

Falling Out of the Sky: Poems about Myths and Monsters, edited by Rachel Piercey and Emma Wright (Emma Press)

This anthology brings together new poems inspired by myths, legends and folk tales. Many focus on classical Greek myths, such as Echo and Narcissus, Arachne, Apollo, Prometheus, Pandora and Persephone, with the Minotaur and Medusa making several appearances (in one instance together!). Norse myths are present in Rachel Piercey's 'To Asgard!' and a note (a useful feature throughout the book) cross references readers to 'Ginnungagap', Richard O'Brien's poem about Norse god Loki the trickster. A variety of traditional tales provide inspiration, including a Cornish legend, St Francis of Assisi, Aztec gods, Welsh witch Ceridwen and Ginny Green Teeth who lurks in the water dragging the unsuspecting to their doom. Several poets make skilful use of anachronism to give their writing a contemporary relevance: in Mary Anne Clark's 'Persephone's Return' Demeter waits at the airport for Arrivals from Hades, while Harry Man speaks in the voice of the Witch from Hansel and Gretel as she shows us round her country abode with its sugar window panes instead of 'typical double-glazing.' The judges felt that this book challenges in a way few anthologies for children do.

This collection is shortlisted for the 2016 CLPE Poetry Award.

Overall aims of this teaching sequence.

- Explore the differences between poetry for the page and poetry for the stage
- Develop personal responses to poetry in performance and in writing
- To understand how storytelling can be done using poetry
- Create an anthology

This teaching sequence is designed for a Year 5 or 6 class.

Overview of this teaching sequence.

This sequence will consider the poems in the *Falling Out of the Sky* anthology and the use of poetic devices and forms to share myths and legends. The sequence considers how to 'read' poetry for the stage and write poetry for the page and how the form and content of poems lead the reader/performer to interpret them in particular ways. Throughout the children will be encouraged to develop their own personal responses to and performances of poems in the collection. The children will also be offered the opportunity to consider what an anthology is and how they are put together by going through the process themselves.

<p>Teaching Approaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poetry Journals ▪ Tell Me, booktalk ▪ Beating rhythm ▪ Drama and Role-play ▪ Performance Poetry ▪ Listening to poets ▪ Visualisation ▪ Poetry writing ▪ Storytelling 	<p>Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Response journal ▪ Poetry performances ▪ Poems written in response to stimulus from the anthology ▪ Poetry Anthologies
<p>Exploring Poetic Forms and Devices</p> <p>Forms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ballad ▪ Sonnet ▪ Haiku <p>Devices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assonance ▪ Onomatopoeia ▪ Refrain ▪ Rhyme ▪ Rhythm (including Iambic Pentameter) 	<p>Opportunities to develop and reinforce phonic knowledge and reading fluency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Beating rhythms encourages children to hear rhythms and patterns in language which is an essential precursor for spelling. ▪ Work on assonance supports children to recognise and hear vowel sounds in words.
<p>Cross Curricular Links:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art and Design – to improve their mastery of art and design techniques, including drawing, painting and sculpture with a range of materials by exploring Greek vases and creating versions of the poems and applying them through pottery. • Music – using poetry to inspire improvisation and composition music for a range of purposes. Use the inter-related dimensions of music and poetry to support understanding and exploration of how music is created, produced and communicated, including through the inter-related dimensions: pitch, duration, dynamics, tempo, timbre, texture, structure and appropriate musical notations. • History - Ancient Greece – a study of Greek life and achievements and their influence on the western world. 	
<p>Links to other texts and resources:</p> <p>Connected to themes in the sequence <i>The Adventures of Odysseus</i> by Hugh Lupton & Daniel Morden, illustrated by Christina Balit. Barefoot</p>	

Books

Goldilocks on CCTV, by John Agard, illustrated by Satoshi Kitamura. Frances Lincoln

The Highwayman, by Alfred Noyes, illustrated by Charles Keeping. Oxford University Press

Collections of Myths and Legends

Treasury of Norse Mythology by Donna Jo Napoli, illustrated by Christina Balit. National Geographic

Poetry Anthologies

Poems to Perform chosen by Julia Donaldson, illustrated by Clare Melinsky. Macmillan

The Oxford Book of Story Poems edited by Michael Harrison & Christopher Stuart-Clark. Oxford University Press

Let in the Stars edited by Mandy Coe, illustrated by Manchester School of Art. Manchester Writing School

Websites [all accessed 9/05/2016]

<https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/resources/poets-talk-about-poetry>

<https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poeticforms/ballad>

<http://www.ancientgreece.co.uk/>

<http://www.sarafanelli.com/docs/books/02monsters/01.html>

<http://ypn.poetrysociety.org.uk/features/how-to-edit-a-poem-with-holly-hopkins/>

<http://ypn.poetrysociety.org.uk/category/workshop/>

<http://www.betjemanpoetryprize.co.uk/#!/betjeman-prompts/f6qbe>

<http://www.storymuseum.org.uk/1001stories/myths-of-ancient-civilisations/>

Teaching Sessions:

Before the sessions start

If your children are less used to working with poetry you might want to spend some time considering with them what a poem is, how, why and when people choose to read or write poetry and the children's preferences for particular poems or poets. You might want to create a poetry board in the classroom for children to pin up their favourite poems from home or ones they discover through the course of the sequence. They could even post some of their own poetry writing on the board. Provide time to share the contents of the board and discuss the children's preferences.

The theme of the *Falling Out of the Sky* anthology is myth and legend so you might want to collect books or other resources associated with the mythologies that are mentioned – these are: The Ancient Greeks, The Aztecs, Norse, Cornish and Welsh. Again if children have particular enthusiasms for these mythologies, encourage them to bring in resources from home once you have revealed the theme of the anthology.

In order to broaden the children's experience and to support their ongoing discovery of poetry you will also want to make available other anthologies and poetry collections.

This sequence considers form and device in poetry but also prioritises children's personal responses. You might want to formalise these responses by creating a class poetry journal by folding and stapling several large pieces of paper and recording the children's discussions. You might also want to provide the children with smaller poetry journals – either exercise books or smaller folded paper versions in which they can record their own responses to the poems in the sequence but also jot ideas for their own poems. You might also want to spend some time exploring the Poetryline website; in particular the films of poets talking about the way they write: www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/resources/poets-talk-about-poetry.

If the children are unclear about the difference between an anthology and a single author poetry collection then you may wish to run the following investigation with them before they start. In order to create their own anthologies they will need to be secure with what an anthology is.

What is an anthology?

- Put a selection of story and poetry anthologies on each table for small groups to investigate.
- Ask the children to look at the anthologies, firstly the front and back cover, title and blurb and create short initial responses on post-it notes to each anthology – would they like to read it – why/why not, what do they think it will be about? Do they have any questions?
- Invite the children to explore the anthologies further, looking at contents pages and even reading a few poems. Invite them to add any further thoughts to their post-it notes.
- Ask the children to place their anthologies around the edges of their tables and conduct a gallery walk looking at each other's observations. This time they could add their names to titles they'd be interested in reading and a poetry library system could be started to share the titles around the class.
- Explain to the whole group that all the books they have been looking at are called anthologies and that they are going to create a definition for an anthology. Create a table asking the children to cite the similarities and differences between the books they looked at. What did they all have? Who had put them together? You might need to spend some time discussing the role of an editor.
- Once you have completed the table, invite the children to draft a definition in pairs, then invite pairs to join up and share their ideas and add/edit their thoughts, then ask the fours to join up and repeat. Continue pairing the groups until the whole class is working together. Write the two definitions on the whiteboard and work with the children to edit them so all the ideas are included. You might also want to share a dictionary definition at this point to compare with the children's ideas.
- Finally, ask the children to go back to their tables and test the definition with the anthologies on the table. Do they want to change anything?

- Once they are happy display the definition on the wall and invite the children to add any questions about anthologies on post-it notes around it.

Session 1: Personal responses to poems.

Providing children with space and time to respond to a poem, before they are asked to consider technicalities, supports them as readers. Over time they will begin to draw together their preferences on theme, rhyme and even on form. Using a poetry journal which they can use to respond in a way they choose is an effective way of doing this. The journals can also act as writers' notebooks.

- Before this session begins set up a gallery walk using the illustrations from the collection labelled with the poem titles. The poems that are included in this sequence are: *Siren Song* (p21), *The Furies* (p36), *The Ballad of Echo and Narcissus* (p38), *To Asgard!* (p66), *Epeius* (p77), *Prometheus Unbound* (p82), *Ginnungagap* (p104), *Medusa and Minotaur Take Tea* (p109). Invite the children to explore the images and consider what they might have in common; which ones draw them in, whether they are reminded of other stories/poems etc.
- Read aloud *Siren Song*, *To Asgard* and *Medusa and the Minotaur Take Tea*. Give the children the opportunity just to listen to you reading.
- Provide the children with their poetry journals – explain that they won't be marked although they are welcome to share them with you and that they can be used how the children choose for their own poetry as well as their responses to the poetry you will share with them.
- Explain that all these poems come from an anthology and provide the children with copies of *Siren Song*, *To Asgard* and *Medusa and the Minotaur Take Tea* to read for themselves. Give them the opportunity to underline words or phrases they particularly like (or record them in their journals). Invite them to write any questions they have about the poems in their journals too.
- Share the films of the poems with Rachel Piercey the poet reading them on the Poetryline website.
- Ask the children how they felt each time the poems were read? How did they most enjoy receiving them? What were the differences between the poet's reading and yours? Did they notice particular words/phrases differently in each of the readings?
- Broaden the discussion about the poems by asking the children: *What did these poems have in common? Why might they be in the same anthology? Did you recognise the content? Are you used to hearing these stories in poetry? What difference did it make to have the story as a poem rather than a narrative? What perspective did the poems take? – Did this influence your opinion? Which poem did you like the most and why?*
- Reveal the anthology that the poems are from and share the film of Rachel discussing putting together the anthology.
- Invite the children to share their thoughts on how they feel about the content of the anthology, what are they hoping to find poems about?

Session 2: Performing poems: Ballad Form

Introducing children to poetic forms with fixed patterns can be supportive and conversations about form should be paired with content. Choice of form is connected to subject matter, how a poem is intended to be shared and in some cases connections to other poems.

- Discuss with the children how information and stories are shared today. Consider how this happened in the past.
- Explain that before most people could read all information was communicated orally. To make this more straight-forward stories were sometimes put into poetry or song form. The most prolific of these was the ballad.
- To find out more about ballads and see some other examples visit <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poeticforms/ballad> or share a longer ballad form poem such as *The Highwayman*.
- Share *The Ballad of Echo and Narcissus* by Sarah Doyle (p38) with the children.
- Read it again. This time provide the children with large pieces of paper and invite them to draw what they can hear – some might choose a story map format, some an individual picture.
- Read the poem a final time (this time you might want to display the text on the IWB) and ask the children to annotate their pictures with labels, and memorable words and phrases.
- If the children are unfamiliar with the Echo and Narcissus story you might choose at this point to share a narrative version so they have an alternative version to compare the poem to. There is an audio version on The Story Museum's 1001 Stories website <http://www.storymuseum.org.uk/1001stories/detail/166/echo-and-narcissus.html> [accessed 9/05/2016]
- Discuss with the children: *Did you know the story before? Did the poem change your mind or make you question something about the story? Whose perspective does the poem take? Did that influence your feelings? Did you notice a rhyming pattern? What effect does the rhyme have on the story?*
- Share the poem out amongst the class giving groups a stanza each. Model how they could beat (using rhythm sticks or clapping their hands the rhythm of the poem. Ask them first to do this with their stanza. Discuss if they thought any beats were stronger than others. Explain that with this iambic (2 syllable) beat the stress is on the second syllable so the emphasis in the first line would look like this: *There **lived** a **girl** in **Ancient Greece**.*
- Invite the children to practice their stanzas over emphasising the stress on the second syllable then discuss whether this exercise has revealed anything new in the poem.
- Now invite the groups to rehearse their stanza. Making the story as clear as possible, ask them to consider using gesture or characterisation and rhyme and rhythm pattern to support emphasis.
- Share the poem – invite the children to respond to the performances –*Which ones revealed things they hadn't heard the first time in the telling? Which ones told the story most clearly and how?*

- To extend work on ballads and in particular how they can be sung to music then the Radio 2 website <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01kgbxx> contains ballads written and sung by folk musicians about the 2012 Olympic Games. There are also multiple versions of traditional ballads in song form online, be aware that the content of these can be quite risqué as the ballad began as a tabloid poetry form and its themes were often affairs of the heart and murder!

Session 3: Performing Poems: Rhythm emphasising content

Rhythm in poetry is used in a variety of ways and in contemporary poetry it is more usual for rhythmical patterns to be inconsistent. While it is important that children know the fixed rhythmical patterns in certain forms such as ballads and sonnets it is equally important that they are exposed to the other ways that rhythm is used to support meaning and an opportunity to consider whether they prefer the formal rhythm and rhyme structures or these other ways.

- Play the children this sound <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArZmaXvrgOU> [accessed 9/05/2016] or another of a horse galloping (without showing the image).
- Invite the children to predict what the sound is, how do they know?
- Reveal that it is a horse and listen again.
- Invite the children to beat out the rhythm they can hear – (3 beats and a pause– quick quick slow pause)
- In small groups ask the children to come up with words or phrases about horses running that match this rhythm (galloping or fast as light for example) and create a shared list with the class – you could beat these words out to check the rhythm.
- Now beat line by line the first 2 stanzas of *Galahad the Good*, by Andrew Wynn Owen (p94) until you reach ‘to find the Holy Grail’ invite the children to repeat each line after you. *Can they hear the horse rhythm? Where does it change? What do they think the poem might be about?*
- Share the poem itself with the children a couple of times, first time just asking them to listen, the second providing the text for the children to see the shape of the poem on the page.
- Discuss with the children: *Did you know the story before? Did the poem change your mind or make you question something about the story? Whose perspective does the poem take? Did that influence your feelings? Did you notice a rhyming pattern? When does this come in? What impact does it have?*
- In groups provide the children with 2 stanzas – again invite them to beat the poem through first and then rehearse their stanza making the story as clear as possible ask them to consider using gesture or characterisation and rhyme and rhythm pattern to support emphasis. This poem also includes clearer characterisation – *How will the children show the change of tone when Galahad is speaking?*
- Share the poem – invite the children to respond to the performances – *Which ones revealed things they hadn’t heard the first time in the telling? Which ones told the story most clearly and how?*
- To extend work on this you could investigate other poems which take on the sound of their

subject – *The Night Mail* by W H Auden and LOKOMOTYWA (*The Locomotive* by Julian Tuwim) <https://vimeo.com/26797029> [accessed 9/05/2016] (a Polish poem). There are also opportunities to discuss the difference between the sound created by the whole poem and single words (onomatopoeia).

Session 4: Performing Poetry – connection between poetry and music

There are many connections to be made between poetry and music, especially poetry in performance. Music can support the study of poetry by emphasising rhythmical patterns and repeating refrains. Children should be encouraged to explore setting poems to music and investigate song lyrics for their poetic features. When describing poetry in performance musical language can also be supportive, considering phrases, refrains, dynamic, tempo etc

- Set mysterious music to play (something like this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0slQ1-2emQ> [accessed 9/05/2016]) without making a comment- gradually increase the volume so it is noticed by the children. If it is possible to place the speakers in an unusual place (in a cupboard, outside the window etc) then that will add to the atmosphere of the session.
- Discuss the impact of the music on the class – how did it make them feel? What did they want to do when they heard the music?
- Share what the children know already about the Siren story. You might want to share a narrative version such as *The Adventures of Odysseus*, by Hugh Lupton and Daniel Morden, illustrated by Christina Balit p56-60.
- Describe the qualities that the most beautiful music in the world would have? Share and scribe their thoughts.
- Provide the children with a selection of instruments to create the tone and timbre of *Siren Song*.
- How do they imagine the Sirens to look? Invite the children to sketch what they imagine in their journals.
- You might then want to share an image such as *Ulysses and the Sirens* by John William Waterhouse for them to compare their drawings with. (<http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/j-w-waterhouses-ulysses-and-the-sirens-breaking-tradition-and-revealing-fears-2/> [accessed 9/05/2016] (N.B. Siren images are intentionally seductive and often include nudity so it is better that images are sourced by teachers for this exercise)
- Share *Siren Song*, by Rachel Piercey (p21) either read by Rachel on Poetryline or read aloud with the children a couple of times, first time just asking them to listen, the second providing the text for the children to see the shape of the poem on the page.
- Divide the class in half with half becoming sirens and the others being the sailors on the ship. You might want to divide the sailor group further sharing the stanzas between them.
- Invite the siren group to use the *Siren Song* stanzas in the poem, to add movement and sound to these words but also to create a quieter soundscape and movement that could work underneath the rest of the poem
- Invite the sailors to create their section of the poem, considering what actions and emotions

are given in the words, where they might be looking, how they might be feeling etc. Do they want to cast one person as Odysseus or take on the roles between them?

- Once the class have had time to experiment, build the performance by marking out a ship large enough to accommodate all the sailors using tape or gym equipment in the hall
- Invite the Sirens to spread themselves around the ship – return to the poem and remind them that they begin on an outcrop before encircling the ship.
- Practise running through the performance.
- You could film these run-throughs then play them back to the children, encouraging them to consider whether they can hear all the words, whether it is clear by their movement and facial expression who they are and also to consider where their audience is and how they might need to adapt their performance to communicate their poem to an audience. Using these notes continue to build the performance.
- Provide the children with an opportunity to perform their reading and receive feedback.
- You could share *Siren* by Amy McCauley (p45) and ask the children to compare how they would perform this poem, would it be different from *Siren Song? Whose perspective does the poem take? Did that influence your feelings?*
- Some poems lend themselves better to dramatic readings than others. Other poems in this anthology which could be approached in the same way are: *Arachnophobia*, (p27), *The Ballad of Echo and Narcissus* (p38), *The Cauldron of Knowledge* (p70), and *At home with the witch from Hansel and Gretel* (p91)

Other possible performance foci:

If you wanted to extend these performance sessions there are other interesting ones to consider:

Ginnungagap (p104) Some poets write out of a fascination for a particular word or sound – because of the way it sounds or feels in the mouth or because of the way it works with other words. You could introduce study of this poem by first giving the children the word Ginnungagap, asking them to say it trying different emotions and exploring which works best. The children could also try putting emphasis on different parts of the word. Then present the children with the word written – ask them to write a definition – they might want to consider etymology or the sound of the word, any words it reminds them of. Once the children have established their definitions share the poem and invite them to add or change their thoughts. Using the mood set by the definition of the word in small groups they can rehearse the poem for performance.

The Furies (p36) The layout and repeating verb pattern of this poem makes it an interesting one to work up for performance. Introduce the poem by exploring what furious means (maybe creating a word collection leading from calm to furious) and therefore what Furies might be like. Look at first line:

Beneath the earth they wait hissing

Ask the children - *How would you perform this? What are you being given to help? What is the gap for?* Following this discussion give groups the whole poem to perform ask them to consider: word meanings, gesture, emotional tone – *Will/does this change over the poem, are there roles given in the*

poem as in Siren Song? - do you want to create any?

Session 5: Choosing a poem for 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. Allowing children to develop a fully rehearsed performance allows them the opportunity to practise drafting and redrafting orally for performance ensuring that they are effectively communicating what they have read. Repeated work with the same text also allows for children to spend time with the words.

- Re-read the poems you have focussed on aloud (or where they are available share the films) 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 these poems?*
 - *Was there anything that you particularly disliked...?*
 - *Was there anything that puzzled you?*
 - *Were there any patterns...any connections that you noticed between the poems...to other books or stories...to your life...?*
- You might also want to consider the questions you have thought about for each poem to compare their responses: *Did you know the story before? Did the poem change your mind or make you question something about the story? Whose perspective does the poem take? Did that influence your feelings? Did you notice a rhyming pattern? When does this come in? What impact does it have?*
- Place the poem titles around the room and invite the children who would like to perform that poem to stand in those groups, they could be invited to write a post-it note or around the title the reasons why they have chosen that poem. If one poem is particularly popular the group could be divided in two to prepare their performance.
- Give the groups time to work on their poems – ask them to consider:
 - *What they are trying to do with the words? – Are they telling the story? Are they interacting with another character? Are they interacting with the reader?*
 - *Are there moments where the reader needs to think about or understand something? How can the performance allow for that?*
 - *What emotional tone do they want to put across? Does it change throughout the course of the poem?*
 - *Does the poem have a rhythm – is it coming across when they perform?*
 - *How can they enhance the performance with appropriate gesture, facial expression?*
 - *Do they need simple props? How will these be managed?*
 - *Do they want to add music to support their performance? – consider timbre, tone and dynamics if so.*
- Invite the groups to perform a first draft of their performance. Invite response to this

performance around:

- *What worked particularly well?*
- *Clarity of storytelling*
- *Characterisation*
- *Tone*
- *How easy it was for the audience to see/hear what was happening*
- *Whether the audience noticed something different as a result of watching the performance?*
- Scribe notes for each group to work on for their final draft.
- Once the groups have finished rehearsing, arrange for an audience of parents or other classes to watch their performances.

Sessions 6 -7: Visualisation into Writing

Session 6: Visualisation

Poetry often contains very strong visual imagery using simile, metaphor or kennings to create powerful images using very few words. Giving the children opportunities to draw what they can hear tunes them into this style of writing and enables them to consider which words or phrases are the most powerful visually.

- Share the poem *Prometheus Unbound* by Joseph Coelho (p82).
- Provide children with pastels and paper.
- This time share the poem stanza by stanza inviting the children to respond using the materials in front of them. What can they see as they are listening? Encourage them to work at speed drawing what they can hear.
- Share again – on tracing paper laid over the artwork annotate with words /phrases that they particularly like.
- Lay out the pictures with a blank piece of paper beside each one and invite the children to go round and look at each others' work. As they are walking invite them to make notes by other pictures where children heard the poem differently from them or something they liked about the image?
- Following the walk consider which images were prominent and featured a lot? Were the same or similar words or phrases used?
- Deepen the discussion by returning to the questions *Did you know the story before? Did the poem change your mind or make you question something about the story? Whose perspective does the poem take? Did that influence your feelings?* Encourage the children to make links between the poems you have shared already and this one.
- You could ask them to consider whether this would be an easy poem to perform and why?
- Share thoughts about story – what did they know before? What questions do they have? If the children are unfamiliar with the story you might want to share it with them.
- Spend some time looking at the first stanza and how the description is built up – discuss the

techniques Joseph uses at the beginning of the stanza – compound nouns, alliteration, and metaphorical language and compare to the last lines which are more literal and place Prometheus in the setting. Consider why Joseph might have chosen this technique. Invite the children to explore in pairs other places in the poem where this alternation between highly poetic and literal language occurs. If the children find this hard to find for themselves, highlight in two different colours and give one child the literal lines and the other the more poetic and ask them to read to each other, discussing the difference and the effect of each other's lines. They might then want to swap over.

Session 7: Writing

Achieving a balance between using poetic devices for effect and sharing the story or idea of a poem is challenging and something that can only be achieved with regular exposure to both the reading and writing of poetry. The economy of the form can be particularly challenging for some writers but poetry lends itself to editing and redrafting.

- Invite the children to pick another mythical or fairy tale character and invite them to draw the character using as much detail as they can. You could use examples from Sara Fanelli's book *Mythological Monsters of Ancient Greece*, Walker Books (now out of print) on her website: <http://www.sarafanelli.com/docs/books/02monsters/01.html> [accessed 9/05/2016] to inspire the children. You could extend this character exploration by inviting the children to explore their character using role-play.
- Following their drawing/role-play, invite them to collect alliterative noun phrases, kennings, and words associated with their character's movement and behaviour around the drawing. You might want to repeat the gallery walk exercise and allow other children to contribute their thoughts so that each child has a bank of ideas they can work from.
- Once they have developed their word collections, ask the children to choose their favourite five words or phrases. Ask them to build lines writing each one on a strip of paper considering: *Will you feature more than one image per line? Will you use long or short lines? How will you hook the reader in and keep them engaged? Are you showing or telling?*
- Ask the children to arrange their lines in an order they are happy with – this might be to tell the story or build a description or both.
- Model how to work with a response partner to improve each other's poems. Using a poem from the class as an example read the poem and invite the children to draw what they have heard. Ask the author of the poem to share whether the other children have picked up the important images for them. Move on to invite the class to suggest places where the words could be more powerful, if there is too much imagery, if the poems need another line to add detail or tell more of the story.
- Invite the children to work with a response partner, drawing and commenting on each other's poems before drafting a finished version. Some of the children might also enjoy drafting a version of their partner's poem.
- Encourage the children to complete a final edit considering: *Are your images all necessary? Would it be more powerful to strip it back? Are there some places where simple sentences are*

more appropriate? Are the images working together to build a picture for the reader?

- Display the finished poems with the pictures which inspired them on the wall display or in a class anthology.

Session 8: Large Subject, Tighter Form – To Asgard

When a poem's subject matter is wide ranging then a tighter form is often used to support the reader. Encouraging children to explore the content of the poem alongside form will support their choices for their readers when they are writing.

- Ask the children to share what they know about Norse Myths and their characters – note down
- Read *To Asgard* or watch Rachel Piercey perform it on the Poetryline website.
- Provide the children with a sheet with 5 face shapes with space to draw bodies beneath
- Re-read – this time encourage the children to add detail to the faces and create the body shapes from the poem to create the cast of characters described
- Re-read – this time add annotations from the language of the poem – you could provide or display the text for children to pick from. What details has Rachel chosen to share about each of the characters? What questions do you have about them?
- Provide the children with the text- ask them to investigate for patterns (remind them of the work you did in the performance section on rhyme, rhythm, refrain etc). Provide them with rhythm sticks to beat out the sounds – are there any rhythmic patterns? Discuss what they notice. Draw out that there are some true rhyming couplets and some that use assonance – why might that be? Talk about 4 line stanzas broken by refrain and the impact of this. Is an expected pattern helpful for you as a reader of this poem? Why?
- Invite children to list a cast of characters from a mythology or traditional tales they are familiar with - imagining that their reader hasn't heard of the stories what are the important details they'd like to share about each of them.
- Revisit *To Asgard*– What is in the refrain? – How does it make you feel? How has the poet achieved that?
- Using shared writing write an invitational refrain for your new poem. You could use Rachel's 7 syllable and 8 syllable line pattern (Come across the rainbow bridge. To Asgard, where the Norse gods live) or model your refrain on her language pattern – a command followed by a statement.
- Challenge the children to write four 8 syllable lines about each of their characters – invite them to choose whether rhyme is supportive or not. If they are using rhyme, are they staying true to their character?
- Response partners – using the same head sheets you used with the initial reading of the poem invite the children to draw the details from a friend's poem – Have they picked the details you wanted? What might be missing? Invite the children to annotate their drawings with the words/phrases they particularly liked from their partner's poem. Invite them to respond to each other highlighting these positives – also – Have they kept to the syllable pattern? If not,

- what was the effect? If they've used rhyme or not –does this work?
- Give the children time to edit their poems based on this feedback.
- You might also want to share A Rowdy Bunch of Rough and Tumble Aztec Gods and discuss how this idea has been approached here.

Session 9: The White Space is for the reader to fill in – Medusa and the Minotaur Take Tea

In the current discussions around the ongoing question – what is poetry? many are in agreement that what marks poetry out is the white space around the poem. Children need to spend time with poetry and work with line breaks to explore what they are asking of the reader. A line break can be considered another form of punctuation, a pause for the reader to fill in something for themselves.

- Discuss with the children the question – What is a monster? Consider examples and pull out features. How do you expect a monster to behave? What facial expression/body language do you expect them to have? What monsters do you know from stories etc? You might want to provide pictures of mythical monsters as a starting point. There are some great examples from Sara Fanelli's book *Mythological Monsters of Ancient Greece*, Walker Books (now out of print) on her website: <http://www.sarafanelli.com/docs/books/02monsters/01.html>.
- Explain your focus characters will be Medusa and the Minotaur – What do they know already? Share the stories of Medusa and the Minotaur if the class are unfamiliar with them.
- You might want to share the other poems in the collection about the two characters: *The Minotaur* (p1), *Medusa and her Sisters* (p75) and *Love song for a Minotaur* (p86).
- Here you can return to Aidan Chambers' key questions from *Tell Me: Children, Reading & Talk with The Reading Environment* Thimble Press 2011.
 - Tell me...was there anything you liked about these poems?
 - Was there anything that you particularly disliked...?
 - Was there anything that puzzled you?
 - Were there any patterns...any connections that you noticed between the poems...to other books or stories...to your life...?
- Provide the children with a piece of paper split into four with the headings – Likes, Dislikes, Puzzles, Connections.
- Read the poem line by line – ask the children to make jottings at the end of each line on their sheets.
- Re-read the whole poem and ask children to make final notes.
- Read the whole poem one last time and display the text – what language do they notice and like, that adds to the mood of the poem.
- How do they feel about Medusa and the Minotaur now?
- *What effect did the line stops have? What did they bring to mind – personal experiences? Knowledge about the story? Did they feel challenged in your viewpoint about monsters? Why?*
- Investigate the first sentence – *The china is in smithereens before the tea is even brewed.* Give children this sentence chopped up. Without changing the order invite them to play with creating lines of different lengths – *What is the impact each time? What do they like?*

- Invite the children to pick two characters with the same traits- princesses, heroes etc - what would they complain to each other about? Who would they blame?
- Invite children to draft their poems on large pieces of paper- they will need to cut the words out so if they need support you might want to provide wide lined paper or they could write each word on a separate piece of paper.
- Cut out the words and with bluetac, stick the words in different line lengths. They could work on this with a partner. The children should also be encouraged to use this as an opportunity for editing – getting rid of extraneous words or writing alternative words and swapping them in. Finally invite them to add in punctuation – *What do they need and where? Where are they inviting the reader to think/to change their minds about the character type etc?*
- Write up a finished version. Again the children can change words – this shouldn't merely be a copying exercise but an exercise in re-reading and re-evaluating their work; switching media for this is often helpful. You might want this to be on a computer so they can easily change words, word orders and line lengths.
- You might also want to share Holly Hopkins' editing process with the children <http://ypn.poetrysociety.org.uk/features/how-to-edit-a-poem-with-holly-hopkins/> . There is a lot of text but it could be summarised whilst you show the images.

Session 10-11: Narrative or Poem? – Siren Song

This collection contains a large number of poems which tell the story of an event and offer the opportunity to investigate what the difference is between a poem and a story. Consideration of rhyme, rhythm, line length and white space up to this point in the sequence should have tuned the children into some of these differences.

- Ask the children to respond to the question - What are the differences between a poem and a story?
- Re-read *Siren Song* (p21) – is this a story or a poem? How do you know?
- Share out other narrative poems from the collection *Minotaur* (p1), *Feathers and Wax* (p101), *Echo and Narcissus* (p38), *The Serpent and the Turtle* (p7). You might also want to share John Agard's *Damsel in Distress Rap* and *Goldilocks on CCTV* poems on Poetryline <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poets/agard-john> which are retellings of fairy tales – *do they have features in common? What is helpful with the storytelling? What poetic features you've explored do they use?*
- Choose a story for the class to work on – if you have been exploring myths and legends you may wish to use one of these or another traditional tale they are familiar with.
- In pairs, invite them to tell the story in decreasing amounts of time (1 minute, 30 seconds, 10 seconds).
- Discuss the effect of this – how easy was it? What did they have to do? What were the key things they kept? What did they lose?
- On paper invite the children to bullet point the key moments into 12 steps using 1 or 2 words. (see below for an example using Cinderella as the story)

Plot points:

1. Cinderella
 2. Family
 3. Chores
 4. Invitation
 5. Preparations
 6. Crying
 7. Godmother
 8. Transformation
 9. Ball
 10. Midnight
 11. Slipper
 12. Wedding
- Explain to the children they are going to create their story as a sonnet. Share the key features (a description of a sonnet is here <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poeticforms/sonnet> [accessed 9/05/2016])
 - Sonnet lines are in iambic pentameter which means the line has 10 syllables in 5 pairs. In each of these pairs the emphasis is on the second syllable like a heartbeat. You could play the sound of a heartbeat or ask the children to feel their pulses to understand this. You might also want to return to the rhythm sticks and beat out some sonnets with the children. This link is to the famous Shakespearean sonnet 'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?' <http://childrenspoetryarchive.org/poem/shall-i-compare-thee-summers-day-sonnet-18>
 - Invite the children to take each moment in their story and create an iambic pentameter line – sonnet lines often also have the rhyme scheme ABABAB, but rhyme isn't key here.
 - The final pair of lines in a sonnet (lines 13 and 14) form a conclusion or answer the question posed by the sonnet. Model how you might want to write either the conclusion of the story, or your opinion in these lines.
 - The draft below shows the Cinderella story

*Cinderella had a tricky home
Sisters ugly and a mother (step)
She worked her hands to the very bone
One day a gold edged invite from the King
Step and the uglies wrapped in silk
Cinderella wept in dying embers
"I'm your fairy godmother." She said
Pumpkin to carriage, Cinders dressed – magic
Dancing in the arms of a handsome prince
Midnight strikes, magic weakens, Cinders flees.
Glass slipper – a hunt across the land
PRINCE ASKS CLEANER CINDERS TO TAKE HIS HAND*

Final two lines to create conclusion:

Their lives destined to be full of laughter

The joy of happily ever after.

- Once they have a first draft invite the children to add poetic detail to their lines, showing not telling, adding metaphor/simile if appropriate, playing with language but retaining the rhythm. The example below shows a redraft of the Cinderella story.

*Cinderella was an unhappy girl
Ruled by sisters (ugly) and a mum (step)
Her hands were sore and blackened with toil
Then, hope. A gold edged invite from the King
Step and the uglies are disguised with silk
Cinder's tears fizzed fierce on dying embers
"I'm your Fairy Godmother." She said
Pumpkin: carriage, Horse: Footman, Cinders: Dressed
Carried by music into royal arms
Midnight strikes, magic falters, Cinders flees
Crystal shoe, left moonlit. A quest begins.
PRINCE ASKS CLEANER CINDERS TO TAKE HIS HAND
Fairytale: happily ever after
Never tears of sorrow, only laughter?*

- You could even extend this idea further to create Haikus (5 syllables, 7 syllables, 5 syllables) to reduce the story even further.

Haiku

Mistreated young girl

Apron becomes a ballgown

Marries a handsome prince

Session 12-15: Making Anthologies (you may wish to spend longer on this activity)

Publishing children's poetry is as important as publishing any other work. It widens the readership for their poems and makes their work more permanent and more attractive. Working together replicating the way that the Falling Out of the Sky anthology was put together will enable children to publish something they are interested in.

Choosing a theme and asking for submission

- You might want to model the steps in the creation of an anthology using the children's work from the previous week of this sequence. You could even begin this submissions process concurrently with the writing week.
- Share Rachel Piercey's responses to the questions *What is an anthology? How did you choose the theme?* from Poetryline.
- Explain that the children in groups are going to make an anthology of their own using their own theme.
- Divide the class into publishing houses (groups of 5 or 6). Explain that first of all they will have to choose a theme that interests them. You could review once again the anthologies you have in school and their themes to give the children some ideas. The theme could be poetic (nonsense verse for example) or subject matter as in the case of *Falling Out of the Sky*.
- Once the groups have chosen a theme, provide them with an A4 envelope and a piece of A3 paper to create a call for submissions. You could use the Emma Press submissions page as a model for this <http://theemmapress.com/about/submissions/> NB: this is a publisher that publishes for adults as well as children so check the content is suitable. Alternatively you could take the format as a guide. The children will need to:
 - explain what their anthology is about
 - talk about what they are looking for from a poem. As the anthologies will include poems from known poets too, the invitation could extend to recommended poems on the same theme from other children.
 - explain how the submission can get to them
 - give a deadline
- Model the writing of the text for the class anthology of mythological poems – sticking the envelope onto the paper for the submissions to be placed inside. Ask the children to put their favourite poems they wrote in the last week (or others they have written in their journals) into the envelope.
- Invite the children to create their own submission description and display all the submissions in the classroom – you might want to get each group to read their submission to the rest of the class to ensure that everyone is aware of what's on offer.

Collecting poems

- The children now have two tasks – writing poems to meet their own or others' submission call out and choosing existing poetry to put into their anthology.
- Give each group time to go through the poetry available in the classroom hunting for poems that fit their theme – you could use this as an opportunity to discuss poetry book features – first line indexes, contents pages, subheadings, titles, blurbs etc that might help them in their search.
- You could also give the children access to trusted websites for their search. The following websites www.poetryarchive.org.uk/childrens , <http://www.poetrybyheart.org.uk/poetry-for->

[children/](#) and www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poems are all good sources.

- The group can add the poems they like to their own envelopes.
- Invite the children to write poems for each other's anthologies: in this instance they can write what they want in whichever form they choose.

Sifting poems and editing

- On the day after the deadline, using your envelope in the first instance, model the reading aloud of poems. Discuss what you like, which poems complement or contradict each other and which haven't answered the brief.
- Give the children time to go through their envelopes. Encourage them to read the poems out loud- Do they sound right?
- Group similar poems together. Do they want to achieve a spread within their theme?
- With the poems written by the other children do they want to make any changes- consider the editing processes they have been through for the poems they've previously written. Invite the children to visit each other making suggestions and editing the submissions.

Selection and thumbnail book stage.

- Invite each group to make a final selection of no more than 20 poems for their collection.
- Look at the anthology and mock up a thumbnail plan of the class anthology including a title page with publication information, contents page, introduction and poems.
- Review the poems you have – how many pages does each one need? Write the poem's title on that number of thumbnails.
- You will then need to cut out the thumbnails and start moving them around to arrange them – look again at *Falling Out of the Sky* and other anthologies – consider benefits of grouping similar poems or spreading them out. Show the children that while the poems are separated in the *Falling Out of the Sky* collection they have the notes which help you find more about that subject if you are interested.
- Invite the children to do the same. Work alongside them talking about your decisions and inviting the children to share their questions or concerns with the class as they work.
- Model the creation of the contents page with your final decision.
- Decide whether you want the poems to be typed or handwritten in your anthology.

Dummy Book Stage

- First collections of poetry are published as pamphlets – A4 pieces of paper folded and stapled with a card cover. Explain this is what the children will need to use.
- Create a dummy – laying out the poems – do they take the number of pages you expect? etc.
- The groups will also need to draft their introduction at this stage to find out how much space it will take up. Share the introduction from the anthology and establish with the children a list of things their introductions should include.

- If the children want to add the notes to the readers they can also experiment with these at this stage and note what illustrations they want and of what.

Commissioning illustration

- Within their groups the children now need to create the illustrations for their poems.
- Review the *Falling Out of the Sky* collection exploring where full page illustrations have been used and where border illustrations have been used. It might be the case that the dummy books have space for full page illustration or they might need/want to stick to borders.
- Divide the work amongst the group, drafting illustrations to match each poem.
- Once the dummy book has been completed, it can be submitted for proof reading and spelling and punctuation errors can be attended to.
- You might decide to collect book reviews and quotes for the front covers at this stage. Explain that proof copies are sent out by publishers for this purpose. Invite children to leave post-it notes or labels by the books with their reviews/quotes – the final editions could include these quotes. Remind the publishing teams that they can choose quotes to make their books seem as desirable as possible.

Publication

- Divide the work between the groups to prepare the pages of their books including cover design.
- If you are going to reproduce the books, encourage the children not to fold the paper but mark the divide between pages on their paper.
- Remind the children that in the final version presentation is paramount – encourage them to consider page layout, ensuring stanzas aren't spread across pages etc.
- Once the books are complete, they can be reproduced and bound. Invite the groups to display their books with the other poetry you have on display and in the book corner. You might even decide to sell them at a book fair or in the staff room.

Extension activity – creating a poetry performance

The children could launch their anthologies by creating a short poetry show to showcase their work. To prepare for this they will need to prepare a short speech introducing their collection and then choose poems for performance. If the poems they choose are written by other children in the class, they could invite the poet to be part of their show. Consider once again the differences between poetry that works for performance and as they are choosing encourage the children to read the poems out loud. They are choosing poems that sound the best, maybe that have more drama than metaphorical language. Give the children a chance to rehearse their shows before performing in assembly or to parents.