

## Stars with Flaming Tails by Valerie Bloom, illustrated by Ken Wilson-Max

Otter-Barry Books 9781913074678

In *Stars with Flaming Tails*, distinguished poet Valerie Bloom offers readers a book rich with cosmic mystery, earthly delights and genuine human warmth. Each poem is filled with a tingly mix of surprise, suspense and play. Valerie's universe is a linguistic ripe fruit to be enjoyed by one and all. This is an inclusive, wide-eyed and knowing book for the poet makes sure no one misses out and nothing is left out. From the silliest-dizziest of wordplay to the tenderest of moments to the richest of dreams, the reader holds their breath, never sure what treat to expect next. The illustrations by Ken Wilson-Max are as star-gazingly rich as the text.

**This collection was shortlisted for the 2022 CLPE Poetry Award.**

### Overall aims of this teaching sequence.

- To explore and understand the importance of poetry as a genre
- To explore musicality, rhythm and rhyme in poetry
- 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 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, 5 or 6 class.**

### Overview of this teaching sequence

This teaching sequence is designed to be delivered over 15 sessions, but teachers will want to use their own judgement about the length of time their class will need to spend on each of the sessions.

The first sessions in the sequence look at the purpose of poetry, introduce the focus poet, Valerie Bloom, and explore children's pre-existing knowledge about poetry. Children will have the opportunity to listen to, respond to and perform a range of poems from the collection to make connections with the poems, their meanings and the types of poetry contained within the collection.

The next part of the sequence moves on to a focus on poetic forms. Within these sessions there will be an exploration of a range of different poetic forms and devices, focusing on how these are chosen and used to suit the subject of the poem and for effect on a reader.

The sessions will then explore how poetry can be used to describe personal experiences and evoke an emotional response in a reader. There is a focus on using your own voice in a poem, including an investigation into how Valerie Bloom writes in Jamaican Patois, getting to the heart of a poem, understanding events and themes explored, looking at how the poet has used language judiciously and for effect. There will also be a focus on how to convey emotion effectively in a poem and performance. These sessions provide the opportunity to reflect critically upon and respond to the ways in which language is used to express, convey, represent, symbolise and signify pertinent points, themes and messages. Reader response and group discussion prior to personal reflection on poems explored form an integral part of a number of the sessions detailed in this sequence.

Throughout the sequence, pupils will have the opportunity to read poetry, listen to poems being read, offer personal responses to the poems, to prepare them for performance and to write their own. The whole sequence builds towards the chance for the class to write and perform their own poems on a subject of interest to them.

The pupils will have the opportunity to use the knowledge they have gained about poetic form, devices and structure throughout the sequence to decide how to present their poem on the page as well as consider how these could be performed to an audience. The poems will be published in a variety of ways to be shared with the school community and beyond.

### Overview of Approaches and Outcomes:

#### Teaching Approaches:

Reading Aloud  
 Hearing poems performed by a poet  
 Performing poetry  
 Looking at Language  
 Re-reading and revisiting poems  
 Responding to poetry  
 Learning about poetry from published poets  
 Modelled writing  
 Responding to writing  
 Publication

#### Outcomes:

Performance of the poet's poetry  
 Identifying poetic language and devices  
 Text marking and annotation  
 Evaluation of performances  
 Poetry Journal with ideas and inspirations for writing  
 Own written poems  
 Performances of children's own original poetry

### Exploring poetic forms and devices:

This collection gives an opportunity to explore the following poetic forms and devices:

- Assonance
- Alliteration

- Rhythm
- Rhyme
- Simile
- Personification
- Enjambment
- Opposition
- Echo Verse
- Elfje
- Cinquain
- Riddles
- Rondel
- Limericks
- Reverse verse

#### Cross curricular links:

##### Personal, social and emotional development:

- Many poems in the collection relate to children's direct and personal experiences. They will be able to connect to and share their feelings and experiences linked to school, family and everyday experiences and the wider world.
- Some of the poems focused on in this sequence cover events such as family tension and break ups, personal worries and anxieties caused by personal events. Whilst it is important that all aspects of life are represented in poetry, as these allow children to see and make sense of emotions and experiences faced by themselves and others, teachers are advised to read the poems in their entirety before introducing these to pupils in order to decide the suitability of poems and how best to mediate the content with their own classes and children in mind.
- Ensure that the class share a common understanding that there is no expectation that they have to share their responses or personal connections to poems read, but that if they choose to do so this is a safe and secure forum for listening, not judging, and that nothing shared will be shared outside the room or used against anyone or that no one will react in a way that makes anyone sharing experience feelings of shame or disgrace, or be treated in a less favourable way because of anything they choose to share. Ensure time and space can be built in to pick up on themes and topics that need greater exploration.

##### Music:

- The second part of the sequence focuses on the importance of rhythm in poetry. This work could be extended into music sessions, allowing pupils the opportunity to create their own rhythms using instruments and experiment with writing and setting words to rhythms.

- They will be able to explore syllabic beat and look at how this fits within the rhythms they have created and adjust lyrics accordingly where syllable beats are too many or too few.

### Geography and Science:

- Two sections of the book focus on poems about 'Our World' and 'Animals'. The poems in the Our World section could link with cross curricular study in Geography on the environment or weather and the Animals poems could link to cross curricular study in Science on animals and their habitats, food chains and life cycles. Children could present their learning related to these areas in the form of a poem.

### Links to other texts and resources:

#### Other books by or featuring Valerie Bloom:

*Fruits*, illustrated by David Axtell (Macmillan)

*Hot Like Fire and Other Poems*, Valerie Bloom, illustrated by Debbie Lush (Bloomsbury)

#### Other poetry collections for Key Stage 2 linked to the styles and themes in *Stars With Flaming Tails*:

*Cloud Soup*, Kate Wakeling, illustrated by Elīna Brasliņa (The Emma Press)

*Moon Juice*, Kate Wakeling, illustrated by Elīna Brasliņa (The Emma Press)

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

*My Life as a Goldfish*, Rachel Rooney, illustrated by Ellie Jenkins (Frances Lincoln)

*Michael Rosen's Big Book of Bad Things*, Michael Rosen, illustrated by Joe Berger (Puffin)

*Jelly Boots, Smelly Boots*, Michael Rosen, illustrated by David Tazzyman (Bloomsbury)

*Being Me: Poems about Thoughts, Worries and Feelings*, Liz Brownlee, Matt Goodfellow and Laura Mucha (Otter-Barry Books)

*Werewolf Club Rules*, Joseph Coelho, illustrated by John O'Leary (Frances Lincoln)

*Belonging Street*, Mandy Coe (Otter-Barry Books)

*Things You Find in a Poet's Beard*, A.F. Harrold, illustrated by Chris Riddell (Burning Eye Books)

*Riding a Lion*, Coral Rumble, illustrated by Emily Ford (Troika)

*Saturdays at the Imaginarium*, Shauna Darling-Robertson, illustrated by Judith Wisdom (Troika)

*If I Were Other Than Myself*, Sue Hardy-Dawson (Troika)

*Cherry Moon*, Zaro Weil, illustrated by Junli Song (Troika)

*Dancing in the Rain*, John Lyons (Peepal Tree)

*Poems the Wind Blew In*, Karmelo C. Iribarren, translated by Lawrence Schimel, illustrated by Riya Choudhury (The Emma Press)

*Cosmic Disco*, Grace Nichols, illustrated by Alice Wright (Frances Lincoln)

*Bright Bursts of Colour*, Matt Goodfellow, illustrated by Aleksei Bitscoff (Bloomsbury Education)

*When Poems Fall From the Sky*, Zaro Weil, illustrated by Junli Song (Troika)

*The Book of Clouds*, Juris Kronbergs, translated by Māra Rozīte and Richard O'Brien, illustrated by Anete Melece (The Emma Press)

*Everyone's the Smartest*, Contra, translated by Charlotte Geater, Kätlin Kaldmaa and Richard O'Brien, illustrated by Ulla Saar (The Emma Press)

*Where Zebras Go*, Sue Hardy-Dawson (Otter-Barry Books)

*Dear Ugly Sisters: and other poems* Laura Mucha, illustrated by Tania Rex

*Weird, Wild and Wonderful*, James Carter, illustrated by Neal Layton (Otter-Barry Books)

*Talking Turkeys*, Benjamin Zephaniah (Puffin)

*Wicked World*, Benjamin Zephaniah (Puffin)

*This Rock, That Rock: Poems Between You, Me and the Moon*, Dom Conlon, illustrated by Viviane Schwarz (Troika)

*A Year of Nature Poems*, Joseph Coelho, illustrated by Kelly Louise Judd (Wide Eyed)

### Before beginning the sequence:

- Before this session, ensure that individual Poetry Journals (small notebooks, which could be handmade) are available for each child to use throughout the unit to note ideas and inspirations. Set the context for how these will be used; they will be for the children's own thoughts, ideas, inspirations and drafts of poems. They will not have to share these with anyone else, unless they specifically want to, but they should be using these all the time to collect and craft ideas for poems that could be worked up to finished pieces at the end of the unit.
- Create a focus display or poetry corner, where you can display a copy of the front cover of the book, a copy of the text and other poems or poetry collections that the children know or could be inspired by (see links to other texts).

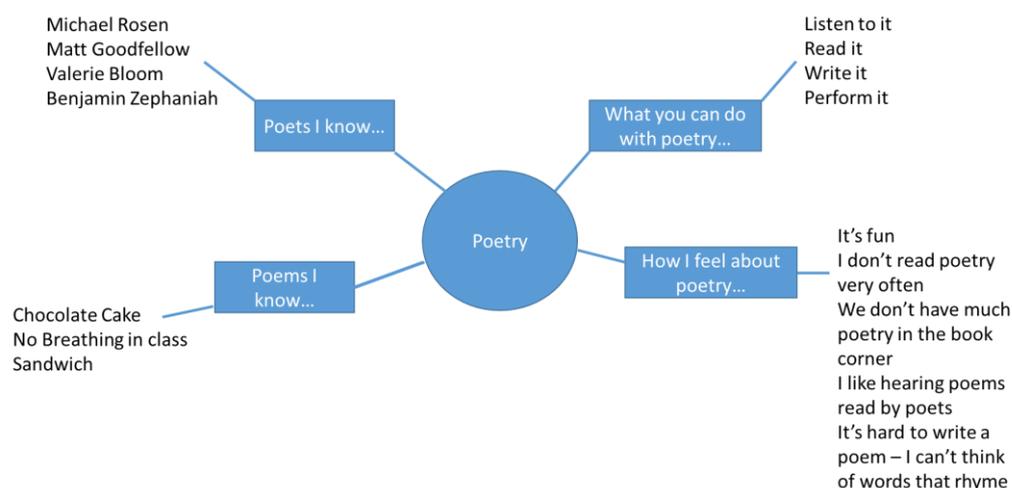
### Session 1: Introducing poetry as a genre and the focus poet, Valerie Bloom

*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. 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.*

- Share the front cover and the title of the collection with the children. Read the name of the poet Valerie Bloom and the illustrator, Ken Wilson-Max. Have the children heard of either of these people before? Provide pictures of both of them for the children to see, and add these to the display alongside the front cover of the text.
- Gather the children's initial responses to the title and the illustrations. Do they find them interesting or intriguing, for example? Do they make them think of anything in particular? How

do they work together? What sense do they give you about the kinds of poems you might find in this collection? Jot the children's ideas around a copy of the front cover of the text to add to the poetry display and come back to at the end of the unit.

- Now, watch poet Valerie Bloom read the poem 'Welcome' (pages 10-11): <https://clpe.org.uk/poetry/poets/valerie-bloom>. Give time for the children to share their initial responses to the text. *What do you like about the poem? How does the poem make you feel? What makes you feel like this? What do you think the poem is about? What do you think this poem might tell us about the writer? Why do you think she might have chosen this as the first poem in the collection? What ideas might it give us about the collection?*
- Come back to talk about how this poem fits with the children's initial perceptions of poetry. What do they think of when the word poetry is mentioned? How do they feel about poetry? Which poets or poems do they know and like? Do they like reading poetry? Performing poetry? Do any of the pupils write their own poetry? It would be useful to ask the children to record their initial ideas and feelings. Model your own thoughts and ideas alongside the children as they work. They can choose any way that is helpful to organise their thoughts, for example in a spider diagram or concept map, e.g.



- Note down any poets and poems mentioned and ask children to bring in books or copies of their favourite poems. You can help children to source poems and collections in school, using your school or local library if you have one, if they don't have copies of these themselves. You may also want to come together to watch Valerie Bloom and other poets talk about their feelings about poetry and look at the similarities and differences with the feelings of the children, using the videos on CLPE's poetry pages: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetry/videos?f%5B0%5D=tags%3A10755>
- Share a copy of the poem as it appears on the page and re-read the poem to the children and discuss the children's responses more deeply. Look at the language and imagery that Valerie Bloom has used throughout the poem and the accompanying illustration by Ken Wilson-Max.

*What feelings and thoughts do certain lines evoke in us? Why is this? What does the illustration make you think about or feel? How does it work with the words to shape our ideas about the poem?*

- Give mixed pairs or groups a copy of the poem to text mark and annotate with their thoughts, observations, ideas and questions, making their thinking visible, then come back to discuss the poem as a whole, using questions to start and provoke the discussion. *What was the poem about? What were the ideas and feelings at the heart of the poem? What was effective in the text and the illustration in conveying these ideas and feelings?*
- The children should be focused, first and foremost, on responding aesthetically and emotionally to the poem, but depending on their prior experiences of poetry, they may begin to talk about the impact of specific poetic devices, such as the rhyme in the last 4 lines of the first stanza, the assonance in phrases like ‘dream of whispers from the sea’ and ‘Breaking in gentle waves’ and the imagery in lines such as ‘when a wrinkled face unwrapped empty gums.’
- Come back to the poem as a whole. *What do you think might have inspired Valerie Bloom to write this poem? Where do you think she might get her ideas from?* Listen to Valerie talk more about this here: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/valerie-bloom-what-inspires-you-poet>
- Now look at the section header of this first part of the book: ‘Family and Friends’ and the accompanying illustration. How does this poem fit with this title? What other subjects or themes might you expect to find in poems in this section? If you were to write a poem for a section titled Family and Friends, what might you write about? Allow time for the children to find a blank page in their poetry journal, to write the phrase ‘Friends and Family’ and to jot down ideas that could form the basis of their own poems later on. If you were to draw on your own experiences of, or emotions connected to, friends and family in a poem, what could these be? To support the children’s thinking, allow them time and space to think about this and share aspects of their life with friends and family and feelings they have connected with their friends and family in a visual organiser. They might focus on aspects such as a particular friend or family member, an important event they have experienced with their friends or family, a memorable experience they have had with friends or family, or something they have seen on TV, in a book or in someone else’s life that could inspire them, as Valerie Bloom alludes to in the video. Explain that this might be a happy or celebratory idea like in the poem they have just read, or it could be connected with other emotions; they are free to connect with anything particularly memorable to them, that they could write about. As an enabling adult and model of the creative process, ensure that you do this in your own Poetry Journal, alongside the children.
- Reinforce that poetry is a place where they can be honest about their thoughts and feelings, and to share emotions. Go back to the original poem ‘Welcome’ and discuss how Valerie Bloom is able to show the feelings of the occasion, without directly telling us these. Look at how they might be able to use imagery as she does to describe feelings associated with the things they might want to write about in this way and to continue to make notes of possible ideas in their journals.

- When they've completed their visual organisers, give them time to think about aspects they think would work best for a poem. Do this yourself, drawing on your own visual organiser to model the process.
- Tell them that they can come back to add to this organiser at any time, and that their thoughts and ideas will be worked up into their own poems at the end of the sequence, but that they can continue to build up and work on ideas in their journals in the meantime.

## Session 2: Responding to and performing poetry

*If poetry is not given a voice, if it just stays on the page as a printed object, then it is not going to come alive for most children. Giving voice and sound to poetry is an important key to unlocking the meanings and music contained in each poem. It is through performing poetry that the quality of rhyme and verse form and the power of language can be explored and realised. Presenting poetry to an audience in this way might also lead children to recognise more clearly the humour in a poem or reflect more thoughtfully on its meaning.*

- In preparation for this session, photocopy the following poems from the collection and pin them up around the classroom or another space, such as the hall, for the children to find.
- 'Best Friends' (p.18)
- 'We Don't Laugh When Grandad Sings' (p.21)
- 'I Opened the Door' (p.29)
- 'The Moon Told the Wind' (p.52)
- 'Volcano' (p.55)
- 'Dawn' (p.56)
- 'Piranha' (p.64)
- 'River Dolphin's Song' (p.65)
- 'Poison Dart Frog' (p.67)
- 'The Vulture' (p.69)
- 'Talented' (p.73)
- Also, photocopy three of the section headers from the book: 'Family and Friends' (p.8-9), 'Our World' (p.50) and 'Animals' (p.62) and stick these up together so that the children can see these clearly before they see the poems.
- As the children enter the space, explain that they are going to have time to explore a range of poems from *Stars with Flaming Tails* that are on display, at their leisure. The poems will be from one of three sections in the book: 'Friends and Family', 'Our World' and 'Animals'. Make clear to the children that they can either read the whole poem or start reading and move on if it doesn't hold their attention. They can also pass over a poem if it doesn't appeal to them. The idea is that they find and pick one that captures their attention most. Support any children whose reading fluency might not allow them to fully engage by giving them a guided walk, reading the poems aloud to them.

- This encourages the children to enjoy the experience of simply reading a poem, to relish the uncertainties of meanings and the nature of the knowledge and emotional responses that poems invoke in them as readers.
- When they have had time to explore, ask them to stand by the poem that most captured their attention. Explain that they are now going to take this poem, re-read it and think about it more deeply. If there are poems that more than one child has chosen, allow them to take this and work in a group. If this is a large group, you may wish to provide them with additional copies of the poem so that all children can read and discuss it.
- Allow time and space for the children to re-read and think about their poems. Encourage them to explore what they like about the poem, ask questions about it, look for connections within the poem or between this poem and others they know, including the previous poem, 'Welcome' and comment on the themes or use of language. You may find the following question prompts useful for stimulating ideas and discussion:
  - What was it that drew you to this particular poem?
  - How would you describe the poem you read? Does it link to any of the thoughts we had about poetry in the last session?
  - What did the poem make you think about?
  - How did the poem make you feel? What made you feel this way?
  - Encourage the children to make their thinking visible by text marking and annotating their poem with their observations, thoughts, ideas and questions. If more than one child picks the same poem, they can either work collaboratively, or you can make additional copies for them to respond individually.
- Allow time for the children to come back together to read their chosen poems aloud to the group and share their thoughts around the poems they chose. *Were there similarities or differences in the types of poems chosen and the reasons for choices? What was it that drew people to their chosen poem?*
- When you have heard and discussed all the poems, talk about the range and breadth of poems they heard and read. What insights do these give us about this collection? What might they tell us about Valerie Bloom's poetry? What do you think might inspire her as a writer? Which section of the book do you think your poem might fit into?
- As a follow up to these discussions, allow the children to work up their chosen poem to perform. To prepare for this, listen to Valerie Bloom's advice for performing poetry, presented as a poem in itself here: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/valerie-bloom-what-advice-would-you-give-performing-poetry>. After watching ask the children to summarise what they have learned about performing poetry from Valerie and to summarise this in a list, that you write up for the children to refer to. You could also share the [advice for performing poetry](#), provided for schools taking part in the CLIPPA shadowing scheme, to help the children make decisions around how to perform their chosen poem and how to develop their performances to bring out the feelings created by the poem they chose.

- After the children have had time to work up and rehearse their performances, allow space for them to work up their poems, individually, in pairs or in small groups to perform for the rest of the class. Encourage them to mark up their copy with performance notes to explore how they will use their voice and any actions, movements or gestures that might enhance the performance. If any children are reluctant to perform, partner them up with a child or group that is willing to perform as a response partner, to comment on and help improve their performance.
- When they have had time and space to try out their ideas and rehearse, set up the space so that there is an area to perform and an area where the rest of the class can watch as the audience and allow time for the children to perform.
- After the children have had time to work up and rehearse their performances, allow space for them to perform their poems for the rest of the class. Before 14<sup>th</sup> June 2022, this could be filmed and submitted for the [CLiPPA shadowing scheme](#) competition to win poetry prizes.
- Then, ask the children to feed back on the interpretations of different groups, evaluating the effectiveness of different techniques and styles and what these brought to their understanding of the poem. *What was most effective about each performance? What did the performance bring to your understanding of or feelings about the poem? Did it change your feelings from when you first looked at the poem on the wall? Why was this?*

### Session 3: Exploring Poetic Devices - Rhyme and Rhythm

*Rhyme is the repetition of syllables, typically at the end of a verse line. Rhymed words conventionally share all sounds following the word's last stressed syllable. Rhyme is one of the first poetic devices that we become familiar with but it can be a tricky poetic device to work with. Matching content to a rhyming pattern takes a lot of skill. Rhyming patterns can be in couplets where pairs of lines rhyme or can be alternate where every other line rhymes.*

*Lots of people believe poetry must rhyme, but an exploration of the work of many modern poets reveals poems that don't rhyme at all, or play with more traditional rhyme schemes. Comic verse is the type of contemporary poetry that is most likely to rhyme*

- Begin the session by listening to Valerie Bloom performing 'Nothing to Do' (pages 14-15): <https://clpe.org.uk/poetry/poets/valerie-bloom>. Allow the chance for the children to respond initially to the poem. *How does this poem make them feel? What makes them feel this way? What do they notice about the way in which Valerie Bloom performs the poem?* The poem is written in rhyme. Rhyme is the first poetic device that we become familiar with, but it can be a tricky one to work with. Matching content to a rhyming pattern takes a lot of skill and at this point it is more relevant to the children to be able to hear and identify rhyme in poetry than try to write with it.
- Hand out copies of the poem on the page for the children to follow as you read through it again or replay Valerie Bloom's performance. Encourage the children to identify and highlight

the pairs of rhyming words. They could use different coloured pencils to identify the pairs of words that rhyme.

- Re-read the poem, encouraging the children to join in, first with the predictable rhyming words as they come up and then again, now closely looking to match the words to the text.
- Practise reading the poem again using the rhythm and rhyme to help the fluency of the reading for performance, but not being chained to these, so that the performance becomes monotonous or stilted.
- Now give out the following poems to groups of children: 'Adam Had An Accident' (page 16-17), 'Pancakes' (page 20), 'Time Like a Baby' (page 25), 'Relief' (p.30-31), 'The Weather's Ball' (p.51), 'This Would be Perfect' (p.53), Eclipse (p.54), 'Orchard' (p.59), 'The Most Dangerous Animal in the World' (p.63) and 'Don't Do It!' (p74-75). You might want to give each group all of these poems, or select one poem for each group.
- You might also wish to watch examples of other poets performing poems to see how poems can be performed drawing on the rhythms and rhyme contained within, such as:
- Matt Goodfellow in 'Poetry':  
<https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/matt-goodfellow-poetry>
- A.F. Harrold in 'Socks Poem':  
<https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/f-harrold-socks-poem>
- Kate Wakeling in 'Comet':  
<https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/kate-wakeling-comet>
- John Lyons in 'Happy Hummingbird Food':  
<https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/john-lyons-happy-hummingbird-food>
- Tony Mitton in 'Plum':  
<https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/tony-mitton-plum>
- Aoife Mannix in Today I'm Not Going to School:  
<https://clpe.org.uk/poetry/poems/today-im-not-going-school>
- John Agard in 'Goldilocks on CCTV':  
<https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/john-agard-goldilocks-cctv>
- Joseph Coelho in 'A Little Bit of Food':  
<https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/joseph-coelho-little-bit-food>
- Allan Ahlberg in 'Dog in the Playgorund':  
<https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/allan-ahlberg-dog-playground>
- Roger McGough in 'The Midnight Skaters':  
<https://clpe.org.uk/poetry/poems/midnight-skaters>
- After the children have had time to work up and rehearse their performances, allow space for them to perform their poems for the rest of the class. Before 14<sup>th</sup> June 2022, this could be filmed and submitted for the [CLIPPA shadowing scheme](#) competition to win poetry prizes.
- Come back together to talk about the poems they chose to perform. What guided their choices? What made the poem good for performance? How did the rhyme support the performance? Why do you think Valerie Bloom might have chosen to make this particular

poem rhyme? Why might she have chosen not to make 'Welcome' rhyme? What might this have taken away from this poem? Look back on 'Welcome' and re-read to explore and discuss this together.

- Come back together to discuss the rhyme patterns in these poems. What did the children notice about the sounds and spelling patterns in the words that rhyme? Did the word endings sound the same and look the same as in washed and squashed or room and broom, or did they sound the same and look different, as in bed and dead, maid and orangeade or meet and neat? Use these discussions to look at the sounds and shapes of words more closely, particularly the alternative ways of representing vowel sounds in the English language, using this as an opportunity to revisit and review alternative grapheme phoneme correspondences and explore spelling patterns in words.

#### Session 4: Exploring Poetic Devices - Wordplay

**Wordplay** is a poetic device in which the words are used in the poem specifically as a main subject of the poem itself, primarily for amusement or the intended effect of the words themselves.

**Comic verse** often focuses on the way words sound. It is often used to play with language and involves a lot of wordplay. It also presents fantastical situations for the amusement of the reader.

- Begin the session by sharing a copy of the poem 'My Teacher Plays the Piano' (page 77). Read the poem aloud, while the children follow the words on the page. Clarify language with the children where necessary so that they can understand the humour and wordplay in the poem. *Do any of them play an instrument? What does it mean to be able to play an instrument 'by ear'? What is it that makes this poem funny? How does the illustration support the humour?*
- Now give mixed pairs a copy of the poem 'Names' on pages 82 and 83. Read the poem aloud, encouraging the children to follow along as you read. Then give them time to discuss the poem – exploring how it plays with words. Encourage them to underline or circle any words they are unsure of the meaning of as they talk. Come back together to discuss the words they have identified and clarify any unknown meanings. Re-read the poem and talk about how Valerie Bloom uses homonyms, playing on the multiple meanings of certain words in this poem. Can the children think of any other homonyms that they could play with the multiple meanings of? If the children struggle with this concept, provide a list, such as this: <https://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-homonyms.html> for them to reference. Give out a strip of paper to pairs of children and challenge them to come up with a line using one of the homonyms explored, leaning on the structure of the lines in the poem to get them going if necessary.
- When the children have completed their lines, collect these in and look at whether they could be put together to create a class homonym poem of their own. Which lines work together? What edits might need to be made to make these cohesive or improve the flow? Pin these up and move them around, allow the children to support as composition partners. Show that

writing and editing is a messy process, and that this is part of the writing process, model how to cross things out, change words and make additions.

- When you have a finished poem you are happy with, print this out to display prominently in the classroom. Continue to collect other examples of homophones to display around the poem.
- Now, hand out copies of the following poems for groups to share and discuss: ‘Praying Mantis’ (page 70), ‘More Lines About the Auk’ (page 72) and ‘The Isle of Negatyves’ (pages 80-81),. Allow time and space for the children to read and explore the language chosen for the poems and how certain words emphasise concepts or humour in the poems. Invite the children to make their thinking visible by text marking and annotating their copies of the poems with their observations, ideas, thoughts and questions about each poem.
- Come back to discuss the poems together, discussing the examples of wordplay seen and why these are effective in emphasising concepts or creating humour for the reader.
- Allow the children to think about how some of these poems might be performed to emphasise this further. Allow children to work on poems independently or together from the selections they have to work these up to perform for an audience. Before 14<sup>th</sup> June 2022, this could be filmed and submitted for the [CLIPPA shadowing scheme](#) competition to win poetry prizes.
- Then, ask the children to feed back on the interpretations of different groups, evaluating the effectiveness of different techniques and styles and what these brought to their understanding of the poem. *What was most effective about each performance? Did the wordplay work as it should have? What did the performance bring to your understanding of the language or feelings about the poem?*
- At the end of the session, ask the children if the poems have inspired any other ideas within them to play with words and language. *Do they know any other words, sayings or concepts that might work in a poem?* To link in work on language, vocabulary and spelling, you could use this as an opportunity to look at other words within words, idioms, sayings, homophones or homonyms which could inspire the children’s ideas. Discuss these together and allow time for children to make notes of any key ideas in their Poetry Journals.

### Session 5: Poetic Forms and Devices – Echo Verse, Rondel, Reverse Verse

- In preparation for the session prepare a pack of three poems: ‘Journey’ (p.36), ‘Sorrow Called’ (p.43) and ‘I Looked Into the Garden Shed’ (p.46).
- Begin the session by looking at the section header ‘Fun with Forms’. Do the children have an idea of what this might mean? Have they heard the phrase poetic forms before? Do they know the names of any particular poetic forms?
- Show the children the names of the different poetic forms on the poetry section of CLPE’s website: [https://clpe.org.uk/poetry/poetic-forms-and-devices?f%5B0%5D=type%3Apoetic\\_form](https://clpe.org.uk/poetry/poetic-forms-and-devices?f%5B0%5D=type%3Apoetic_form). *Are any of these familiar to them? If so, what do they know about these forms?*

- Explain that over the next couple of sessions, they are going to investigate and have a go at writing in some of these forms.
- Give out the poetry packs to mixed pairs or groups. Begin by looking at 'Journey'. Read the poem aloud for the children, then look at the words printed above the title **Echo Verse**. *What do you understand by the word echo? Where might you experience an echo? What do you think an Echo Verse is? Looking back at the poem on the page – what do you think you need to know or do when writing an echo verse?* Allow the children to discuss their own ideas, then cross check against a description: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetry/poetic-forms/echo-verse>
- Re-read the poem again. Why do you think this is a good subject for an echo verse? What does the form add to our experience of the poem? How was Valerie able to play with homophones and parts of words to achieve particular effects and change the meaning of the repeated part?
- Now turn to 'Sorrow Called'. Read the poem aloud and then look at the name of the form **Rondel**. *Have they heard this word before? Do they know what it means? Does this word remind them of any other words they know?* You could explore the etymology of the word and how it came into the English language:



Middle English: from Old French, from *rond* 'round';

- Now explore the definition of rondel together, and identify how this definition matches the poem: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetry/poetic-forms/rondel> identifying the features of the form. *Why does this form work well for this poem? How do the features of the form enhance our experience of the emotions of the poem?*
- Finally, look at 'I Looked Into the Garden Shed'. Again, identify the name of the form **Reverse Verse** at the top of the page. What do you understand by the word reverse? Why do you think this is called a Reverse Verse? What patterns can you see in the lines of the poem? What effect does the repetition of the lines in reverse have on you? What impression do you get of the shed because of the form chosen?
- Now allow the children to experiment with these forms themselves. Would particular ideas, settings or emotions work well for a poem in one of these forms? Where else would you hear an echo? What other emotions or events might work as a rondel? Where else might a reverse verse create atmosphere?
- Give the children time and space to begin to record ideas in their poetry journals. They might just come up with ideas, settings or emotions that could work with each form, or they may begin to have a go with following the rules and patterns associated with the particular form chosen. Allow the children access to the definitions of each form to follow as they work.

## Session 6: Poetic Forms and Devices – Limericks and Riddles

- In preparation for the session prepare a pack of poems for mixed pairs or groups, including the two limericks 'Numbers' and 'A Babysitter Who Lived in Nantucket' (p.44-45), the riddles 'Behind a White Wall', 'Twins', 'Ten Sisters', 'The Pearl' and 'You Made me Today' (p.40-42).
- Begin by reading the poems 'Behind a White Wall' and 'Twins'. *Have they seen a poem like this before? Do they know what it is called?* If not, introduce the term riddle – a poem that is a type of word puzzle where the reader has to guess the identity of an object or person through a series of clues hidden in the verse. *Can they guess the identity of the objects described in these two poems?* Discuss together what clues they might be able to pick up on in the poems, and what further clues might lie within the title. Collect together the children's suggestions, then check the answers on p.96, being careful not to reveal the answers to the remaining riddles!
- Illustrate this further by reading aloud 'Ten Sisters', 'The Pearl' and 'You Made Me Today' allowing the children time to talk about and discuss the clues hidden in each riddle and possible answers in mixed pairs or groups. Come back together to discuss these, looking at the possibilities explored by the children and the similarities and differences in their opinions. *What was it in the language that led you to your possible answer? Could the other options (if there are any) also be plausible?* Once again, check the solutions on p.96 and identify and talk about the clues that support these.
- Now, read aloud the two limericks 'Numbers' and 'A Babysitter Who Lived in Nantucket'. Try to emphasise the rhythmic pattern of the form as you read. Discuss the poems with the children. *How would you describe these? What did you like or dislike about them? What connections did you make with other poems we've explored? What questions do you have about the poems? What similarities do you hear in them?*
- Look at the name of the form at the top of the page – Limerick. Have they heard of this word before? Do they know what a limerick is? Or have any ideas about what a limerick is like?
- Share the definition on the poetic form page in the Poetry section of CLPE's website:

***Limericks are 'a five-line comic verse following the syllable pattern 8, 8, 6, 6, 8 with the rhyme scheme AABBA – where the 1st, 2nd and 5th lines rhyme with each other, and the 3rd and 4th lines rhyme with each other also'.***

- Investigate what this means with the children by taking these two limericks and looking and how these rules apply. Focus first on counting the lines in the poem, then move on to focusing on the syllables. Words divide into syllables depending on how many vowel sounds they have: *pen* has one syllable, while *badger* has two and *interviews* has three. In words with more than one syllable, a single syllable will carry the greatest stress; e.g. the first syllable is stressed in *special*. An understanding of syllabification will also support children's growing understanding of spelling. Support the children in counting and identifying the number of syllables in each line of the poem. Now, encourage them to look at the rhyme scheme, identifying rhyming words with an A or B at the end of the line. *Does it match the AABBA rule?*

- Now allow the children to experiment with these forms themselves. Would particular ideas work well for a poem in one of these forms? How can you create the rhythm and humour seen in the limericks, or the intrigue in the riddles for yourself? How can you make sure the riddles are cryptic enough so that the answers aren't too immediately obvious?
- Give the children time and space to begin to record ideas in their poetry journals. They might just come up with ideas, rhyming words or question stems which could work with each form, or they may begin to have a go with following the rules and patterns associated with the particular form chosen. Allow the children access to the definitions of each form to follow as they work.
- Encourage the children to read their poems aloud when they have formed a draft, to hear whether the words and rhythms work off the page as well as on, editing and refining as they work up to a finished piece. They might also consider whether to illustrate their compositions, looking to Ken Wilson-Max's own illustrations for inspiration.

### Session 7: Poetic Forms and Devices –Elfje and Cinquains

- In preparation for the session prepare copies of the following poems for mixed pairs or groups, the elfje 'Green' (p.38) and the cinquain 'At Once' (p.39). Also provide the children with the written descriptions for the following forms from the poetry pages on the CLPE website but with the name of the form blocked out or removed:
- Elfje: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetry/poetic-forms/elfje>
- Cinquain: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetry/poetic-forms/cinquains>
- Read aloud the poem 'Green'. Ask the children to follow along with the words on the page as you read. What is this poem about? What experience is being described here? Have you been on a boat before? Have you ever felt seasick or travel sick? What was it like? How do the words chosen paint a picture of this moment in a concise way? Now look at the name of the form elfje. Have they seen this word before? Does it look or sound like any other words you know? Ask the children to re-read this poem again for themselves. What do you think might be special about an elfje poem? What rules do you think this form might have? Encourage the children to annotate the poem with their thoughts, ideas and observations. Can they notice any patterns in the words or lines?
- Come back together to discuss the children's observations and ideas. They might have noticed a pattern to the number of words to each line – 1 in the first line, 2 in the second, 3 in the third, 4 in the fourth and back to one in the final line. *What do you gain from the build-up of words in the first four lines? What impact does returning to just a single word at the end of the poem have?*
- Now, read aloud 'At Once'. What were the similarities and differences with 'Green'? What did the poem make you think about? How did it make you feel? What mood or atmosphere was created in this poem? Look at the word at the top of the page to describe this form: cinquain. Have they seen this word before? Does it look or sound like any other words you know? Children who speak French or who are learning it as a modern foreign language may

immediately recognise the start of the word as ‘cinq’ and relate this to the number 5. If they don’t, share this information with them. How might this connect with the poem they see on the page?

- Hand out the descriptions of an elfje and a cinquain. Read these aloud without mentioning the name of the form. *Can they match the rules to the right poem? Give children time and space to read the rules of the two forms and link this to the two poems on the page, text marking and annotating their poems to show how they worked out which was which.*
- Now allow the children to experiment with these forms themselves. Would particular ideas, settings or emotions work well for a poem in one of these forms?
- Give the children time and space to begin to record ideas in their poetry journals. They might just come up with ideas, settings or emotions that could work with each form, or they may begin to have a go with following the rules and patterns associated with the particular form chosen. Allow the children access to the definitions of each form to follow as they work. Once again, encourage them to plan ideas loosely and roughly at first, playing with ideas and concepts, before working up to completed pieces which follow the rules and patterns of the form. Encourage the children to read their poems aloud when they have formed a draft, to hear whether the words and rhythms work off the page as well as on, editing and refining as they work up to a finished piece. They might also consider whether to illustrate their compositions, looking to Ken Wilson-Max’s own illustrations for inspiration.

### Session 8: Creating space for linguistic diversity

- Listen to Valerie Bloom talking about dialect poetry here: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/valerie-bloom-what-importance-hearing-variety-voices-and-dialects-classroom>. Listen again to the first poem in the collection, ‘Welcome’: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/valerie-bloom-welcome> Give the children the chance to talk about their responses to the poem on a second reading. *How do you feel after hearing it again? How does what Valerie said about dialect poetry relate to this poem? What did you learn about the voices and cultures of the people represented in the poem?*
- Now give the children the opportunity to listen to a range of poets perform in a range of voices, accents and dialects focused on topics related to those that fit the section titles of *Stars with Flaming Tails* explored; ‘Friends and Family’, ‘Our World’ and ‘Animals’. This might include:
  - Jackie Kay ‘River Reflection’: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/jackie-kay-river-reflection>
  - Matt Goodfellow ‘Ten’: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/matt-goodfellow-ten>
  - James Berry ‘Seeing Granny’: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/james-berry-seeing-granny>
  - John Agard ‘On the Run From Colours’: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/john-agard-run-colours>
  - George Szirtes ‘The Sea’s Hands’: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/george-szirtes-seas-hands>

- John Lyons ‘Granny’s Sugarcake’: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/john-lyons-grannys-sugarcake>
- Roger McGough ‘Give and Take’: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/roger-mcgough-give-and-take>
- Grace Nichols ‘Hummingbird’: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/grace-nichols-hummingbird>
- Nikita Gill reading ‘When to Write’ by Sophia Thakur: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/nikita-gill-when-write-sophia-thakur>
- Kwame Alexander ‘I Skipped School Today’: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/kwame-alexander-i-skipped-school-today>
- Ruth Awolola ‘Superpowers’: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetry/poems/superpowers>
- Discuss the poems together, what you liked about the performances, and the way the poets performed. Did you notice any differences in their accents, dialects and tone? Are any of the accents familiar to you? Can you link them to a specific place? Allow space for the children to ask any questions you had about the poems they heard and within what sections of *Stars with Flaming Tails* they might fit.
- Explore with the children how poetry allows us to share parts of ourselves, our cultural heritage and allows our voices to speak. *If they were to write in their own voice, what would it sound like and why? Would it be different from the Standard English they are usually expected to write in at school? Why do you think it is important to hear a range of voices and dialects?*
- This would be a good opportunity for the children to explore and experiment with writing in their own voices and languages. Allow time and space for the children to begin to build on some of the ideas they had about possible topics for writing about friends and family, which they noted down in their poetry journals. *Which of these ideas might be able to be the basis of a poem? How might we begin to work these up?*
- Use the writing practices of different poets to inspire their own process of beginning to create and shape a poem of their own. They might start by jotting down favourite words or phrases, they may want to splurge their ideas like Kate Wakeling: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/kate-wakeling-how-do-you-go-about-writing-your-poetry>, they may have a line that is their starting point, like Sue Hardy-Dawson: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/sue-hardy-dawson-how-do-you-go-about-writing-your-poetry>, they might make a mind map around the theme or title, like Ruth Awolola: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/ruth-awolola-how-do-you-go-about-writing-your-poetry>, making notes in a notebook, on a device or recording lines like Joseph Coelho: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/joseph-coelho-how-do-you-go-about-writing-your-poetry>.
- Remind them that they don’t have to start writing a poem straight away, they might just begin by collecting words, phrases, ideas and images that can be used later. However, if they have an idea that they want to start exploring immediately in a poetic form that is also fine.
- Children who speak more than one language could explore writing in their first language if they have the knowledge and skills to do so.

- Reinforce that poetry is a place where they can be expressive about their thoughts and feelings and that they can also do this indirectly through taking snippets of their own lives and presenting these through an ‘I’ narrator.

### Session 9: Poetry connected to our own experiences – Our wider lives and experiences

*A places, people and families theme could offer a clear focus for the personal memories of each writer and can provide a variety of ways in which it is possible to represent early childhood experiences and give them new life. Often, places hold particular memories for families. They may be tied to a special occasion like a wedding, a birthplace or a holiday.*

- Begin the session by listening to Valerie Bloom read the poem ‘When Mummy Combs My Hair’ (page 19): <https://clpe.org.uk/poetry/poets/valerie-bloom>. Allow time for the children to discuss their initial reactions to the poem. *What did it make them think about? How did it make them feel? What made them feel this way? How does this poem compare and contrast with other poems by Valerie Bloom that they have read so far? How did her performance bring out the experience described and the emotions evoked in the poem?*
- Now, give out copies of the poem on the page to mixed pairs or groups of children. Play the video of Valerie reading the poem again, encouraging them to follow the poem on the page as she reads. Come back to discuss: *What personal connections do they have with the poem? Can they empathise with any of the events described and feelings associated with these?*
- Now read another selection of poems based around the theme of hair. These might include:
  - ‘Haircut Rap’ by Valerie Bloom from *Give the Ball to the Poet* (Commonwealth Education Trust)
  - ‘First Haircut’ by Mandy Coe from *Belonging Street* (Otter-Barry Books)
  - ‘Hair Piece’ by Kate Wakeling from *Moon Juice* (The Emma Press)
  - ‘Ode to My Hair’ from *The Crossover* by Kwame Alexander (Andersen Press)
  - ‘Afro Hair Haiku’ by Victoria Adukwei Bulley from *Rising Stars* (Otter-Barry Books)
- Consider the thoughts, feelings and experiences described in each of the poems. Why do you think hair is such a common theme across so many different poets? What similarities and differences did you see in the poems? Did you connect with any of the poems personally? Why was this? What thoughts and feelings do they have about your own hair? Have any memorable experiences happened to you associated with your hair?
- Now, allow time for the children to re-read and discuss the original poem together, sharing their thoughts, observations, looking at the language used, how the words are laid out on the page and to raise any questions that they have about it. Encourage them to make their thinking visible by text marking and annotating their copy of the poem as a record of their thoughts and discussions.
- Come back together to discuss as a group. The children might talk about:
  - The power of the verbs used: **tugs, twists, pulls, yanks** and the repetition of these throughout the poem.

- The imagery created in the description of what happens to the hair at the end of each couplet.
- The choice to make this poem rhyme – *what effect does this have?*
- The use of the pronoun **she** at the start of every couplet, in opposition with the use of the more endearing **Mummy** in the title.
- The illustration chosen to accompany the poem, why this might have been chosen and what it might tell us about the narrator of the poem.
- Their personal connections with the emotions and experiences shared.
- If you were to draw on your own thoughts, feelings, emotions or experiences connected with your hair in a poem, what might these be? To support the children's thinking, allow them time and space to think about this and share these in a visual organiser in their Poetry Journal.
- As an enabling adult and model of the creative process, ensure that you do this in your own Poetry Journal, alongside the children. Come back to all the poems shared to look at how these can be funny, tender, celebratory or evocative.
- When they've completed their visual organisers, give them time to think about aspects they could share through a poem. Do this yourself, drawing on your own visual organiser to model the process.
- Ask them to look over what they've done and pull out something that could have the potential to be built upon. Ask them to write this thing at the top of a new page in their journal and to use this stimulus to complete a piece of stream of consciousness writing. For this, give the children 5-10 minutes to pick up a pen and just keep writing. Encourage them to ignore punctuation, style, grammar, format - anything that stops them from writing. The idea behind stream of consciousness writing is that you write in a state of flow. It involves you writing down whatever comes to mind. You don't try to stop it, edit it, bypass it, judge it or re-phrase it in any other way than how it is coming to you. Do this yourself alongside the children.
- After this period of writing, ask the children to come back to read over what they've written and to text mark and highlight anything that might be good inspiration to build up into a poem about their random thoughts and wonderings.
- Give the children a period of independent writing time, where they are able to work up these ideas into a poem of their own, drawing back on the three poems read to look at poetic forms and devices that they could use in their own writing. As they work on their poems, allow them to consider how and why they will break up lines and verses, drawing on what they found effective in Valerie Bloom's own work. Work on your own poem alongside the children as they write, sharing your own process with any children who are struggling to get going or who need support in the craft of writing.
- When they have had chance to work up a draft, allow time for them to read this aloud to a response partner, who can tell them what they liked about their work, ask them questions about it, discuss any challenges and suggest improvements as a reader. Model this process by sharing your own work with the children first, looking at how to make edits on the page as challenges are explored and suggestions are made. Model that writing is a tentative, rough and often messy process as you shape ideas into a finished piece.

- When they have acted on the response, allow them time to present their poem for publication. This might be writing it up in presentation handwriting, typing up on a word processor or filming a performance of their finished poem, as they saw Valerie do at the start of the session. Collect these together and make a display, around copies of the hair themed poems that stimulated their ideas. Allow the children time to reflect on their work and that of others, talking about what they liked, what they found challenging and how they feel about the finished compositions.

### Session 10: Poetry as a window into the wider world – evoking ideas and feelings through language and poetic devices

*Many of the cross curricular themes and topics that act as a focus for learning and teaching in the primary classroom are capable of being illustrated through poetry. A focus on ‘conservation’ poems for example is a good example of bringing together a collection of poems around a particular theme. Poems offer a special way of thinking. They can express some of the more intuitive, affective aspects of our perceptions, those which are sometimes left out of a narrowly conceived, cognitively orientated curriculum.*

- Begin the session by listening to Valerie Bloom perform the poem ‘Forest’ p.60-61 – at this point ensure that the children do not see a copy of the poem on the page. *What impression did you get of the forest? What do you think it would be like to be there? How do you think it would feel to be there? What words or phrases were most memorable? Were there any words they weren’t clear on the meaning of?* Discuss and clarify these together, drawing on context, word knowledge and checking the meaning in a dictionary.
- Listen to Valerie read the poem a second time. This time, ask the children to visualise the forest in their mind as she reads. What can they see in their mind’s eye? What features stand out? What time of day do you think it is? What might the weather be like? What colours, tones and highlights can you see?
- Now, give each child a black and white pastel, and tell them that they are going to use these to sketch the forest they picture as they hear the poem again. Watch a video sharing Ken Wilson-Max creating the illustration for the poem ‘The Moon Told the Wind’ watching how he sketches out lightly at first, before layering up thicker and stronger lines and adds tones, shades and highlights, just using a monochrome palette:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcGJlecdMQY>
- Play the poem once or twice more through as the children work on their own sketches. When they are complete, ask them to write the words and phrases that they think most inspired their ideas on a post-it note and attach these to their illustration.
- Now, pin all the sketches up around the classroom and allow time and space for the children to embark on a gallery walk, exploring each other’s representations and looking at the words and phrases that inspired each sketch. *What was similar and what was different in their work?*

*Why do you think this was? Were certain words and phrases inspiring for a lot of people? What were these? Why do you think they stood out?*

- Now give mixed pairs or groups a copy of the poem on the page. Allow time for them to explore the illustration Ken Wilson-Max created to accompany the poem. *What was similar to their own drawings? What was different? What words or phrases do you think he was most inspired by?*
- Now give time for the children to re-read the poem for themselves and to talk about the poem together. This time, when they read, ask them to think about how they feel about the forest. *What has the poet done to make you feel that way? What language makes particular impact on you as a reader?* Allow time for the children to highlight evocative or emotive words and phrases and to text mark the poem with their thoughts, feelings, ideas and questions about the poem. You can use this as an opportunity to introduce children to the names of specific forms or devices to look at what makes their chosen poem poetic. You might introduce this by way of what Michael Rosen calls ‘secret strings’ (*What is Poetry?* Walker 2016). He talks about the importance of discovering how the poet might have used assonance, alliteration, imagery, opposition, rhythm and sound. You could also share the poem ‘Terms’ (p.35) to highlight some specific poetic devices to the children. *Can they identify any of these in this poem?*
- Come back together to discuss as a group. The children might talk about:
  - The adverbial used to open the poem ***Here at the edge***, and where this places us as the reader;
  - The opposition of the dark and light;
  - The personification in ***night shakes hands with day*** and the effect this has;
  - The impact of the simile silent as a ***shadow’s breath***;
  - The impact of the alliteration in ***ceaseless snowflakes, settled snow***;
  - The impact of the assonance in ***mousing owl’s***;
  - The imagery in the phrases nothing living moves, the sentinel trees, the whispering breeze and the effect this has;
  - The impact of the adjective choices – the ceaseless snowflakes, the sentinel trees, the whispering breeze, straying footsteps, settled snow, a distant country, a welcoming cheer.
  - The choice to make the poem rhyme and the effect this has;
  - The awe, wonder and specialness of the singling out of the ones that are willing to see and the ones that are willing to hear;
  - The choice to include direct speech – who might be saying these words? Are they real or imagined?
  - The shift in mood from the beginning to the end of the poem.
- Now, give mixed pairs or groups a copy of both ‘Indigestion’ (p.57) and ‘The Sea is a Wild Horse’ (p.58) and allow the children to discuss how Valerie Bloom captures a picture of the sea and a volcano with her choice of words, highlighting and recognising poetic devices and specific language choices as they did with ‘Forest’ and the impact these had on them as

readers. *What thoughts and feelings did you have about the subject of these poems? What did Valerie Bloom do to make you feel that way? What language makes particular impact on you as a reader?* Encourage the children to highlight and text mark their copies of the poems to make their thinking visible and to use as an aide-memoire to feed back to the wider group afterwards.

- After feeding back as a group, ask the children to consider any other aspects of the natural world that they might be interested in writing about for themselves. Explain that the three poems they have looked at all feature in the 'Our World' section of the book. Ask the children to write 'Our World' on a new page in their poetry journals. Discuss different ideas which could form the basis of a poem. Ask them to jot these down in their Poetry Journals and think about the thoughts, ideas and feelings they have connected with these things. *Why do these particular things interest them? What feelings do they have connected with these things? How could they use language to paint a picture and evoke feelings of the thing for a reader?*
- Give time for the children to conduct extra research around the things they want to explore, including photographs and videos. Encourage them to take notes in their Poetry Journal so that these can be drawn upon and be worked up into their own poems at the end of the sequence, and that they can continue to build up and work on ideas in their journals in the meantime.

### Session 11: Deeper responses to poems read – poetry to connect with and make sense of personal experiences and emotions

*Poetry requires careful consideration of word choices, order and arrangement to best convey the thoughts and feelings of the poet and inspire a response from the reader. This makes poetry a powerful and effective art form that can inspire profound, deep and meaningful responses and engagement.*

**NB: The series of poems shared in this session cover events such as family tension and break ups, personal worries and anxieties caused by personal events. Whilst it is important that all aspects of life are represented in poetry, as these allow children to see and make sense of emotions and experiences faced by themselves and others, teachers are advised to read the poems in their entirety before introducing these to pupils in order to decide the suitability of poems and how best to mediate the content with their own classes and children in mind.**

- Begin this session by listening to Valerie Bloom read the poem 'My Heart is a Volcano' (p.27): <https://clpe.org.uk/poetry/poets/valerie-bloom>. Allow time for the children to discuss their initial reactions to the poem. *What did it make them think about? How did it make them feel? What made them feel this way? Were their feelings the same throughout the poem or did they change at different points? What emotions are they left with as the poem ends? How did Valerie's performance bring out the emotions evoked in the poem?*
- Now, give out copies of the poem on the page to mixed pairs or groups of children. Play the video of Valerie reading the poem again, encouraging them to follow the poem on the page as he reads. Come back to discuss: *What do you know, or think you know about the narrator or 'I'*

*in the poem? What in the poem allows you to infer this about the character? What personal connections do they have with the poem? What do they empathise with in the experience of the narrator?* Be aware of any children who may have experience of abandonment, or the loss of a parent. Although poetry can be a safe space to make sense of difficult experiences or emotions and see these reflected, this poem may trigger emotions that they would rather not explore in a class setting.

- Now, allow time for the children to re-read and discuss the poem together, sharing their thoughts, observations, looking at the language used, how the words are laid out on the page, the accompanying illustration and to raise questions that they have about the poem. Encourage them to make their thinking visible by text marking and annotating their copy of the poem as a record of their thoughts and discussions.
- Come back together to discuss as a group. The children might talk about:
  - The imagery used in the poem, particularly in the metaphors used;
  - The emotional journey of the poem and how this is presented;
  - The impact of the illustration that accompanies the poem;
  - Personal connections they have with the emotions or experiences shared.
  - Follow up by handing out copies of the following poems to the pairs or groups: ‘You Are’ (p.12), ‘Mum Says She Loves Me’ (p.13) and ‘Hide and Seek’ (p.22-23)
  - Encourage the children to look more deeply at the poems, exploring the themes and concepts introduced and the poet’s use of language. Then ask the children to pick one poem to discuss more deeply. Ask them to talk about the poem together, discussing what the poem makes them think about, how it makes them feel and what makes them feel this way.
  - Encourage the children to make their thinking visible by text marking and annotating their chosen poem with their thoughts, ideas and questions.
- Come back together to discuss: Why did they choose the particular poem they did? What did it make them think about? How did it make them feel? Did they feel the same throughout the poem or did their feelings change at different points? How or why do you think this is? What connections did they make with the poem? Did it connect to any other poems they have read, to personal or real life experiences they’ve had? What did they find particularly effective about the poem?
- Now, share with the children 2019 CLIPPA winner, poet Steven Camden’s thoughts on performing poetry: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/steven-camden-what-advice-would-you-give-performing-poetry>. Consider what he says about connecting with the words and fitting your emotional connection to the words into your performance. Give each group time to look at their poem again, talking specifically about the emotions they feel as they read their chosen poem and how they might convey this in their performance.
- Encourage them to think about how they will vary the pace, tone and volume of their voices to convey their connection with the words and the emotions evoked by the poem. Allow them time and space to think about or discuss this, if they are working in a pair or group, and to

mark up their copy of the poem with performance notes before trying out ideas, adapting where necessary and rehearsing their performances to share with the rest of the class.

- After the children have had time to work up and rehearse their performances, allow space for them to perform their poems for the rest of the class. Before 14<sup>th</sup> June 2022, this could be filmed and submitted for the [CLIPPA shadowing scheme](#) competition to win poetry prizes.
- Then, ask the children to feed back on the interpretations of different groups, evaluating the effectiveness of different techniques and styles and what these brought to their understanding of the poem. *What was most effective about each performance? What did the performance bring to your understanding of or feelings about the poem or the subject matter? How was the performance different from hearing the poem read aloud?*
- Allow time and space for the children to add to their visual organisers about some of the deeper and more complex experiences and emotions connected with the theme of friends and family, with any new ideas they gained from this session and to begin thinking about ideas for their own poems in their Poetry Journals. These may be rough notes of ideas in words, pictures or visual organisers, or snippets of lines or verses. Allow the children to decide if theirs are ideas they want to share or write just for themselves if dealing with more sensitive issues, such as those explored in some of Valerie's poems. Writing about such issues may help to explore and work through them.
- As the children do this, it is important for you to keep up your own journal alongside, modelling ideation and composition and how to develop ideas into drafts, talking through stuck points and where ideas may not be working and have to be abandoned or how these can be worked around.

### Session 12: Writing own poems in response to the collection: Ideation

*Following an authentic model for writing in the classroom allows students to feel what it is like to be a writer. It is so much more than simply 'doing' writing tasks.*

*Following an authentic process results in well-developed pieces of writing; pupils follow a truly creative process and have the impetus to write for themselves.*

*The core focus of an authentic writing process is on giving pupils a credible opportunity to develop their own voice, have a choice about what they want to say and how they say it and the chance to write with freedom.*

**Ideation** is the creative process of generating, developing, and communicating new ideas. Activities and demonstrations should focus on exploring where and how we get ideas from in the real world of writing and giving pupils time, space and stimulus to begin to form and shape ideas for their own writing for real life purposes and audiences.

- Reflect on all the poems that have been read in the collection so far. How would you describe the different poems? Can you categorise them under different headings? What would these be? What were different poems about? Could you categorise these into different topics or

themes? What ideas do these give you about what poetry is and what it could be? What ideas do you have for poems of your own?

- Often, when people talk to writers about their work, one of the most commonly asked questions is where they get their ideas from. Listen to a range of poets talk about where they get their ideas from. The following are very useful examples:
  - Nikita Gill: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/nikita-gill-what-inspires-you-poet>
  - Matt Goodfellow: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/matt-goodfellow-what-inspires-you-poet>
  - Michael Rosen: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/michael-rosen-what-inspires-you-poet>
  - John Lyons: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/john-lyons-what-inspires-you-poet>
  - Ruth Awolola: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/ruth-awolola-what-inspires-you-poet>
- How does what these poets say link to the ideas you heard from Valerie Bloom herself? Replay this if the children can't remember the original clip: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/valerie-bloom-what-inspires-you-poet>.
- Allow the children to talk in pairs or small groups and list as many places as they can think of where a person can get ideas to help their writing. After a couple of minutes, get children to report back and create a class list. *Where can we get ideas from?* Children might mention: things that we see/notice, something heard, memories, other books that we've read, a song that we heard, dreams, imagination, daydreaming, playing, films, toys, family events, arguments, etc.
- Listen to Valerie Bloom and other poets talk about how they go about writing their poetry: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetry/videos?f%5B0%5D=tags%3A10757&search>. *What ideas can they pick up from this?* John Lyons: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/john-lyons-how-do-you-work-your-poems-0>, Matt Goodfellow: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/matt-goodfellow-how-do-you-go-about-writing-your-poetry>, Nikita Gill: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/nikita-gill-how-do-you-work-your-poems> and Philip Gross: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/philip-gross-how-do-you-go-about-writing-your-poetry> talk about the importance of keeping a note of ideas in a notebook.
- Come back to the Poetry Journals where children have been jotting down ideas, inspirations, sketches and drafts of poems. Remind the children that these books are only for them – there's not a particular amount of writing you expect them to do, they can write in any way they wish, and they can also sketch and draw. It's also important to make clear that you won't be marking them.
- Now give time for the children to reflect back on the ideas they've collected and think about which they feel might be most successful to take forward to a draft piece of writing in the next session.
- It is important for you as a teacher of writing to reflect on your own feelings about writing alongside the children and review ideas you have collected in your own journal. Our recent research highlights the importance of teachers as writers of poetry. Share some of the ideas you would consider working up and why, and how you might start to think about doing this,

then give the children some time to begin to work up their own ideas or to sit and think about how to do this.

- Some children may choose to start by drawing, doodling or sketching ideas initially. You might even refer back to some of the illustrations in the text.
- They could also draw on the ideas of practising poets. You can listen to Valerie Bloom and other poets talk about how they go about writing their poetry here: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetry/videos?f%5B0%5D=tags%3A10757&search>. They might want to go back to the techniques that they already explored from Kate Wakeling (splurging ideas), Sue Hardy-Dawson (finding a line) and Ruth Awolola (using a mind map) if they found these useful.
- Remind them that they don't have to start writing a poem straight away, they might just begin by collecting words, phrases, ideas and images that can be used later. However, if they have an idea that they want to start exploring immediately in a poetic form that is also fine.

### Session 13: Writing Own Poems, Gaining a Response

*Creation is the act of writing down and shaping ideas with a purpose, audience and form in mind. Activities and demonstrations should focus on exploring different ways to capture, work up and develop ideas in the journey to publication. Sharing the processes of real writers, for example their thoughts and advice and images of their journals, notebooks and sketchbooks can be a valuable part of this process, sharing how the work will often begin rough, in note form and tentative before being worked up more fully for an audience.*

*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.*

*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. 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.*

- 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? How can you take your initial notes forward into crafting a poem?
- Take a theme or topic from your own journal that you could begin working up into a poem. Model how you might begin crafting a poem based on one of the topics discussed during one of the sessions, talking through the choices that you are making as a writer to communicate the right feelings and images for your reader.

- Think about the form the poem will take and if they will use any of the poetic devices you have explored in Valerie Bloom's poetry, such as rhyme, wordplay, repetition, imagery, alliteration or assonance. You may have children in the class who are very adept at using rhythm and rhyme in their writing, some may be more comfortable to write in free verse and find it easier to express their thoughts and feelings in this way. Encourage them to select the form and devices that allow them to best express their themes and feelings in the best way, as they have seen and responded to in Valerie's writing.
- Allow time for children to draft their own poems around the themes and subjects of their choice, then allow them to read these aloud to themselves, perhaps while walking around or moving so they can feel the rhythms of their writing before sharing with 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, adjust rhythms or make suggestions to improve the writing.
- Start to think together about how the poem could be presented on the page to enhance the meaning and the reader's understanding. Draw the children's thoughts back to what they saw in Valerie Bloom's poems and the impact this had on them as readers and use this knowledge to make notes about this on their draft.
- You might also think about whether the poem will have an accompanying illustration, and if so, what this might be. Again, look back at the poems studied and the accompanying illustrations by Ken Wilson-Max. *Which of these had accompanying illustrations and which didn't? Why do you think this was? What is the impact of having the illustrations there? What does the reader have to do if the poem is not illustrated? What style of illustration do you think might best fit the theme and emotions captured in your writing?*

### Session 14: Editing and Publishing Own Poems

*Publication is the means to present writing in a way that is most appropriate for the purpose, audience and form. This may be through the spoken as well as the written form and may also involve visual communication, if appropriate.*

*Prior to publication, writers should work with a supportive partner to polish the work ready for publication, proof reading work and checking for spelling and punctuation accuracy. Materials that facilitate the most appropriate forms of publication, reflecting those used by a practising writer working in this way should be provided to give writers the full sense of the satisfaction publishing and presenting writing can bring.*

- Give further time for children to redraft any parts of their poems that they discussed with their response partner in the previous session, or to work on their poems further if they need time to do this.
- When they have a poem that they have read aloud to a partner, discussed and explored changes and that they are happy to present to a wider audience, start to think about how that poem could be best presented. *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 a word processor? 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?*

- Allow plenty of time and space for the children to make a final draft and then publish their work accordingly.
- When they are happy with the way their poems look on the page, think about how this could be lifted off the page and be performed to an audience. Give each child a photocopy of their finished poem and allow them to mark this up with performance ideas. *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?*
- Ensure time is given to try out ideas and rehearse performances of children's own poems before presenting to an audience and consider ways to allow published poems to be shared with an audience – as part of a display in a prominent area in the school, printed in an anthology to share in a public reading space or school library, on a class blog or the school website, or published on a school social media account – you could even tag in the poet – Valerie tweets @PoetryVal.
- Allow the children time to reflect on the writing process. How did it feel to write their own poems? What was successful? What was challenging? Have they been inspired to write more poetry? Why or why not? If so, what else might they want to write about?

### Session 15: Reflecting on the Collection

- Begin by reading aloud the final poem in the collection 'The Colours of My Dreams' (page 94-95) and allow time for children to give their initial responses to the poem. *What did this poem make them think about? How did it make them feel? What made them feel this way? Why do you think Valerie Bloom chose to end the collection with this particular poem?*
- Revisit the poems that have been explored throughout the sequence. Ask the children what their favourite poems have been, re-read some that the class suggest or invite them to read these to the class.
- To draw together all the work done in this unit, hold a discussion about the collection as a whole. Which were your favourite poems? Which were the most memorable for you? Why? What questions might you like to ask Valerie Bloom after reading her poetry? Or ask Ken-Wilson Max about how he illustrated the collection? 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?
- Compare their current thoughts around the book with their first impressions. What were you expecting? Was the poetry included in the collection what you expected it to be? Why/why not? Was there anything in the collection that surprised you? How would you describe this

collection to someone else? What would you tell them about the poems? What might you keep back so as not to spoil their experience?

- Come back to discuss the poems that they have heard performed by the poet, heard read aloud or read and performed themselves and discuss the similarities and differences within them.
- Spend some time now reflecting on the poems that the children have written. What kinds of poems were your favourite to write? What did you find it easiest to write about? What was more difficult or challenging for you? Why do you think this was?
- Following this, you might hold a poetry festival 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 of poems from this collection that they will need to remember when reading their own poems.
- Display the children's own poems and artwork prominently in the library or other shared area or on a blog, website or school social media account so they can be read by a wider audience. Ensure you obtain each child's consent before publishing their work. This might lead on to wider explorations around the concept of copyright. You may wish to draw on the resources CLPE produced in partnership with the ALCS to explore this in more depth:  
<https://clpe.org.uk/teaching-resources/ALCS-resources-on-copyright>.
- You may also want to look into the prospect of inviting Valerie to the school for a poet visit. Details of how to do this can be found on her website:  
<https://valeriebloom.co.uk/contact/bookings/>