

Rebound

Kwame Alexander, illustrated by Dawud Anyabwile (Andersen Press)

A prequel to Kwame Alexander's successful verse novel *The Crossover*. Here Kwame uses the form to give voice to the feelings of Charlie Bell as he deals with grief following his father's death, alongside Charlie's changing relationships with friends and family. These deep concerns intermingle with his pursuits and desires such as discovering the comics his father read as a boy, reflected in the verses incorporated in comic strips interspersed throughout the novel, and wanting fashionable sneakers in which to play basketball: 'Why can't/my mother/understand/that the shoes/are not just/for my feet/but my heart,/too?'. The rhythm and energy of the poetry often reflects the fast-paced play in basketball which is central to the novel although Kwame Alexander uses a variety of poetic forms to vary the pace of the narrative and express emotion. These include nonets, concrete poetry, dialogues, lists and rhyming couplets.

This collection was shortlisted for the 2019 CLPE Poetry Award.

Overall aims of this teaching sequence.

- To develop the skills of reader response through the use of book talk, close reading and critical reflective study of a selection of poems
- To recognise how a poet uses poetry as a voice to express feelings and views
- To explore how poetry is presented on the page to enhance our understanding
- To interpret poems for performance
- To gain and maintain the interest of the listener through effective performance of poems
- To draft, compose and write poems based on personal interests, experiences and emotions using language and form with intent for effect on the reader

This teaching sequence is designed for a Year 6 or 7 class.

Note to schools and teachers:

This moving verse novel does not shy away from exploring sensitive subject matter or mature content. It will be important for teachers to read the whole novel before introducing it to pupils in order to decide how best to mediate the content. Understanding would need to be shown when introducing the book to a class in which a pupil may have experienced bereavement; although the book could provide a safe and supportive context through which pupils may be able to express their feelings.

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 first section looks at the purpose of poetry, introduces the focus poet, Kwame Alexander, and explores the pupil's responses to poetry. The second section focuses on children being given the opportunity to explore poetry performance and lifting the words off the page. The final part of the sequence encourages children to 'have a go' at writing their own poetry, preparing performances of their own writing and working to collate their poetry into a class anthology. In each section, children have the opportunity to read poetry, listen to poems being read and offer

personal responses to the poems. The whole sequence builds up towards the chance for the class to write their own poems on a subject of interest to them. The children will use the knowledge they have gained about form and structure throughout the unit to decide how to present their poem on the page as well as how these could be performed to an audience. The poems could be published in a class anthology to be shared with the school community in a variety of ways.

Before starting the sequence:

Before teaching from this poetry sequence and prior to reading *Rebound*, 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; books by the same author, planning in regular browsing and independent reading time when the children can access the books.

Teaching Approaches	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reading Aloud ▪ Listening to the poems and responding ▪ Response to illustration ▪ Performing ▪ Response and Editing ▪ Publishing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Text marking ▪ Written responses to poems studied ▪ Poetry performance ▪ Drafting, redrafting and writing poetry ▪ Published poems

Cross Curricular Links

Art:

- Consider Graphic novels or cartooning as a form as it features in the novel. You might want to collect copies of publications such as *The Phoenix* (<https://www.thephoenixcomic.co.uk/>) or use The Cartoon Museum’s website (<http://www.cartoonmuseum.org/explore/collection>) to look at layout of text and image, explore narrative boxes, speech bubbles, thought bubbles and other ways to present text.

Music:

- Throughout the sequence pupils can explore the beat and rhythm of poetry linking this to their existing knowledge of music. The pupils could also look at the musicians such as Miles Davies, The Fresh Prince, Horace Silver as well as the musical styles referenced in the novel such as pop, jazz, soul and hip hop as part of the teaching sequence.

PSHE

- Many of the issues and themes contained in the poems will provide an excellent stimulus for group discussions in PSHE sessions that will allow for the pupils to explore and extend discussions around issues brought out in the poems.

Links to other texts and resources

Other books by Kwame Alexander:

- *The Crossover* (Andersen Press)
- *Booked* (Andersen Press)
- *Swing* by Kwame Alexander with Mary Rand Hess (Blink)
- *Out of Wonder: Poems Celebrating Poets* by Kwame Alexander, Chris Colderley and Marjory Wentworth, illustrated by Ekuia Holmes (Candlewick Press)
- Hear an extended interview with Kwame Alexander here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCMa5z28gMk>

Other Verse Novels:

- *Love that Dog* by Sharon Creech (Bloomsbury)
- *Hate that Cat* by Sharon Creech (Bloomsbury)
- *The Weight of Water* by Sarah Crossan (Bloomsbury)
- *One* by Sarah Crossan (Bloomsbury)
- *Locomotion* by Jacqueline Woodson (Puffin USA)
- *Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson (Puffin USA)
- *Home of the Brave* by Katherine Applegate (Macmillan USA)

Resources to support the teaching of poetry:

- CLPE's Poetryline website contains a wealth of resources including videos of poets performing their poems and talking about their writing process, which will inspire children in their own performances and writing. These can be found at: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poets> and <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poet-interviews>
- The Poetryline website also contains resources to support subject knowledge around poetic forms and devices: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poetic-forms-and-devices>

Teaching Sessions:

Part 1: The Power of Poetry

The first part of this sequence introduces the children to the focus text and the focus poet.

Session 1: Introducing the verse novel as a genre

Before this session, ensure that individual poetry journals (small notebooks, which could be handmade) are available for each pupil. The pupils can make notes in these during the sessions and also between the sessions, whenever they feel inspired to write or draw, they can also be a place for working up drafts of their own poetry. Later in the text *Rebound*, it is revealed that the poems are from the journal that the central character Charlie kept during the summer of 1988 so you may want to encourage the children to see this journal in the same way, for example allowing them to decorate the front cover and to take it home after the sequence and to continue to use it over the summer holidays.

- Without revealing the title, author or front cover of the text, give the pupils, individually or in pairs, a copy of the first poem in the book, *Looking Back*.
- Allow time and space for them to read and respond to the text, text marking with their thoughts, feelings, questions and ideas about the piece in mixed pairs or small groups to share ideas and interpretations. At this point, allow the pupils to reflect as a reader, without telling them to look specifically for poetic techniques or devices, although it is fine if they do this naturally. Share their responses to the poem as a whole class, clarifying for example language that may be unfamiliar to them due to its cultural and historic context.
- Reveal that this is the first poem in a verse novel. Ask the pupils if they have already read any verse novels before. *What were they? Who wrote them?*
- If they haven't, ask them what they think a verse novel might be and how it might be different from a novel. Explain that this verse novel is written by award winning author Kwame Alexander, who has previously written verse novels such as *Booked* and *The Crossover*. Let any pupils who have read those books share their thoughts and impressions. Explain that this novel is a prequel to the book *The Crossover* although it was published afterwards.
- At this point you may want to explore the form of the book and the concept of a verse novel, especially if this is not a style the pupils have read before.
- The author and poet Sarah Crossan describes the verse novel as snapshots or moments and impressions of someone's life. You may want to share Sarah Crossan speaking about the verse novel with the pupils, this video can be found here: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poet-interviews/thinking-about-types-collection-verse-novels-0>
- You can also hear Kwame Alexander discuss the difference between poetry and prose here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bMU6HWYbdvE&index=6&list=PLr-pRmuKcD37nTRqOfK2HDQiuKplAm8lr>
- Consider what both poets say about verse novels and poetry in the clips.
- Now reveal to the pupils the title of the book, *Rebound* which also featured in the first poem, *what double meaning does this have in relation to the poem we have read?* (A rebound is when a player gains control of a basketball after a shot is missed.) Discuss their ideas and establish how much knowledge the class have about the game basketball; this will be useful as the novel progresses.

- Come back to the poem *Looking Back*. Think of how Sarah Crossan described the verse novel as a series of photographs. *What did you see in this image Kwame Alexander presents at the start of the book? What is seen and what is left unseen for you to interpret? Look at the title 'Looking Back' – does this have any significance? What photos do you think would come next in this collection? How do you think the story will progress?* Collect initial ideas from the pupils to reflect on in further sessions.

Session 2: Responding to Poetry

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.

- Provide the pupils with the poems in the novel from *May 28, 1988* on p.5 to *Home* on p.13 to read for themselves.
- Allow plenty of time for the pupils to read and discuss the poems, sharing their emotional responses to the situation that Charlie has found himself in and the grief he is experiencing.
- Building on the way in which you explored the initial poem in the first session, you may want to use these prompts to support their discussion:
 - Read with the eye: look at the poem laid out on the page. Look at a poem as you would a painting, a photograph, a sculpture. What *does* it look like?
 - Read with the ears: read aloud poems that appeal – hear their 'music', their sound.
 - Responding to what is unique: read a poem at least twice – finds its heart, an idea, a feeling.

Benton and Benton (1999)

- Ask the pupils to feed back in their groups their responses to the poems; which ones they like best and why, which 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.
- Ask them to consider how the ways in which the poems are laid out on the page add to their understanding. For example, considering the ways in which Kwame Alexander uses white space, length of stanzas, line breaks, use of italics, bold words, and capitalisation as well as the inclusion of a comic strip. Ask the pupils if they were surprised to see the inclusion of comic book panels in the verse novel.
- As they read and re-read the poems, also ask them to pick out the poems that are the most memorable for them and to note what they find out and can infer about the characters of Charlie, Skinny, Charlie's father, his mother. *Which character(s) interest them most? Why? What do you find out about the family as a whole? How could this relate back to the first poem we read together? What further 'snapshots' have we been shown?*
- It might be helpful to begin a 'Role on the Wall' for the central character in the book at this point. Draw around one of the children or have a prepared template cut out, pin this to the

learning wall. Ask the pupils to write on post-it notes words or phrases they would use to describe Charlie's feelings and personality, which can be stuck on the inside of the outline and what the children know about his outward appearance or facts and other information about him to be stuck on the outside.

- Later in the book you can also complete a Role on the Wall for his father, mother, Skinny, CJ, his grandparents and Roxie. Continue to return to the Roles on the Wall as you read the story, adding information in different colours so that you can track the emotional journey the characters take as the story progresses and how a reader's perceptions of a character can alter as a story progresses.
- Ask the pupils what they notice about the overall themes that are emerging in the novel, for example grief, friendship, family, basketball, comic book heroes, sports legends.
- Finally, reflect on the reading you have done so far. *Are you engaged with the story so far? Why or why not? Did you feel like you were 'working harder' as you were reading to gain a full understanding of what was going on?*

Read aloud up to *Lunch* p.56 before the next session. Stop at different points, to clarify the children's understanding and allow for discussion around what the children like, dislike, any patterns that they notice or any questions that it brings up. Continue to add to the Role on the Wall made for Charlie and begin to create new ones for other central characters.

Session 3: Responding to Poetry

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.

Focus poems: I Skipped school today p.44, After dinner p.46, Conversation (that ends badly) p.49, Overheard p.51, and Things I Think About Before I Fall Asleep p.53

- Place the pupils into small mixed experience groups or pairs and share out copies of the focus poems.
- Support the pupils to respond to the poems as you have modelled in the previous session. You may also want to have the following prompts displayed to guide their talk and response:
 - *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?*
 - *What type of poem is it?*
 - *Can you recognise the form of the poem?*

– *How is it laid out?*

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

- Once the pupils have spent time responding to the poems in small groups or pairs, ask them to feed back their responses to the whole group – sharing the poem that they have looked at and inviting other pupils to respond to the poem.
- Particularly focus on the pupils' emotional response to the themes explored in the poems.
- Display the poem 'I Skipped School Today', and ask the children to read this aloud and to walk around as they are saying the words of the poem out loud. *What do they notice about the rhythm of the poem as they walk around reading out loud? Does reading it aloud this way and moving with the poem change how they respond to the poem? How does this make the writing poetic?*
- The pupils will notice that the word 'and' is repeated multiple times to begin the lines in the poem. Consider with the pupils how this creates a pattern and rhythm which affects the way the poem is spoken out loud. (This technique is repeated in the novel in the following poems and you could compare and contrast these again once you have read the novel in its entirety to consider further the effect this has on the reader: *Ten Reasons Why I Hate Sirens* p.23, *The Fourth* p.346, *Things I Think About While I'm in Jail* p.369)
- You may want to explain that the deliberate repetition of the first word in the poem in order to achieve an effect is known as Anaphora. Consider with the children what impact this device has on them as they listen to the poem read aloud.
- For example, can they notice how this repetition creates a driving rhythm and that it intensifies the emotion of the poem giving us an insight into Charlie's thoughts and feelings while he is grieving for his father? Also consider the line break at the end of the poem, *why did Kwame Alexander create a pause between Charlie's thoughts and his mother's question? What impact does this have on you as a reader and listener?*
- Reflecting on the novel so far, compare this poem to the way in which the other poems are laid out, considering why different poems may take on different forms.
- Ask the pupils to consider the different ways in which the content of the poem has shaped the author's choice of form. As an example, at the start of the novel the way in which the poem 'May 28, 1988' p.5 has been crafted allows the reader to feel the energy and flow of the basketball game that Charlie is watching and invites being read aloud. Whereas the poem 'Conversation' p.18 reveals the back and forth, somewhat stilted and antagonistic conversations Charlie has with his mother which are shaped by the pain of their grief.
- Consider with the children how the different forms used in the novel also allow the book to vary in pace for example, considering how *Overheard* p. 51 is very different from the earlier poem *May 28, 1988* p.5.
- Continue to explore this as you read the novel aloud in between the sessions.

- You can also hear Kwame Alexander reflect on his choices of form more generally here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DiF03ELKt9Y&list=PLrpRmuKcD37nTRq0fK2HDQiuKplAm8lr&index=4>

Read up to the poem *Unleashed* p.106 before the next session. Stop at different points, to clarify the children's understanding and allow for discussion around what the pupils like, dislike, any patterns that they notice or any questions that it brings up. You may want to give the pupils the opportunity to reflect on the themes and issues discussed in their own poetry journals. You may also want to continue to explore the theme of grief in additional PSHE lessons.

Session 4: Response to Illustration

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

Focus poems: So Fly p10, Air Jordan p.60 and Dad p.107

- Hand out copies of the comic book sections explored so far (pages 10-11 and 60-61) or have copies displayed on an IWB. Read aloud the text boxes and model the rhythm and rhyme that characterises the poetry on these pages. Consider the pace and flow of these poems when read aloud and how they differ from the other poems explored so far.
- Ask the pupil to consider why the poems on these pages are structured in this way, *what insight is Kwame Alexander giving us into Charlie's inner thoughts and emotions?* Reflect on the sense that these panels show us Charlie's daydreams and wishes, based on the style of comics he is reading at the same time in the novel.
- Some of the pupils may also recognise the 'trash talk' that occurs in these poems, the process of using insulting or boastful speech which is intended to demoralise or humiliate a sporting opponent. The language and structure of the poems are also similar to the poems in the poetry slams or rap battles which feature braggadocio and put-downs and that are also a test of skills in wordplay, imagery, rhyme and rhythm.
- Following this, ask the pupils to look closely at the images drawing out what they notice.
- *What can you tell from the expressions on the characters' faces? The gestures and movement of characters? The stylised representation of each person?* Ask the class to also consider what clues are in the images which tells the reader more about the character Charlie. For example, what do his facial expressions and body language suggest about his feelings or what he wishes he were like in his imagination. Also ask the pupils to consider what they notice about the way in which the illustration complements or extends their feelings about the poem.
- Now reveal the next comic in the novel, on page 107. This is entitled *Dad* and rather than being an imagined scenario Charlie would like to be in, it is an actual memory of a time he and his father played basketball together.

- Read this poem aloud and give the pupils time to respond to the accompanying images and the way in which the text is laid out on the page. Ask the pupils to respond to the way in which Charlie's father is presented in these images and the contrast between him and the other father, Mr Miller. Consider if this is how the pupils imagined Charlie's father and what this depiction may reveal about how Charlie thinks of his father now he is no longer alive.
- The illustrated pages were created by the illustrator Dawud Anyabwile, the pupils can find out more about him here: <https://www.anyabwile.com/about>

Read up to the poem *Friday* p.117 before the next session. Stop at different points, to clarify the children's understanding and allow for discussion around what the pupils like, dislike, any patterns that they notice or any questions that it brings up. Continue to add to the Roles on the Wall created for the different characters.

Session 5: Book Talk

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.

Focus poem: Saturday p.117

- Read aloud the poem *Saturday* p.117 and allow the pupils to respond to the content and emotion conveyed in this scene of Charlie and his mother eating breakfast. Consider with the pupils the difference the way in which Charlie's relationship with his mother is presented to the reader compared with his memories of his father.
- Hand out copies of the poem and ask the pupils to read the poem again considering what effect the poem has on them as readers and the way in which the author has been able to do this with the way in which he has crafted the poem. The pupils may find it helpful to text mark to support their observations.
- You may also want to display the following questions to support their thinking:
 - *What do you notice about the words that are used, the rhythm, the shape of the poem?*
 - *The characters in the poem?*
 - *The message and meaning of the poem?*
 - *The way the poem makes you feel?*
 - *The tone of the poem?*
 - *The images the poem makes you see?*
 - *Any figurative language that is used?*
 - *The meaning of the poem, a line or a word. Why the poet has used a particular word?*
 - *Are there repetitions of words, lines or stanzas?*
 - *Are there patterns of line length?*

– *Is the poem written in a way that makes a shape on the page?*

- Come back together and share the pupils' notes and observations. Return to the Roles on the Wall created earlier and add further information about Charlie and his mother based on their reading of this poem.
- Ask the pupils to reflect on the different poems read and closely observed so far, *what do they notice about the way in which the narrative is driven forward but simultaneously the reader can spend time reading and re-reading the individual poems to gain further insight and meaning? What do they think of the verse novel as a form so far? How is it similar to or different from other texts they have read before?*

Read up to the poem *Steaming* p.145 before the next session. Stop at different points, to clarify the children's understanding and allow for discussion around what the pupils like, dislike, any patterns that they notice or any questions that it brings up.

Session 6: Exploring Setting

Poetry is a dense form and one which has connections with art and music. Therefore, to support their reading and understanding pupils need opportunities to respond to the poems they encounter in a variety of ways.

Focus poems: Looking Back p.1, In The Morning p.22, After Dinner p.46 and The Rink p.133

- Place the pupils into small mixed experience groups or pairs and share out copies of the focus poems so that each group has copies of all the poems.
- Ask the pupils to re-read and discuss the poems in relation to the way in which Kwame Alexander has created a sense of place and time for the reader, specifically thinking about the way in which the reader is taken back to the late 1980's. *What aspects of the setting are they unfamiliar with, or suggest to them that the novel is set in a different era?*
- Ask the pupils to text mark and create a bank of words, phrases and imagery which support the reader in imagining the setting. For example, teen pop-cultural references such as the sweets 'Now and Laters', MTV, Will Smith, Jazzy Jeff, Michael Jackson, Michael Jordan, roller skating, roller discos, Jordache jeans, Air Jordan shoes, pop-tarts.
- The pupils might also want to look back at the comic strip panels to consider the clothes and hairstyles with which the people are depicted, as well as other things such as the characters having to call each other on a house phone, the fact that Charlie is woken up by a radio clock, the absence of social media and mobile phones.
- If it is helpful you may want to allow the children to look up some of these references or to provide images of these things so that the pupils can create a fuller image of the setting in their mind's eye.
- Following this, ask the pupils to discuss and then to note down in their poetry journals what they would need to include in their own writing if they were to create the idea of what it was like to be a young person in 2019. *What cultural references would they want to include,*

referring to current music, trends, fashion, food, hobbies, technology etc.? The pupils may want to include some of these references when they come to write their own poems later in the sessions.

Read up to *Breakfast* p. 183 before the next session. Stop at different points, to clarify the children's understanding and allow for discussion around what the pupils like, dislike, any patterns that they notice or any questions that it brings up. Create Roles on the Wall for Charlie's grandparents as they are introduced.

Part 2: Lifting Poems off the Page; Reading Aloud, Dramatising and Performing

Session 7: Exploring Performance

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

- Teachers may find the following guide useful before starting these sessions:
<https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/clippa>
- Spend some time watching Kwame Alexander performing his poetry: there are some videos available on his Facebook page:
 - <https://www.facebook.com/KwameAlexanderBooks/videos/1796217687112349?sfns=xmo>
 - <https://www.facebook.com/KwameAlexanderBooks/videos/1788939051173546?sfns=xmo>
- Allow time for the pupils to enjoy the performances and savour the poetry, language and his performance style.
- Ask the pupils to consider what they notice about his performance style; *could they characterise it in any way? Is there anything that adds to his performance style that is uniquely his? Is there anything that brings the poems to life in a way that another person reading it wouldn't be able to do? Can they now 'hear' his voice when they look at his poems on the page?*
- Following this, ask the pupils to consider what they think could influence a particular performance. For example, individual style, accent, dialect, cultural heritage, the poem's theme, context or form.
- Consider the advice that the poets have given more generally on how to perform poetry: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poet-interviews/what-advice-would-you-give-performing-poetry>
- Allow the pupils to respond to the different advice given. For example, A. F. Harrold suggests that you need to '*read it [the poem] many times*', Sarah Crossan suggests that pupils try to '*own the space...pretend there is no one else there...*' and that '*you find it easier to make sense of the poem once it is said out loud*' and Kate Wakeling suggests letting the pupils '*bring the sounds of words to life*'.

- Ask the pupils to reflect on the different advice given and to reflect on their own experiences of performing poetry. *What do they notice about the difference between reading a poem silently to yourself, hearing a poem read aloud and seeing a poem performed?*
- You may want to summarise the advice given for a successful performance in the pupils' own words and display this on the Working Wall for the class to refer back to.
- Now take a previously read poem such as *Air Jordan* p.60. Allow the children the chance to read it aloud in small groups. Discuss the rhythm, rhyme and the patterns of language.
- Ask the pupils to read it aloud again, encouraging them to move or beat to the repeated rhythm, listening out for emphasised words or joining in with the predictable words.
- 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, emphasising the repeated rhythmic structure.
- Repeat through shared reading, allowing the pupils to enjoy being able to recite parts, or all, of the poem by heart, engaging them in the rhythm and rhyme.
- To support this, share with the pupils a short video of Kwame Alexander performing this poem: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7U-Tke3pjjU>
- Discuss what they noticed about his performance style and the way he adlibbed a section at the end.
- Ask the pupils to work on reciting the poem by heart in small groups, organising themselves any way they like, e.g. in unison throughout or each taking a verse. They may also want to use beat boxing or an accompanying beat, for example using an App such as Garage Band.
- Support pupils with an enlarged copy of the poem. Ask the pupils 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 how music could accompany or enhance the performances.

Before 9am 13th June 2019, these performances could be filmed and submitted for the CLiPPA shadowing scheme competition to win the opportunity to perform this poem on stage as part of the award ceremony at the National Theatre, see: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/clippa/clippa-schools-shadowing-scheme>

Before the next session, read up to the poem *Amen* p.226. Stop at different points, to clarify the children's understanding and allow for discussion around what the pupils like, dislike, any patterns that they notice or any questions that it brings up. Create a Role on the Wall for Roxie as she is introduced.

Session 8: Performing

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

In the following two sessions the pupils will have the opportunity to compare contrasting poems in order to compare performance styles, starting with poems that enable exploration of more 'performative' aspects, such as rhythm and repetition and then reflecting on poems with different content and ideas that could require a different approach to performance.

Focus Poems: The Score p.215, 10-9 p.217, Get in the Game p.218, Huddle p.220, Awry p.221, After Roxie checks p.222, To The Rescue p.224 and Amen p.226

- Using the poems above the pupils will need to be placed into 7 groups so that they can work on a performance of each poem. As a culmination they can then put their performances together to tell the 'story' of the basketball game that is dramatised across this section of the verse novel.
- Begin by reflecting on the advice the pupils heard in the earlier session, from the poets featured on Poetryline. *What generalisations can the pupils make about the ways in which poetry is most effectively performed?*
- Return to advice given by the poet A. F. Harrold who suggests that the best way to explore performance is to consider the specific poem you are going to lift off the page as 'the poem will speak to you'.
- To support their performances, you may also want to show the pupils' performances by different poets which reflect a difference in performance style. Examples can be found on the Poetryline website: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poets>
- Give out the different poems to the different groups and allow the children time to explore the poems first. Following this, allow the children time to consider how the theme, ideas and content of the poems will shape the performances they create. Ensure that the pupils pay attention to the way in which the poem is laid out and the decisions Kwame Alexander has made around form, which will support their performance.
- Give plenty of time for the pupils to rehearse and perform the poem in groups before performing as a whole class.
- Once they have performed ask the pupils to reflect on the different ways in which the groups lifted the poems off the page considering similarities and differences between the performances and identifying what different groups did that was effective for an audience listening. *How was the basketball match brought to life through the poetry performance?*

Before the next session, read up to the poem *Skinny in DC* p.278. Stop at different points, to clarify the children's understanding and allow for discussion around what the pupils like, dislike, any patterns that they notice or any questions that it brings up.

Session 9: Reflecting on Performance Style

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.

Focus Poem: Sometimes, I wish p.250

- Read the poem *Sometimes, I wish* p.250 aloud to allow pupils to hear the language and to respond to what the poem is about and how it makes the pupils feel. Explore the poem as a whole class to unpick the idea of a poem 'speaking to the reader' more thoroughly.
- Then give the pupils copies of the poem and allow them the chance to re-read it aloud in pairs. Ask the pupils to reflect on the use of language in the poem and the style, *in what ways do the language choices create an impact on them as a reader? How is the poem arranged on the page?* Through reading the poem aloud and hearing the poem read out, the pupils may be able to describe the way in which the tone and mood of the poem contrasts with the set of poems that they explored in the previous session.
- Ask the pupils to consider, *if this poem were to be performed, how do the pupils think this should be done? Would it be the same kind of performance that they created in the previous session? Why? Why not? What may shape the performance of this poem? In what ways does this poem 'speak to the reader' which will direct the way in which the words are lifted off the page? What is the theme of the poem? How will this impact on how it is read aloud?* Allow them time to discuss in pairs and feed back to a whole group reflection.
- Ask the pupils to work in small groups to prepare a performance of this poem. Discuss with the pupils the different aspects of poetry performance that enhance the experience for an audience such as tone of voice, intonation, volume, facial expression and gesture and which are most appropriate for this poem.
- Give time for the pupils 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 pupils could then go on to create another performance taking on each other's feedback.
- After this session, pupils may want to return to their poetry journals to write about the issues discussed and to reflect on their own personal experiences.

Before the next session, read up to the poem *There's a Hole in my Soul* p.374. Stop at different points, to clarify the children's understanding and allow for discussion around what the pupils like, dislike, any patterns that they notice or any questions that it brings up. You may want to plan in an additional PSHE session to explore some of the themes and issues this section of the verse novel raises such as drug taking, getting arrested and gun violence.

Session 10: Reflecting on Performance Style

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.

Focus Poem: Rebound p.376

- Read aloud the poem *Rebound* p.376 and allow the pupils to respond to what the poem is about and how it makes them feel. Consider the imagery and metaphor contained in the poem, and the novel as a whole. *In what way has Charlie had to rebound? What does 'using the blackboard' mean? How can we draw analogies with his experiences on the basketball court with his wider life?*
- Add to the Role on the Wall for Charlie and his grandfather and consider their actions and feelings at this moment in the text.
- Hand out copies of the poem and re-read it aloud also asking the class to consider the poem on the page as well as how it sounds read aloud.
- Ask the children to work in pairs to prepare a performance of this poem, reflecting on the fact that some of the poem is dialogue and how they might use body language, gesture and intonation to show the relationship between the two characters.
- Share some examples around the class and again consider the difference in performance style of this poem and how the form has to some extent, led the performance.

Session 11: Book Talk

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.

- Read aloud until the end of the book. Discuss the pupils' responses to the ending of the novel. *What did they like or dislike? What puzzled them? What connections can they make to the text?* Consider together the book's epilogue including the sequence of poems set thirty years later. Ask the pupils if they made them look back differently at the earlier sections. *Are they encouraged to go and read *The Crossover* to find out what happened to Charlie and CJ as adults and their own two sons?*
- Return to the poem *Dear Boys* p.405. Re-read the poem aloud and allow the pupils to reflect on the way in which the poem mirrors and directly repeats lines from the opening poem of the novel, *Looking Back*. Reflect on the impact this has on them as readers and the emotions it stirs within them.
- Reflect more broadly on the novel and poems you have explored as a whole considering the following:
 - *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 novel? Why? Why not?*

- *What did you think about the verse novel form?*
- *How does this compare with narrative novels? Which do you prefer? Why?*
- *If you were to write a letter to the author, what would you say about the novel?*
- *What lingering questions would you ask him? (You could get the pupils to write these up and send some to the poet or email questions to him.)*

Part 3: Writing and Performing Poetry

Sessions 12: Generating ideas and Writing

It is important to develop pupils as reflective writers by giving ample opportunity throughout the writing process to talk about themselves as writers, enable them to voice their views, listen to others and develop new knowledge and understanding.

- Explore the videos on the Poetryline website in which the featured poets offer advice to young people who want to write poetry: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poet-interviews/what-advice-would-you-give-budding-poets>
- Reflect on the suggestions given and particularly any that resonated with the pupils in your class. For example, John Agard suggests that you can write poetry about anything ‘as long as it touches you’ or if ‘you have emotional engagement’ with the subject matter. Sarah Crossan suggests taking time to ‘wait for the words to come’ to ‘walk around and move’ to the sound of the words and then to record ideas on paper ‘to slow the process down’. And Jackie Kay talks about being ‘authentically yourself’.
- Reflect on the ideas that the pupils have been noting in their poetry journals throughout the unit. *Which ones do they feel strongly enough about to take through to writing?* Perhaps they will have been inspired by the themes explored through Kwame Alexander’s verse novel and would like to use their poems as a way to express emotion or they may want to be playful with language.
- Think about a theme or topic you could explore in a poem. Model writing a poem based on one of the topics discussed throughout the sequence during a shared writing session, talking through the choices that you are making as a writer to bring the experience alive for the reader.
- Think about the form the poem will take; *will it rhyme to add humour? Will you arrange it as a prose poem as it tells a story? What language can you use to make your writing poetic? What did Kwame Alexander do to make his writing poetic? Which forms or devices would you like to try out that you have experienced through the exploration of this verse novel?*
- Allow time in the remainder of this session and in a following session for pupils to draft their own poems around the themes and subjects of their choice.

Session 13-14: Drafting and Editing

Pupils’ writing can be improved if they, a partner or their teacher reads it aloud at an early stage, giving it life and breath and helping the young poet see the patterns and tunes they have created.

Just as an author would work with an editor, pupils should be given opportunities to help each other by reading their writing aloud and responding as readers. This allows them to support each other as they compose and structure their ideas.

- Once the pupils have an initial draft or drafts, allow them to read aloud their poetry to a response partner to lift the words off the page, hearing how they sound when performed.
- Give time for response partners to ask the writers questions, discuss parts they aren't sure are working or make suggestions to improve the writing. For example, writers can tell response partners what they are pleased with in their writing, particular devices or parts of the poem they may be struggling with and gaining a picture from the reader of how their writing impacts on them.
- Response partners should be encouraged to reflect on the impact of the poem on them as a reader. Pupils can then re-draft parts of their work, based on these conversations.
- Ask the pupils to think together about how the poem could be presented on the page to enhance the meaning and the reader's understanding. *How will it look on the page? What form will it take? How will you use line breaks, spacing on the page to enhance the meaning or emotions behind your poem? Will you hand write it? Will you publish using ICT? What script or font will you choose? Will you make any specific decisions about the way certain words look or are placed on the page? Will you illustrate the poem? If so, how will the words and illustration sit and work together?*
- Give further time for pupils to redraft any parts of their poems that they discussed with their response partner, or to work on their poems further if they need time to do this.

Session 15: Presenting poetry through performance

After listening to poetry, pupils may want to write their own poems. These, too, can be recorded with music or sound effects, and kept together with a class anthology in the listening corner. Alternatively, individual collections of poems can be built up by each child and presented both in book form and performed or recorded; collections of this kind can show the range of subjects and forms explored.

- When the pupils are happy with the way their poem/poems look on the page, they can begin to think about how they could be lifted off the page and be performed to an audience.
- Give each child a photocopy of their poem and allow them to mark this up with performance ideas. Ask the pupils to consider: *will you perform on your own? Do you need others to support you? How will you use voice, body movements and facial expression to enhance the listener's engagement and understanding?*
- Following this, hold a poetry fest for pupils to do readings from their collections to parents or other classes in the school or display their work as part of an exhibition, including the published poems and accompanying illustrations.
- For the pupils performing at the event, ask them to consider what they learnt from listening to the poems being read aloud and performed by other poets as well as trying out ideas in their performances.

- Display the pupils' own poems prominently in the reading corner, library or a shared area so they can be read by a wider audience.