

Poems to Perform, illustrated by Clare Melinsky, edited by Julia Donaldson

This collection was shortlisted for the 2014 CLPE Poetry Award.

A careful selection of poems, both familiar and new, that lend themselves to being performed in a range of collaborative ways. Progress through the book is subtly themed: gliding through poems about school, football, food and many other matters. Succinct suggestions for how they could be presented both verbally and dramatically are listed at the back, leaving plenty of scope for teachers and pupils to make their interpretations. The judges felt that the poems in the anthology had been really carefully chosen and selected to reflect the best of poems to perform across a broad range of time, poets and styles. Linocut illustrations echo an element of each poem.

Overall learning aims of this teaching sequence:

- To make choices in selecting poems for anthologies;
- To explore, interpret and respond to poetry;
- To explore rhythm, rhyme and pattern in a range of poems;
- To respond to and play with language in poetry;
- To use poetry as a stimulus for art;
- To perform in response to poetry;
- To compose and perform own poetry.

This teaching sequence is designed for a Year 1 or Year 2 class.

Overview of this teaching sequence

This teaching sequence is approximately 2 weeks long if spread out over 10 sessions and divided into two themes: 'Rhythm and Sound' and 'Natural Wonders'. Children should have every given opportunity to listen to poems from this collection throughout the sequence; expressing interest and preferences and making choices for their own class anthologies on a preferred theme. The tuneful nature and predictable pattern of the poems in this anthology supports teachers to engage children in recital and expressive performance. There is much vivid imagery to explore and inspire creative response and interesting use of language to play around with and extend interest in the meaning of words. The themes and style of such poetry offer inspiration to young budding poets and serve as a model for the development of their own poetry writing.

National Curriculum objectives covered by this sequence

Reading: (Word reading / Comprehension)

- Develop pleasure in reading, motivation to read, vocabulary and understanding;
- listen to, discuss and express views about a wide range of poems at a level beyond that at which they can read independently;

Writing: (Transcription / Composition)

- Develop positive attitudes and stamina for writing by writing poetry;
- draft and write by noting ideas, key phrases and vocabulary, and composing and rehearsing phrases and sentences orally;

- link what they read or hear read to their own experiences;
- recognise and join in with predictable phrases in poems and to recite some by heart;
- to recognise simple recurring literary language in poetry;
- discuss and clarify word meanings, linked to those already known;
- discuss favourite words and phrases;
- continue to build up a repertoire of poems learnt by heart, appreciating these and reciting some, with appropriate intonation to make the meaning clear;
- make inferences on the basis of what is said and done;
- answer and ask questions; explain and discuss understanding of poems; those they listen to and those read independently.

- write for different purposes including poetry;
- reread and evaluate writing to check it makes sense and make simple revisions;
- read writing aloud with appropriate intonation to make the meaning clear;
- use new and familiar punctuation correctly;
- use sentences in different forms;
- expand noun phrases to describe and specify.

Speaking and Listening:

- Listen and respond appropriately to adults and peers;
- ask relevant questions to extend knowledge and understanding;
- consider and evaluate viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others;
- participate in discussions, performances, role play, improvisations and debate about what has been read;
- use spoken language to develop understanding through imagining and exploring ideas.

Cross Curricular Links:

Much of the cross-curricular work in this sequence engages children in exploring the language and vocabulary necessary to be able to both access and compose poetry.

Science

- Children can explore, discuss, raise and answer questions about the changing state and physical properties of water;
- Children can identify and describe the characteristics of animals and their habitats
- children can learn animals' basic needs for survival, how to look after animals, particularly those in their immediate environment, and how to put them back safely;
- Children can compare natural 'treasures' throughout the changing seasons

Art

- Children use drawing and painting to develop and share their ideas, experiences and imagination in response to poetry;
- Children can develop techniques in using colour, pattern, texture, line, shape, form and space using watercolour, ink, and charcoal.

Music

- Children use their voices expressively and creatively by speaking chants and rhymes in reading poetry and in performing;
- Children have opportunity to listen with concentration and understanding high-quality recorded music of the Royal Philharmonic playing Vaughan William’s *‘The Lark Ascending’*.
- When rehearsing poetry recitals and performances, children could be encouraged to experiment with, create, select and combine sounds using the inter-related dimensions of music.

P.E

- Children can rehearse and perform a dance in role as the Skylark, using simple movement patterns.

Developing Phonological Awareness:

- discriminating environmental sounds;
- onomatopoeia;
- exploring voice sounds;
- exploring instrumental sounds;
- keeping and following a rhythm
- identifying rhyming words;
- onset and rime;
- syllabification.

Exploring Vocabulary and Language

Structure:

- generate vocabulary experientially;
- drawing to describe and think;
- explore onomatopoeia;
- identify rhyming words;
- joining in with predictable patterned phrases.

Teaching Approaches:

- reading aloud and rereading
- role play
- visualising
- drawing and annotating
- responding to illustration and film
- responding to music
- shared reading
- shared writing

Outcomes:

- Descriptive vocabulary and phrase collections
- Poems inspired by the collection:
 - Innovated verses of ‘Rhythm of Life’
 - Fresh lines for ‘The Sound Collector’
 - original poem inspired by poetry and music: ‘The Lark Ascending’
- Performance and recital
- Class anthologies

Links to other texts and resources:

There are so many anthologies and collection that are inspired by childhood experiences and will provide the children with a broad range of poetry to listen to, read aloud and perform, as well as enabling children to choose poems when creating their own anthologies on given themes.

- *‘The Puffin Book of Fantastic First Poems’*, ed. June Crebbin;
- *‘The Dragon with a Big Nose’* by Kathy Henderson

- ‘All the Best. The Selected Poems’ by Roger McGough (*Poetryline*)
- ‘Caribbean Playground Song’ read by James Berry (*Poetryline*)
- ‘Dog in the Playground’ read by Allan Ahlberg (*Poetryline*) from his ‘Collected Poems’
- ‘Everybody’s Got a Gift’ by Grace Nichols (*Poetryline*)

Resources for ‘The Treasures’ sessions:

- Springtime footage – play until 6:00: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GELKWldCTv8>
- ‘Lark Ascending’ by Ralph Vaughan Williams: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZR2JIDnT2l8>
- Skylark flying – play until 1:02: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6tsl9vn3LQ>

Links to other resources on the Poetryline Website:

Watch poets read their own poems, including:

- Rosen reading ‘*Rhythm of Life*’: <http://www.poetryline.org.uk/poems/the-rhythm-of-life-44>
- McGough reading ‘*The Sound Collector*’: <http://www.poetryline.org.uk/poems/the-sound-collector-530>

Look up poets by age range or themes, enabling you to access a wide range of poetry to inspire budding poets.

Cover image

Before beginning this book:

Consider immersing the school, and certainly the year group, in a wide range of poetry. Perhaps make a prominent ‘Poet Tree’ display upon which members of the school community can stick their favourite poem, recommending it to others. Become familiar with CLPE’s Poetryline website as well as those belonging to the poets themselves and other sites that enable the children to watch the poet 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 a class collection 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.

The first part of the teaching sequence relates to the rhythms and sounds in everyday life so it is wise to ensure the children take lots of environmental sound walks in a range of places in order to better access the vocabulary when performing and composing poetry.

Teaching Sessions

Part 1: Rhythm and Sound

Session 1: Responding to and performing poetry

Poem: ‘The Rhythm of Life’ by Michael Rosen LINK

- Show Michael Rosen’s performance of his poem, ‘The Rhythm of Life’ on CLPE’s ‘Poetryline’ website <http://www.poetryline.org.uk/poems/the-rhythm-of-life-44>, without showing them the text.
- What do you think of the poem? Was there anything in particular that you liked about the poem or the performance? Use the ‘Tell Me’ framework to support thinking and elicit responses.

- Discuss and identify the rhythm and patterns of the performed poem. Play Rosen's performance again, encouraging the children to move or beat to the repeated, undulating rhythm, listening out for emphasised words or joining in with the predictable actions and words, particularly the rhyming pairs. Discuss the effect of the repeated rhythm, the pauses and the effect Rosen creates when accelerates to a crescendo and then stops.
- Display the text of the poem on IWB or visualiser, this time reading it aloud to the children, perhaps more slowly, so they can predict and join in with the refrains and actions, emphasising the repeated rhythmic structure. An additional adult could beat the syllables of each verse on a tambour or rhythm sticks alongside the reading.
- Repeat through shared reading, allowing the children to enjoy being able to recite parts, or all, of the poem by heart, engaging them in the rhythm and memorable refrains. How do the actions support recital?
- 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.
- Confident groups can perform to the class. Compare performance styles.
- What else could Rosen have written about where we might feel a rhythm? Draw on inspiration from the poem, the children's experiences or take the children on a walk around the school or in the local environment for ideas.
- Make a collection of rhythmical things that can be turned into new verses through shared writing, using the repeated structure of the poem: 'Hand on your...feel the rhythm of...'. Rhyming words can be discussed but this wouldn't be vital; more valuable to check the rhythmic pattern fits with the Rosen's poem given its significance in enhancing the meaning of the words. Children can perform the poem that they have composed together.

Session 2: Word collections

Poem: 'Voices of Water' by Tony Mitton

- Hold up a glass of water and tell the children that you are going to pour it into another glass. *What sound might it make?* Elicit sound effects from the children. Pour some water, raising the glass high and low to vary the sound as it pours. Now put your hand in a bowl of water. *What sound will the water make if you swish your hand about?* Elicit further sound effects and onomatopoeic words from the children, such as whoosh, slosh.
- Explore the children's concept of water. Why we need it, what it is used for, where it comes from, where we find it, etc. Scribe ideas. How does the sound of the water vary from place to place? Children can discuss ideas about where loud water sounds might be heard and when water can sound quiet, echoic, rhythmical etc. Elicit ideas and encourage sound effects.
- Make provision for varied water play using a range of shallow and deep containers, sieves, pouring jugs, ice shapes, guttering for water travel along into another container, pumps, etc. Ensure there is ample opportunity for the children to collaborate to experiment with the structures they can craft and the variety of water sounds they can create as a result. Water can be ice cold and warm to produce further interesting sound effects.
- Ask the children to collect words and phrases that describe the various sounds we can make

with water, e.g. *drip dripping, pitter patter, slosh, crick crack*.

- Examine the word collections, reading aloud and encouraging the children to say them with appropriate intonation. Discuss which words are onomatopoeic and why. You could play the children some sound clips or find footage of fountains, waterfalls, the seashore, melting glaciers, rain or a tap dripping and ask the children to choose word that they think best fit.
- In an additional session, the children could depict different forms of water using watercolours or ink and water. Model techniques such as wetting the paper first and dropping the paint or ink onto the page, layering washes of paint over each other, using a range of sponges and brushes to create different effects. Allow the children exploration time.

Session 3: Reading aloud and Readers' Theatre

Poem: *'Voices of Water'* by Tony Mitton

- Remind the children of yesterday's exploration of water sounds and tell the children you are going to read aloud Tony Mitton's poem, *Voices of Water*. Ask them to predict what he might write about? Elicit responses from peer discussion.
- Read the poem aloud, encouraging the children to predict what the water 'says' occasionally, being careful not to break the flow of the poem but modelling the expression and intonation of the piece.
- Show the children an enlarged copy of the poem and ask the children to discuss the structure of the poem, identifying the repetitive refrain, and discussing why the printed poem has been laid out on the page in this way. *How does it affect the way you read it? Look at the illustration. Why so sparse? Is this what you had in your mind? Has Mitton been successful in creating strong images in our minds? How has he done this?*
- Using shared reading, model the rhythm of the refrain and the intonation to emphasise the onomatopoeic words. Examine: *'The water in the pond...stays still.'* *Why has Mitton used ellipses here? How does this affect our reading, emphasise meaning and allow images to be formed for the reader?*
- Model text marking the poem to give directions for it to be read aloud and performed. How could we use our voices as a group to best effect? When might silence be most effective? What if we were to add actions or facial expression? Instruments? Mark the text and try out a performance as a class or using a group to demonstrate. How could it be improved? Make further annotations or marks to show these revisions.
- Assign a verse to each group and ask them to mark the text ready for performance. Rehearse and make revisions ready to perform to the class in turn.
- Perform the verses of the poem in order (you will need to perform the poem twice if you have four children to a verse), watching other groups carefully. Evaluate and compare performances, commenting on particularly successful elements in the performances as well as considering new ideas.

Session 4: Responding to illustration, reading aloud, sound collecting

Poem: 'The Sound Collector' by Roger McGough

- Show the children an enlarged image of the illustration. Ask the children to respond to the image, scribing ideas around the outside of it in the class poetry journal/on a role on the wall:
 - *Who is he?*
 - *What does he have in his bag?*
 - *Where is he going?*
 - *Where has he been?*
 - *Would you like to meet him? Why? Why not?*
 - *Does anything puzzle you? What would you like to ask him?*
- Read the first verse only. Ask the children to brainstorm which sounds they think he collected in his bag and swiftly make a class list.
- Watch Roger McGough perform the whole poem, on Poetryline <http://www.poetryline.org.uk/poems/the-sound-collector-530>
- *What would a world be like if left in silence? Ask the children to be silent. Were there any sounds? What were they? What if they weren't there? How would you feel if you couldn't hear or speak? How do you think a deaf person feels? Why do you think that?* (It would be good to invite someone who is hearing impaired to share their experiences of the world with the children including positive messages, such as communication methods like British Sign Language, maybe learning a song using sign.)
- Compare our list of sounds with those of Roger McGough. *Were any the same or similar? Why?* provide opportunities for the children to take walks around the school and local environment to collect more sounds. They could take a special 'sound collector bag' to hold their list of sounds as they hear them.
- This would be a good opportunity for the children to continue this learning at home in order to vary the sounds collected in the home, in the bath, at the woods, around the shops, in the park, etc.

Session 5: Shared Reading and composition

Poem: 'The Sound Collector' by Roger McGough

- Read the whole poem aloud again.
- Discuss the structure of the poem: four line verse, rhyming pattern and the sound usually being described by the action of something, e.g. *'The hissing of the frying-pan.'* *'The squeaking of the chair.'* *'The popping of the toaster.'*
- Pick out the action words that are creating the sound, e.g. *'hissing'*, *'squeaking'*, *'popping'*. Discuss how we would say them and McGough's use of onomatopoeia to enhance meaning and effect.
- Take a list from your 'sound collector bag' that might look something like: tap, chair, children, leaves, etc. Choose one word and, through shared writing, model how you can create a new line of the poem, using the poet's structure of *'The [action] of [a noun]'*, e.g. *'The gushing of the tap.'* *'The scraping of the chair.'*
- Ask pairs to choose a word from your list and create their own line, sharing ideas with other

pairs.

- Children can create their own verse from their sound collections, either individually, in pairs or in small groups (each contributing a line each if appropriate).
- Read aloud to each other and make simple revisions, perhaps looking at emulating the rhyming pattern of the original poem. This might be modelled in a small group by a teacher, revising and editing the children's lines to achieve a rhyming verse.
- Put the verses together to create a class poem, reading it aloud and encouraging the children to join in with reciting their own verse and with predictable words and phrases.

Part 2: Natural Wonders

Session 6: Responding to imagery and expanding vocabulary

Poem: 'The Treasures' by Clare Bevan

- Show the children a prepared treasure chest and ask them to guess what precious things are inside. Elicit and discuss different and similar ideas. *What is your most treasured possession? Why? How do you care for it?*
- Gradually show the children the contents, one at a time: a feather, a scented flower, the sound of the waves (imagine letting the sound out whilst playing), an 'icicle' (use the finger of a rubber glove as a mould). Try to engender a sense of awe and wonder whilst bringing the treasures out of the bag. *Why are they in a treasure chest? What is so special about these things?* Ask the children to choose one of the treasures with a partner and think of three things that makes it precious. Share with the group and scribe in the poetry journal around an image of each. *Who do we think might want to keep the treasures safe in the chest? Why should we look after them?* Elicit ideas and discussion.
- Read the poem aloud. Check the children know the animals. Discuss the message the poet is trying to convey. *Why is it a child keeping the treasures safe rather than an adult?*
- Find out what the children know of conservation and what might happen if we don't look after our planet. Share ideas and opinions. They may need to research conservation further and books such as: 'The Kapok Tree' by Lynn Cherry, '10 Things I can do to Help my World' and 'My Green Day' by Melanie Walsh, Burningham's 'Oi Get off my Train' and 'Dear Greenpeace, There's a Whale in Emily's Pond' by Simon James are excellent texts to support children learn about environmental issues.
- Watch the footage <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GELKWLdCTv8> showing these and many other treasures as the world wakes up to Springtime, asking the children to describe the feelings it evoked in them. *How have the scenes been filmed?* Draw out that some of the filming is time lapse, some close up and some from a bird's eye view. *Has the film helped you to see anything differently to before?* How could they describe some of these natural wonders portrayed in the film? Map the collection of words and phrases within a zone of intensity, (see resources).
- Watch the footage again, this time asking the children to choose their favourite natural

wonder from the scenes, large or small. Discuss the smaller wonders, those that we might have taken for granted before. The children can depict their 'treasure' in chalk pastels or another preferred medium. You could put some images of the treasures from the poem at tables for the children to reference. They can include words, phrases or a caption to describe why it is so precious, how it makes them feel, why it is in danger or why we should take care of it. The footage can be repeated or music, such as 'The Lark Ascending' by Vaughan Williams played to inspire creativity.

- Read the poem again, then a second time but with the children joining in; splitting the class into parts, some being the child asking 'Who..?' and individuals taking each of the animals' parts. Discuss the impact of performing in this way rather than reading alone.

Session 7: Shared Reading and Reader's Theatre leading to a performance

Poem: 'The Treasures' by Clare Bevan

- Look at an enlarged version of the poem, and ask the children to consider why the poet has linked those particular animals to the treasures she speaks of. *Where do the shadows the tiger will give come from? What will happen to the tigers if there were no shadows? How does this make you feel? How would you read or perform this? What about the Minnow...why is it sighing? How does this contrast with the sound of the Barn Owl or Peacock?*
- Show the children how to prepare the poem for performance by marking the text in agreed ways, e.g. to denote pause for dramatic effect and the contrasting tempo and dynamics involved. Assign some parts, including creative effects and have a go at performing, discussing the performance and model making some revisions.
- Assign a small group to each verse, some children assigned to ask the question, one to voice the animal and perhaps the narrator / creative effects. Ask each group to text mark their verse (with adult support if appropriate), rehearse, revise their recital, ready to join in a class performance of the whole poem.
- Groups could make simple costumes or masks to enhance the performance.
- Each group performs the poem for the class. Comment on successful aspects of each performance and ask the groups if they would make any revisions. Discuss similarities and differences in each of the performances. Where there were similarities, identify the structure or language of the poem that led this to happen. Discuss the poet's intent and the power of the words she has used.

Session 8 and 9: Dance, vocabulary and phrase collection, composition inspired by 'The Treasures', bookmaking and publication

Poem: 'The Treasures' by Clare Bevan

- Discuss the message of 'The Treasures' and that the things given to the child to take care of are not necessarily dramatic natural wonders but might be quietly awe inspiring, such as the 'hush of a feather'. Ask the children what they think is so wondrous about a bird that could inspire such a line. Elicit ideas and engage the children in further discussion about what we consider precious.

- Play the children the opening of 'The Lark Ascending' by Ralph Vaughan Williams <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZR2JIDnT2I8>. What instrument is leading? (Violin). *What do you think the violin is depicting in this piece of music?* Take ideas then tell them the title of the piece, showing them some footage of a lark rising and falling, alongside the music. (play until 1:02: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6tsI9vn3LQ>). *How does it make you feel?* Note descriptive words and phrases on a 'thermometer of intensity', e.g. *'glad > happy > joyful > blissful > exhilarated'*
- Children can depict the movement of the lark with charcoal as they listen to the piece again. Elicit descriptive words and phrases on strips of paper and display with the artwork.
- Make provision for the children to have space to move as the lark rises and falls in the sky whilst playing the music again. Encourage and praise the changes in pace and form as the children swoop and dance in the space.
- Children orally rehearse and, in pairs, discuss phrases they can use to describe the movement of the lark. Write descriptions on different strips of paper and organise the strips to create a poem, in pairs or individually as appropriate.
- Read aloud, evaluate and make simple revisions in pairs.
- Create a handmade zig-zag book within a 'treasure chest' box in which to illustrate and publish the poem, to be displayed and read by peers.
- Read or listen to 'The Lark Ascending' by George Meredith that inspired Williams to compose his piece of music (see additional resources). The children could listen to the poem alongside Williams' music, allowing the children to tune into the rhythm and tone of the language. The children might pick out words and phrases that compare with their own poems.

Session 10: Creating anthologies

- Provide much opportunity for the children to listen to, read, re-read, recite and perform the poems in the collection.
- Discuss the themes that flow through the anthology, e.g. animals, games, sounds, water, school, etc. and allow the children to choose a title for which they would like to create a poetry anthology.
- Conduct a library session during which the children are able to browse the poetry section and make choices as to the content of their own anthology. Try to provide poetry collections that the children choose from rather than ready made anthologies so they are making genuine choices and the children's anthology feels more authentic.
- Children can make handmade books, e-books or publish their anthologies in a prepared journal that can be illustrated and the poems word-processed or handwritten neatly for presentation.
- Provide the children with a range of art materials and be prepared to model techniques employed by their favourite illustrators as this is as much a part of the anthology as the poem. Refer to Julia Donaldson's comments on her choice of illustrator, the sparseness of her style and why she felt it vital not to provide too much additional imagery other than that the poems themselves provide the reader. *Is that true of all anthologies or illustrated poems? Why/why not?*
- Respond to Donaldson's anthology, *'Poems to Perform'* using the 'Tell Me' grid and write a book review for peers.