

The Rainmaker Danced by John Agard, illustrated by Satoshi Kitamura (Hodder)

John Agard's poems display an intense integrity, never talking down to children, encouraging them to question, while being playful in tone, witty or satirical. They focus on social observations, play with ideas from mythology and traditional tales, consider new developments in technology and reflect on nature and humanity and their interaction. The bold black and white illustrations complement and counterpoint the ideas in the poems.

This collection was shortlisted for the 2018 CLPE Poetry Award.

Overall aims of this teaching sequence.

- To explore and understand the importance of poetry as a genre
- To know how to listen and respond to a wide range of poems from a single poet collection
- To understand that poems are written for different reasons
- To interpret poems for performance
- To gain and maintain the interest of the listener through effective performance of poems
- To recognise how a poet uses poetry as a voice to express their own feelings and views
- To explore how poetry is presented on the page to enhance our understanding
- 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 4 or Year 5 class.

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, John Agard, and explores the things that inspire his writing. 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, offer personal responses to the poems and to prepare them for performance. 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 will 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 *The Rainmaker Danced*, it would be useful to spend time exploring poetry more generally with the children in your class. If this is not part of the whole school ethos, consider immersing the school, and certainly your year group, in a wide range

of poetry. Become familiar with CLPE's Poetryline website www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline and other sites that enable the children to watch poets reading their own poems. It is important for the children to see a poet perform a poem as it was intended to be read. Make available collections of poetry books; collections by the same author and anthologies, planning in regular browsing and independent reading time when the children can access the books.

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

Cross Curricular Links

Art:

- Through the exploration of Satoshi Kitamura's illustrative style, art is used as a means of visualising and representing responses to the poetry in the collection. Following on from this you may want to use a range of materials as well as a focus on specific techniques for observing real objects and representing imagined experiences. Responding to the children's drawings afterwards will allow them to explore the effectiveness of techniques and materials used.

Music:

- Throughout the sequence children can explore the beat and rhythm of poetry linking this to their existing knowledge of music. The sequence also allows for opportunity for improvisation and to compose music for a poetry performance.

Links to other texts and resources

Other poetry collections by John Agard:

- *Goldilocks on CCTV*, illustrated by Satoshi Kitamura (Frances Lincoln)
- *The Young Inferno*, illustrated by Satoshi Kitamura (Frances Lincoln)
- *Einstein, the Girl Who Hated Maths*, illustrated by Satoshi Kitamura (Hodder)
- *Hello H2O*, illustrated by Satoshi Kitamura (Hodder)
- *Under the Moon & Over the Sea*, edited by John Agard and Grace Nichols (Walker)

Find out more about these books and others by John Agard and Grace Nichols in this CLPE booklist: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/clpe/library/booklists/john-agard-grace-nichols-booklist>

Information about John Agard:

- <https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/john-agard>

Resources to support the teaching of poetry:

- CLPE's Poetryline website contains a wealth of resources including videos of John Agard and other 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 collection and the focus poet.

Session 1: An introduction to Poetry

The experience of being read to is likely to be the real foundation of children's knowledge of poetry, and is also going to be a major influence on how they write themselves. So it is important that it should be as rich, interesting and 'ear-catching' as it can be.

- Before this session, ensure that individual poetry journals (small notebooks, which could be handmade) are available for each child. The children 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.
- Begin the session by asking the children to share their favourite poems with each other, encourage the children to bring these poems into class and provide a setting in which they can explore their recommendations, such as in a poetry corner. From this starting point you can begin to explore the poems that the children are drawn to and respond to in the collection *The Rainmaker Danced*.
- This will also be a useful starting point for discovering what the children like and dislike about poetry, if they have a favourite author that they turn to when reading poetry and if they read poems outside of the school setting.
- At this point you can therefore explore what the children already know about poetry, not only to inform future planning, but also to address any misconceptions that may arise. Some children for example may think that all poems have to rhyme.

- Write the names of any poets and poems mentioned on word cards or sentence strips and add these to a working wall. After the session, source photographs of any poets mentioned to display alongside their names and copies of any of the poems mentioned to read and share at communal reading times.
- It is useful at the start of a poetry sequence to debunk the myth that exploring poetry means only deconstructing the use of language in the poem or only looking at the poetic form and devices, as it is also about responding emotionally to a poem and the children need to be encouraged to do this.
- Pick a selection of four or five poems to read aloud from *The Rainmaker Danced* that you interested you as a reader. Share your thoughts, feelings and responses with the children as a model of how they can join in with discussions about poetry.
- Read the poems aloud again and discuss the children's responses to the poems.
- Here you can use techniques taken from Aidan Chambers' book *Tell Me: Children, Reading & Talk with The Reading Environment* (Thimble Press 2011). These questions give children accessible starting points for discussion:
 - *Tell me...was there anything you liked about this poem?*
 - *Was there anything that you particularly disliked...?*
 - *Was there anything that puzzled you?*
 - *Were there any patterns...any connections that you noticed...?*
 - *Do you notice any patterns in the language such as repetition?*
 - *Were there any memorable words or phrases that stood out to you?*
- You may wish to record the children's responses on A3 pieces of paper or on the IWB. You could then add this to an ongoing working wall or poetry display, which the children can continue to add to as the sequence continues.
- Encourage the children to return to the poems individually or in small groups, continuing their exploration of the poems after the session.

Session 2: Reading aloud

One of the best ways of involving children in poetry is to make a habit of reading aloud to them as often as possible. The experience of being read to is likely to be the real foundation of their knowledge of poetry, and is also going to be a major influence on how they write themselves. Poetry is rooted in word games, word play, song and rhythm, and it's therefore particularly important that it should be heard as well as read. It is important that voices other than the teacher's should be heard interpreting a poem. In this way, a range of accents, dialects and voices can be introduced into the reading. It can be particularly valuable for children to hear the poets themselves reading their own poems. This allows authentic voices to be heard.

Focus Poems: When Questions Are Bliss, More Pointless Questions, Rooms and Seeking Answers.

- Read aloud the poem 'When Questions Are Bliss' to the children. Ask them for their initial responses to the poem. *What do they like about it? Is there anything they dislike? Can they make connections with it? Do they have any questions about it?*
- Allow plenty of time for the children to read and discuss the poem. Building on the way in which you explored the initial poems in the first session, you may also 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)

- Once the children have had time to discuss their responses to the poem, share the performance of the poem with the children which can be found here: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poets/agard-john>
- Allow some time to discuss responses to John Agard's performance. *What did they notice about his performance? Was it what they expected? Why? Why not? How do they think the form of the poem, the way it is laid out on the page, affected the performance? What about the content of the poem? Did this affect the type of performance it was?*
- Place the children into mixed ability groups and give the children copies of the following poems: 'More Pointless Questions', 'Rooms' and 'Seeking Answers'.
- Focus the children to consider what they can find out about John Agard from the ideas expressed in the poems and to make annotations around the poems. You may also need to give the children opportunities to look up new language.
- Rotate the poems around the groups so they all have an opportunity to respond to the different poems.
- Ask the children to feed back in their groups their responses to the poems; which ones they like best and why, words or phrases they like or that add meaning or feeling, questions they have around the poems and connections with shared or real life experiences.
- Then bring the discussion back to what the children have been able to infer about John Agard from the poetry. *What do you think his interests, pre-occupations or motivations are? Are there common themes or ideas emerging from your discussion of the poems?*
- The children may notice that many of his poems focus on social observations, are witty or satirical, play with ideas from mythology and traditional tales, consider new developments in technology and reflect on the nature of humanity.
- You may also want to give the children the opportunity to spend time exploring the collection of John Agard's poetry performances and readings on the Poetryline website

(beginning with poems from previous collections).

<https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poets/agard-john>

- Spend time allowing the class to enjoy the performances and respond to these.
- There are also videos available on the Poetryline website in which John Agard speaks about his writing process and his inspiration for writing:
 - <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poet-interviews/how-do-you-go-about-writing-your-poetry-0>
 - <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poet-interviews/how-do-you-work-your-poems>
- Give the children time to watch the videos and to respond to his comments. Ask the children, *did the video confirm or challenge any of your ideas about him?*
- At this point the children can also comment on whether they write in their own time, how they feel when they write poetry, why they write and so on. Consider if they think this is similar to or different from John Agard's motivations. Reflect on why people write poetry more generally. For example, *are all poets motivated by the same things? Are all poems written from the same inspiration? Why? Why not?*
- You may want to encourage the children to begin their own poetry journals at this point in the sequence where they can begin to express their thoughts, feelings and experiences through the medium of poetry.

Session 3: 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: Progress, Line, The Balloons And The Pins, A Single Cry.

- Place the children into small mixed groups or pairs and share out the focus poems.
- Support the children to respond to the poems as you have modelled in the previous session. You may 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 2012

- Once the children have spent time responding to the poems in small groups or pairs. Ask them to feedback their responses to the whole group – sharing the poem that they have looked at and inviting other children to respond to the poem.
- Particularly focus on the children's emotional response to the themes explored in the poems.
For example, what do they notice connects or links the four poems? What themes or ideas is John Agard exploring? Why do they think he might have been inspired to write these poems? Who do they think the 'balloons and pins' may be? Could this be a metaphor for something seen in reality? A real experience? Why do they think the pins 'always win'? Why does the poem 'A Single Cry' suggest humanity unites around a common enemy? Do the children know of examples where they have seen this to be true? Can they challenge this assertion?
- Display the poem 'Progress', 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?*
- The children may notice the way in which after several lines the number of syllables extends, repeats and then towards the end of the poem this decreases again. Consider how this creates a pattern and rhythm which affects the way the poem is spoken out loud.
- You may want to explain that the deliberate repetition of the first part of the sentence in order to achieve an artistic effect is known as Anaphora. Consider with the children what impact this has on them as they listen to the poem read aloud. For example, can they notice how this repetition creates a driving rhythm? Which they may have noticed as they walked around saying the poem aloud, or that it intensifies the emotion of the poem.
- Look at the poem on the page again and consider how the way in which the poem is laid out also impacts on how you will speak the words out loud, for example the line break between 'fire a canon' and 'it takes a second'.
- Reflect on why John Agard may have made these decisions. For example, *why did he create a pause between the two verses? What impact does this have on you as a reader and listener? Why speed the poem up at the end? In what way does this reflect the content of the poem and the issue the poem is addressing? In what ways have things 'progressed' in technology and warfare? Is this what the poem means by 'progress'? What else could the use of this word suggest?* Allow the children time to share their response to the content of the poem, acknowledging their concerns and fears.

- Look at performance of the poem 'Progress' by John Agard which can be found here: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poets/agard-john>
- Ask the children to reflect on how the performance by the poet adds to their response to the poem. *Was it what they expected? Do they prefer the poem now they have heard it performed as intended? Does the poem have greater impact when performed by the poet? What do they notice about John Agard's performance style more generally?*

Following the session, you may want to give the children the opportunity to reflect on the themes and issues discussed in their own poetry journals.

Session 4: Using visual images

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

Focus Poem: On The Run From Colours

For this session you will need to copy the images that accompany the poems in *The Rainmaker Danced* and display them somewhere so that it mimics an art gallery. These illustrations have been created by the artist and illustrator Satoshi Kitamura.

- Take the children to the 'gallery' that you have set up using the images of the illustrations from the anthology. Allow time for the children to explore the gallery.
- The children could respond to the pictures by writing their thoughts down on paper or on large post-it notes.
- Prompt them with some questions to support their exploration. For example, *what is it that they think they are seeing? Which of the images do they like the most/least? Do the images remind them of anything they have seen before? What questions do they have about the images?*
- Once back in class you could have the same images on the IWB to enable a whole class discussion. Record the children's thoughts and responses on the class working wall or poetry display.
- Explain who the illustrator of the images is and share information about Kitamura with the children. Supporting resources can be found here:
 - <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/authors/k/kitamura-satoshi/>
 - <https://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/gallery/2011/mar/14/satoshi-kitamura-illustrator-pictures>
 - <https://www.penguin.co.uk/ladybird/authors/satoshi-kitamura/1000226/>
- Ask the children to reflect on his style of illustration and their opinions of the images. For example, *do they like his illustrative style? Why? Why not? Does it remind them of anything*

they have seen before? Do they have any questions about the way in which the images are created?

- Explain that Kitamura uses a special Japanese glass pen and ink which supports the creation of his distinctive illustrations. If possible, share images of these pens with the children if they have not heard of these before.
- You may want to share the following quote with the class which explains the process: *'It's a strange-shaped thing, but I use it as any other dip pen. I dip the pen in a pot of ink and the ink travels up the grooves on the nib. When you draw, usually you get a very fine line. It's very fragile and it breaks easily. I always knew about these glass pens, and one day I just bought some, and I used one and it broke and the nib became shorter. I found that I could still write and draw with it. Then I got these irregular lines.'*
- Spend time looking at the illustrations in the anthology and consider how they fit in the context of the text. Consider how they are placed next to or within the text and the impact that this has on the reader's experience.
- Share the following quote from Kitamura with the children: *'It is in the space between the lines that I find things to illustrate.'*

Both quotes taken from the following article:

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/nov/08/saoshi-kitamura-angry-arthur-illustrations>

- Look at the poem 'On The Run From Colours' in order to explore the way in which the children think he has done this. Read the poem aloud several times and hand out copies of the poem along with the accompanying illustration. Allow the children to respond emotionally to the poem before looking at the illustration in more detail.
- Consider the way in which the whole spread is washed with ink and then look at the figure running across the page. *What do the children notice about this image? Why do they think there is so little detail in the illustration? What impact does the blurred line and washed background have on their reading of the poem? In what way do you think Kitamura has illustrated in the space between the lines?*
- Broaden the discussion back out again to a more general reflection on the use of illustration throughout the anthology. Reflect on the use of black and white throughout the text, *what do they think of the lack of colour in the collection? Would they have illustrated the collection like this? Would they have used colour if they had the choice?* Perhaps compare a more detailed illustration such as the one on page 33, with the illustration from 'On The Run From Colours'.
- Return to this discussion later in the sequence when the children come to illustrate their own anthologies, considering how the children may want to add to their poetry through the use of illustration.

If possible, you may want to consider other texts in which John Agard and Satoshi Kitamura have

collaborated to explore their artistic partnership further beyond this session.

Session 5: Visualisation

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

Focus Poem: The Dew Stealers

Prior to this session you may want to provide opportunity for the children to look for real examples of dew in the environment or to show the children images of dew to support their interpretation and understanding.

- Watch John Agard performing the poem 'The Dew Stealers' on the Poetryline website. <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poets/agard-john>
- Give the children time to digest what they have heard. Re-read the text again or re-watch the video, but this time ask the children to close their eyes and invite them to try to visualise the scene evoked in the poem. Ask the children what they think the poem is about, *what does the poem tell them, show them or make them think about?* Ask the children what pictures or images they see when they hear the poem read aloud.
- Give the children pieces of paper and appropriate and available art materials, watercolours or ink would work well for this activity. As they listen, ask the children to paint what they imagine, exploring techniques and the effects of water on the paper or paint using pipettes, brushes, sponges etc. You could read the text again several times while the children draw their pictures.
- After they have completed their drawings the children could annotate the pictures with key vocabulary or phrases from the poem which support their understanding or interpretation. For example, the figurative language may stand out to the children such as, *'heaven's pearls'* or *'spittle of the stars'* or *'dawn's treasury'*.
- Put the images aside somewhere so that the children can walk around each other's creations commenting on the images and the feelings that they evoke. Invite children to comment on what is similar and what is different about the way they have illustrated and why they think this is.
- Ask the children to consider how the way in which they have drawn the pictures expresses the atmosphere of the scene they had in mind. Read aloud some of the children's annotations, discussing particularly effective words or phrases that either confirm or add meaning to the artwork.
- Now give the children a copy of the poem in small groups and ask them to read through it together. Allow the children to explore the poem together, responding to the theme, the feelings evoked by the poem, the language and the structure. Extend the children's discussion by returning to the 'Tell Me' approach.

- Share the different groups' responses in a whole class discussion. Ask the children to identify any vocabulary they are unsure of and give the children time and opportunity to find the meaning of this new language. For example, Roman Pliny, revenue or treasury. Discuss the meaning of the vocabulary the children have explored and reflect on what it adds to their understanding and interpretation of the poem.
- Ask the children to contrast their original interpretation of the poem and the images that they created, with their understanding now that they have explored this language. For example, *does it change their responses? Why? Why not? Why do they think dew has been presented in this way in the poem? Why does it evoke comparison with precious jewels or gems or something valuable? In what way is nature as valuable as something material?*
- Reveal the illustration in the text, reflect on how this compares with their own illustration, *is this what they expected? How do you think Kitamura has illustrated the space between the lines in this instance?*

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

Session 6: Exploring 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.

Teachers may find the following guide useful before starting these sessions:

<https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/clippa>

- Spend some time re-watching a selection of the videos available which show John Agard performing his poetry: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poets/agard-john>
- Allow time for the children to enjoy the performances and savour the poetry, language and his performance style.
- Ask the children to consider how it felt to hear the poet read the poems compared with when they have heard others read his poetry. Ask the children 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?*
- Allow the children to explore some other poetry performances that they will be able to compare and contrast with the performances they have watched by John Agard.
- Some suggestions that may support this session:
 - Something more quiet and contemplative:
<https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poems/poetry-and-dragon>
 - A poem that reflects on grief and loss:
<https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poems/my-story>

- A more playful poem: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poems/little-bit-food>
- A poem which allows exploration of dialect and the rhythms of speech: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poems/haircut-rap>
- Following this, ask the children 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.
- Following this 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 children 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 children 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 children 'bring the sounds of words to life'.
- Ask the children 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 children's own words and display this on the working wall for the class to refer back to.

Session 7: Performing

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.

Focus Poem: Among The Hairyboos And Smoothyboos

- Read aloud 'Among The Hairyboos And Smoothyboos'. Ask the children if there was there anything in particular that they liked about the poem.
- Give the children copies of the poem and allow them the chance to re-read it aloud in small groups. Use the 'Tell Me' framework to support thinking and elicit responses from the children.
- Consider with the children if the poem is similar to any that they have explored from the collection already. *Is it similar in form? Theme? Ideas? Language? Style? What do they notice about the style of this poem?* If children are familiar with ballads they may draw comparisons with this as the poem tells a story of an imagined community.
- Read the poem again, encouraging the children to move to the poem, listening out for emphasised words or joining in with the predictable language.

- 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.
- Repeat through shared reading, allowing the children to enjoy being able to recite parts, or all, of the poem by heart, engaging them in the way in which they can lift the words off the page.
- Reflect on John Agard's language choices and the way in which the words are arranged on the page. *How have the words, layout and style of poem created pictures in their minds?*
- Ask children to work on reciting the poem by heart in small groups, organising themselves anyway they like, e.g. in unison throughout or each taking a verse.
- Support children with an enlarged copy of the poem with visual prompts if appropriate. Ask the children to choose movement and actions that they think would enhance their performance.
- At the end of the session confident groups can perform to the class.
- Compare performance styles and consider what music could accompany or enhance the performances.
- Following this, watch John Agard's distinctive performance of the poem on the Poetryline website. Available here: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poets/agard-john> Consider this performance in comparison to the children's own performances, *was it what they expected? Why? Why not? Which do they prefer? What do they think influenced his performance style in this occasion?*

Allow time at the end of the session for the children to write their own personal reflections of this poem to stick around a copy of the text in the class journal or on a working wall.

Session 8: 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 Poems: Seagull Chant, Lost Sheep, The Tomato Says I Do.

In the following two sessions the children 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.

- Begin by reflecting on the advice the children heard earlier in the sessions, from the poets featured on Poetryline and also on their own performances so far. *What generalisations can the children 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’.
- Reflect on what he means by this and consider what the children have noticed in the ways in which John Agard has adapted his performance styles for different poems in the collection.
- Begin with exploring a poem as a whole class to unpick this idea of a poem ‘speaking to the reader’ more thoroughly.
- Using the poem ‘Seagull Chant’, read the poem through to allow children to hear the language and initially respond to what the poem is about and how it makes the children feel.
- Following this, give children copies of the poem ‘Seagull Chant’, to look at in pairs. *How is the poem arranged on the page? What do you notice about the way in which the illustration complements or extends your feelings about the poem?*
- Ask the children to reflect on the use of language in the poem, *in what ways do the language choices create an impact on them as a reader?* Through reading the poem aloud and hearing the poem read out, the children may be able to describe the way in which the language choices and repetition within the poem resonates with the rhythmic sounds of a seagull’s cry and the backwards and forwards motion of waves on the shore.
- Consider with the children how the structure of the poem and placing of words enables the replication of these sound structures. Some children may need further support to hear this and would benefit with comparing the sounds created in the poem with the actual sounds of seagulls and waves. Supporting resources are available here:
 - <http://soundbible.com/2193-Flock-Seaquills.html>
 - <http://soundbible.com/338-Beach-Waves.html>
- Ask the children to consider, *if this poem were to be performed, how do the children think this should be done?* Allow them time to discuss in pairs and feedback to a whole group reflection.
- Extend this by asking the children to think about performances on a larger scale. *If this were to be performed on stage in a theatre, how should it work? Should it be one person? A group? Should there be any set or props? What lighting would help enhance the mood of the poem?*
- For children who have less experience of theatrical or live poetry performances, you may need to preface this activity by watching some appropriate performance videos to enhance understanding of this terminology and the additional effects that can be created in theatre performance.

- Following this allow the class to work in pairs or small groups to prepare performances for the following poems, ‘Lost Sheep’ and ‘The Tomato Says I Do’.
- Allow the children to work together to decide how to organise the performance. *Will they read it all together, in chorus? Will they split the poem into parts for individuals to perform?*

- Ensure the children pay attention to the way in which the poem is laid out and the decisions John Agard has made around form, which will support their performance. For example, 'The Tomato Says I Do' is written as questions and answers, the poem is therefore structured as a dialogue. This kind of poem works very well in performance as there are clear roles and voices within it and the children can have fun adding character to the lines.
- Give plenty of time for the children to rehearse and perform the poem in groups to the rest of the class, looking for similarities and differences between the performances and identifying what different groups did that was effective for the audience listening.

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: Line

- Return to the poem 'Line', explored in session three. Ask the children to reflect on how they would prepare a performance of this poem. *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?*
- Ask the children to work in small groups to prepare a performance of this poem. Discuss with the children the different aspects of poetry performance that enhance the experience for an audience such as tone of voice, intonation, volume, facial expression and gesture and which are most appropriate for this poem.
- Give time for the children to mark up a copy of the text in their groups, rehearse and perform to the class.
- Evaluate the performances together looking at specific performance techniques that brought the poem alive and added effect and meaning to the poem. The children could then go on to create another performance taking on each other's feedback.
- Watch John Agard's performance of 'Line' on the Poetryline website:
<https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poets/agard-john>
- *How did this performance compare to their performances? Was it different hearing it performed by one person rather than a group of people? Which suited the poem more? Or were different aspects of the poem emphasised by the different performances?*

Part 3: Writing and Performing Poetry

Sessions 10-11: Generating ideas and Writing

It is important to develop children 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 children 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 children 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 John Agard’s collection and would like to use their poems as a way to express emotion, as a means of questioning existing social structures or systems, 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 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?*
- Allow time in the remainder of this session and in a following session for children to draft their own poems around the themes and subjects of their choice.

Session 12-13: Drafting and Editing

Children’s 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, children 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 children 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. Children can then re-draft parts of their work, based on these conversations.
- Ask the children 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 children 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 14: Presenting poetry through performance

After listening to poetry, children 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 children 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 children 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 children 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 children 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 children's own poems prominently in the reading corner, library or a shared area so they can be read by a wider audience.

Session 15: Reflection on collection as a whole

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.

- To draw together all the work done in this unit, hold a discussion about the collection as a whole. Asking the class to consider: *what are your most memorable poems? Why? What have you learnt about poetry that you didn't know before? Would you be encouraged to read more poetry after studying this collection? Why? Why not?*
- If you were to write a letter to the poet, *what would you say about the collection? What lingering questions would you ask him?*
- Now focus on the poems that the children have written. Reflect with the children on the following; *what kinds of poems were your favourite to write? What did you find it easiest to write about? Will you continue to write in your poetry journal? Why? Why not?*