aloud the poem *Carnival Jumbie* and explore the way in which John Lyons has captured the movement, sounds and atmosphere of the dancer in his poem. The children could stand and enact the dancer's movements as expressed in the poem, thereby lifting the words from page to stage.
- Reflect on his language choices, the rhythm of the poem and the way in which the words are arranged on the page. Ask the children how the language is patterned and crafted and the effect his word choices have on the listener. How have the words, layout and rhythm created the pictures in their minds that they explored in the previous session?
- Following this, read aloud to the children the poem *Carnival Moko Jumbie Dance*. Compare and contrast the ways in which the jumbie dancers are presented in the two different poems. Ask the children which poem they prefer and why. How do the poems make the children feel?

Session 8: Performance

Dramatic poetry performance can be a fruitful way of working with poetry, both in terms of encouraging and eliciting responses from children to the poems they read, and also in providing opportunities for poems to be lifted 'off the page' and brought to life.

- Read aloud or watch the poem *Carnival Dance Lesson* performed by John Lyons on the Poetryline website.
- Ask the children if there was there anything in particular that they liked about the poem or the performance? Use the 'Tell Me' framework to support thinking and elicit responses from the children.
- Give the children copies of the poem and allow them the chance to read it aloud in small groups. Discuss the rhythm in the poem and the patterns of language. Discuss the effect of the repeated refrain.
- Play the performance again, encouraging the children to move or beat to the repeated rhythm, listening out for emphasised words or joining in with the predictable actions and words, particularly the repeated refrain.
- Display the text of the poem on IWB or visualiser, this time reading it aloud to the children, perhaps more slowly, so they can join in with the refrains, emphasising the repeated rhythmic structure. An additional adult could beat the syllables of each verse on a tambour or rhythm sticks alongside the reading.
- Repeat through shared reading, allowing the children to enjoy being able to recite parts, or all, of the poem by heart, engaging them in the rhythm and memorable refrains.
- Give the children another opportunity to watch carnival dancers and to hear carnival music. Ask the children to reflect on the way in which the poem has been crafted to create the same sense of movement, dynamism and fun that is part of the carnival experience.
- Ask children to work on reciting the poem by heart in small groups, organising themselves anyway they like, e.g. in unison throughout or each taking a verse. Support children with an

enlarged copy of the poem with visual prompts if appropriate. Ask the children to choose movement and actions that they think would enhance their performance.

- At the end of the session confident groups can perform to the class. Compare performance styles and consider what music could accompany or enhance the performances.

Sessions 9: Exploring and collecting words

One of the most basic pleasures of poetry is the pleasure of playing with words and language and using all the elements of language to the full, so that the shapes and sounds and rhythms of words are enjoyed as well as their meaning.

- Explain to the children that in the next two sessions they are going to further explore carnivals and then write their own poetry based on their experiences.
- Begin the session by asking the children about their own experiences of carnival. Allow the children time to share their own memories of being at carnival if they have been to one, or their impressions of carnival gained from watching the videos you have already shown them and the poems explored in this sequence.
- Share the history of carnival with the children; you may want to focus on the annual carnivals held in Trinidad, the Notting Hill Carnival in London and the Rio Carnival in Brazil.
- Return to the images and videos explored previously and ask the children to work together to generate vocabulary that they would use to describe carnival. Record this vocabulary on large sheets of A3 paper and set them aside for later in the session.
- Now share with the children examples of traditional carnival music, with a focus on calypso and steel bands.
- Supporting resources:
 - http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/music/world_music/music_caribbean4.shtml
 - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/clips/zgf9jxs> (Calypso song)
 - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/clips/z4x34wx> (Steel bands)
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGt21q1AjuI> (Lord Kitchener)
- As an example, you may want to play the children the following sound clip: <https://soundcloud.com/bigbands/track-3> Give the children time to listen to the track and to move to the music if they want to.
- After listening to the track/s ask the children to reflect on the style of music. What did they like about the music? How did it make them feel? What mood or atmosphere was created by the music? Why do they think this is the music that accompanies the carnival dancers on the parade?
- Return to the language banks generated earlier and ask the children to add to this using new language that they would use to describe the calypso music. Also return to the poems by John Lyons which focus on carnival and remind the children of the language and techniques he used

to create the carnival atmosphere in his poetry.

- Following this, ask the children to write their own poem about the carnival. Explore with the children how they can create the sense of movement and energy John Lyons was able to create in his poems and allow them time to draft, edit and refine their own writing.

Session 10: Carnival Poem Performance

- Explain to the children that in this session the children are going to create their own mini carnival and this will be the platform for them to perform their poems.
- Discuss with the children the different aspects of poetry performance that enhance the experience for an audience such as tone of voice, intonation, volume, facial expression and gesture.
- Give time for the children to mark up a copy of their own poems independently or working in groups, rehearse and practise a performance.
- You may want to give the children opportunity to design and make carnival costumes and/or their own masks. Supporting resources:
 - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/clips/z44d2hv> (carnival costumes)
 - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/clips/zxhyr82> (carnival costumes - Brazil)
 - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/clips/z6vcd2p> (mask making)
- Once the children have organised their costumes and props, ask them to prepare or choose music to accompany their poems.
- Finally, give the children the opportunity to hold their own carnival using this as a means to perform their poems.

Section 3: Nature

Session 11: Drawing and Annotating

Opportunities to draw, both before and during writing, increase children's motivation to write, and can help them to think. Drawing can help all writers to plan their writing, develop their ideas and use vivid description.

- Play the children the following clip as an introduction to the poem *Dancing in the Rain*: <https://soundcloud.com/priscillapwood/rain-on-a-tin-roof>
- Ask the children to discuss with each other what they think they are listening to and the atmosphere evoked by the clip. Draw out through the discussion, the sound of the rain on the tin roof.
- Following this share the following clip with the children, but with the sound off as the music creates a different atmosphere. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoSridCnqN8>
- Discuss the children's responses to the footage, especially how it makes them feel and ask them to reflect on their own personal experiences of heavy rain, storms or floods.

- Ask the children what they normally do when it rains heavily, how does it make them feel? They may link this to personal experience of being kept inside for 'wet play' and either the boredom and frustration this evokes or, in contrast, the security and warmth of being inside.
- Show the footage again, or play the sound of rain. As they listen, ask the children to paint rainy scenes with watercolours or water based ink, exploring techniques and the effects of water on the paper or paint using pipettes, brushes, sponges etc. Put these aside somewhere so that the children can walk around each other's painting commenting on the images and the feelings that they evoke. As the children comment, scribe the language that they are using to reflect on the paintings, for the children to refer to later on in the sequence.
- Gather the children back together and read aloud the poem *Dancing in the Rain*. Explore the poem together, responding to the theme, the feelings evoked by the poem, the language and the structure. Focus the children on the way in which the poem evokes the building of the storm; the dark sky, the effect on the animals, the angry wind, the panic of the people, the rattling on the roof. Contrast this with the culmination of the poem in which everyone 'squealing' dances in the rain.
- Ask the children to reflect on the experience of being in the pouring rain suggested by the poem, the warmth of the rain in the Caribbean compared to the cold rain we experience in Britain, the response to the rain being one of excitement. Ask the children if they have ever danced in the rain and how this felt.
- Re-read *Dancing in the Rain* and ask the children to consider if this might be a memory of a real experience had by John Lyons. Ask the children why John Lyons might have decided to call the collection after this poem's title?

Session 12: Collaborative Poetry

Creating poems collaboratively provides opportunities for children to discuss the effect of the words that they are choosing and using in their poetry. Encourage the children to discuss the words, explaining to each other why they were chosen and the effect they have. Consider and reflect on the poetic devices present and why they were used by the author.

- Ask the children to reflect on the previous session. Share with the children the language that you scribed while they were discussing the paintings. What do they notice about the language they used? What mood does the language evoke? What other language might they use to enhance the language already gathered?
- Extend the discussion to refer directly to the rain, and ask the children to think about what language best evokes the rainy scenes that they heard and watched. This may be an opportunity to revisit or introduce figurative language such as onomatopoeic words, such as pitta patter, plop, drop, splash, thump or simile and metaphor.
- Return to the poem *Dancing in the Rain*, and reflect on the way in which John Lyons' language choices and use of repetition creates the atmosphere of the gathering storm.
- Place the children in mixed ability groups and ask them to work together to create a poem which reflects their experience of being in the rain. Encourage the children to draw on the

language you have discussed and to experiment with the techniques you have explored so far in this sequence.

- After the children have drafted and edited their work they could prepare a performance. This could be supported with the use of instruments that can create the sounds of rain, or the children could improvise techniques such as using rice inside a balloon or clicking all together to create the effect of the gathering storm.

Session 13: Shared Writing

Shared writing is one of the most important ways a teacher can show children how writing works and what it's like to be a writer. Shared writing gives children a model for their own independent writing and can introduce them to unfamiliar genre or style of writing.

- Organise the children into mixed ability pairs or small groups and begin by sharing the illustration that accompanies the poem *Happy Hummingbird Food*, but do not share the title of the poem with the children yet.
- You might want to give each group an enlarged A3 copy of the picture.
- Allow the children time to look at the illustration in depth and pose questions or thoughts about the image - you might want to layer the discussion as suggested here or, if the children are well practised at exploring illustration, ask the children to annotate copies of the picture with post-it notes and then develop the discussion starting with the children's ideas.
- Draw attention to the whole illustration; what do they notice immediately? Where is their eye drawn to in the picture? Why do they think that? Are different children drawn to different aspects of the image? Why? What do they notice about the colours? Are there any questions they have about the image? What could the poem be about? What predictions can they make from the observations they have already made?
- Once sufficient time has been provided conduct a whole group discussion, sharing their speculations and what they have inferred about the poem based on the illustration. Share the title of the poem with the children and ask the children whether this changes or confirms their initial thoughts.
- Explain to the children that the hummingbird is a common bird in Trinidad, sometimes called land of the hummingbirds. To support the children's understanding of the poem you may want to show them the following links and videos:
 - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/life/Hummingbird#p00cn9h7> [Accessed 21.04.16]
 - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/life/Hummingbird> [Accessed 21.04.16]
- Read aloud or watch the poem performed on the Poetryline website and ask the children to respond to the poem. You could focus their discussion with the following prompts and questions:
 - *How does the poem sound to you?*
 - *Do you have a favourite part of the poem?*
 - *What pictures or images can you see when you hear this poem? Does the illustration*

complement what you have imagined or is it different?

- *What does the poem tell you?*
- *How does the poem make you feel?*
- Following this, ask the children to consider what birds are common in their environment. Scribe their responses and choose one to focus on.
- Depending on the children's prior knowledge, they may need to complete some cross curricular research into common British garden birds. Supporting resources can be found here:
 - <http://www.rspb.org.uk/> [Accessed 21.04.16]
 - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/life/Bird/by/rank/all> [Accessed 21.04.16]
 - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007qgm3> [Accessed 21.04.16]
- Working together, create a whole class poem based on the children's observations and knowledge of the bird that you have chosen to focus on. You may want to innovate on the poem *Happy Hummingbird Food*, using the same repetition. For example, *Blackbird, Blackbird, singing a mellow tune...*
- After this, the children could choose their own bird to write a poem about and they could be given the opportunity to create artwork to accompany their writing.

Session 14: Writing Poetry

After listening to poetry, children may want to write their own poems. These, too, can be recorded with music or sound effects, and be kept together with a class anthology.

The following poem lends itself to imitation and innovation: *Tell Me, Mama*. In the following sessions the children can respond to this poem and create their own poems in the same style.

- Read aloud the poem to the children and elicit their responses through discussion. Share copies of the poem with the children and ask them to work in small groups to text mark the poem, drawing out further responses to the poem.
- Ask the children to generate their own questions about nature in the same style as the poem, listing them on A3 paper in their groups. Share their questions as a class, discussing the similarities and differences in the children's questions. Display the questions somewhere where all the children have access to them.
- Model for the children how to use these questions to create a poem in the same style as John Lyons' *Tell Me, Mama*. You may want to choose another person to address the questions to e.g. an older sibling, a grandparent, a friend.
- Once the children have had time to draft their poems, ensure they can edit and refine their work. Following this, the children could share their poems with one another in a class performance. Additionally, the poems could be placed into a class anthology, illustrated and published by the children.

In other curriculum areas you may want to allow time for the children to find the answers to the questions they have composed together.

Session 15: Performance

- Give children copies of the poem *Carib Nightfall* and spend time exploring the poem together. Use the following questions to develop the children's responses:
 - *What type of poem is this? Do you recognise the form? How is the poem laid out and structured?*
 - *What does the language of the poem do? What effect does the language have? Focus the children on the figurative language and imagery created for example 'like a fire ball' or 'mosquito violins'.*
 - *What is the theme of the poem? What does the poem make you think about?*
 - *Do you think this is a memory or reflection on an experience?*
 - *How does the poem make you feel? What creates that feeling?*
 - *What is sunset/the evening like in the Caribbean? How do you know?*
 - *How does John Lyons create the feeling of the nightfall in Trinidad?*
- Read aloud/watch the poet perform the poem *Carib Nightfall* on the Poetryline website.
- Now that the children have heard the poem read aloud/performed ask the children to reflect on what performance adds to the poem and their enjoyment of the poem. Ask the children if they think the poem works well read aloud. Is it a poem to be read silently or a poem to perform to bring it to life?
- At this point you could compare some of the other poems that you have explored in the sequence with different performance qualities such as *Carnival Jumbie Dance Lesson*. Ask the children to consider the difference in the ways this poem would be performed compared to the poem *Carib Nightfall*.
- Divide up the poem into the three verses and the class into three groups. Give each verse to a different group and ask them to work in the groups to prepare a performance of the verse that they have been given.
- Once the children have had time to prepare a performance of their verse, put the three performances together to create a whole class performance of the entire poem.

Drawing the learning together:

- To draw together all the work done in this unit, hold a discussion about the collection as a whole. What are your most memorable poems? Why? What have you learnt about poetry that you didn't know before? Would you be encouraged to read more poetry after studying this collection? Why? Why not?
- If you were to write a letter to the poet, what would you say about the collection? What lingering questions would you ask him? (You could get children to write these up and send some to the poet or email questions to him.)

Following the Sequence: Bookmaking

Publishing their work for an audience helps children to write more purposefully. Bookmaking provides a motivating context within which children can bring together their developing understanding of what

written language is like; making written language meaningful as they construct their own texts.

In following sessions the children will have the opportunity to create their own poetry anthologies. This can be made up of poems that the children have written throughout this teaching sequence, poems the children have written outside this sequence, some of the children's favourite poems from other anthologies and their favourite poems from the collection *Dancing in the Rain*. It will support the children to have a display of a wide range of anthologies for the children to refer to and to draw inspiration from during these sessions.

- Begin by creating individual books for the children to use as their personal poetry anthologies.
- How to make a simple origami book:

1. Take a sheet of A4 or A3 paper. Hold the paper in the landscape position and fold the left edge to the right edge. Open out.
2. Then fold the left and right edges into the centre. Open out. You now have 4 equal panels
3. Fold the top edge to the bottom edge. Open out.
4. You now have a sheet with 8 equal panels.
5. Fold the left edge to the right edge. Cut through the centre crease on the folded side—to the width of one panel.
6. Open the sheet out—you now have a cut in the centre of the sheet.
7. Fold the top to the bottom. The cut is on top.
8. Push the left and right edges to the centre—carry on till you have a cross shape.
9. Fold round into a book.

- Following this, the children can compile their anthologies using a range of poems; those they have written themselves, a selection from *Dancing in the Rain* and any others that the children enjoy reading.
- Allow the children to create a cover for their anthology using a range of art materials. The children can also illustrate the poems that they have included. Refer back to the session where the children considered the illustrations in *Dancing in the Rain* and ask the children to think about where they might place their illustrations to enhance meaning.

To give the bookmaking an additional purpose you could display the children's finished anthologies in the school library or in a 'pop up' display in the school where a wide audience can access them and the other children and adults in the school can browse, make comments and recommendations.