

## Thinker: My Puppy Poet and Me by Eloise Greenfield, illustrated by Ehsan Abdollahi (Tiny Owl)

A puppy who is a poet knows he has joined the right human family when they choose to name him Thinker. Seven-year-old Jace is a poet too and these appealing poems detail their dialogue as they share ‘word-music’ through their poetry. Ehsan Abdollahi’s collage illustrations, depicting an African-American family, are an attractive complement to the variety of verse forms which culminate in ‘Thinker’s Rap’.

Eloise Greenfield is an African-American children’s poet and author. She has written biographies, a memoir and over 40 children’s books. Her work has won many prestigious awards, including the Coretta Scott King-Virginia Hamilton Award for Lifetime Achievement.

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 1 or 2 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 teaching sequence is split into three sections. The first section introduces us to the poet as well as introducing the children to what poetry can be. The second section focuses on giving children the opportunity to explore the poetry collection; in particular how poetry can portray relationships, everyday events, personal experiences and emotions. In the final section, children will explore inspirations for their own poetry and work up poems for performance, finding the rhythm in their own writing and honing their own work for a performance outcome in the form of a family poetry celebration. In each section, children have the opportunity to read poetry, listen to poems being read, offer personal responses to the poems, to prepare them for performance and to come up with ideas for poems of their own. The whole sequence builds up towards the chance for the class to write their own poems on subjects of interest to them and perform them for the school and local community.

The children will use the knowledge they have gained about rhythm and structure throughout the unit to decide how to perform poetry to an audience as well as present poems on the page. The poems will be published in a class anthology to be shared with the school community in a variety of ways.

### Teaching Approaches

- Reading Aloud
- Hearing poems performed by poets
- Looking at Language
- Engaging children in rhythm through music
- Engaging in narrative response poetry through drama
- Modelled writing
- Responding to writing
- Publication

### Outcomes

- Performance of the poet's poetry
- Identifying poetic language and devices
- Rhythmic movement
- 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:

- Free poetry
- Haiku
- Conversation poetry
- Narrative poetry
- Rhythm
- Rhyme

### Cross Curricular Links:

#### Geography:

- The book sleeve provides pen portraits of the poet, Eloise Greenfield, and the illustrator, Ehsan Abdollahi. The award winning poet has published over forty books and her work is widely praised for its depiction of African-American experience, particularly family life. Greenfield has said she began writing for children after looking in vain for books for her own children that reflected their life. What does this mean for the children and the way they view their own family, relationships, heritage and identity? How are they reflected in stories and poetry collections they read?
- This collection is grounded in the life of a family and many of the scenes may feel familiar to your children. It would be beneficial to explore the places in which the collection is set and how much this reflects Greenfield's life in the United States and Abdollahi's life in the South of Iran. This could provide a good basis for a comparative study and give the children chance to explore in more depth the place in which they themselves are growing up.
- Langston Terrace, where Eloise grew up, was the first federally funded housing project and a place of great happiness for her. Children could compare her upbringing and sense of place in this community and compare it to their own family homes and wider community. It is especially important to enable children to see their own realities reflected in authors, poets and characters in books, as well as to help children to avoid making negative assumptions about who people are, where people live and how it makes them feel.

### Art:

- Look at the illustrations by Ehsan Abdollahi throughout the text. *Do you like the style? Does it fit with the poems? How important are the illustrations to the reader? How do they add meaning?* Encourage the children to develop their own ideas for illustrating favourite poems in the collection or their own poems, choosing and using a style that matches the text.

### Links to other texts and resources:

- CLPE's 2018 Reflecting Realities Report: <https://clpe.org.uk/search/core/reflecting%20realities>
- Eloise Greenfield biographical information and poetry: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/eloise-greenfield>
- Tiny Owl promotional films about Eloise Greenfield: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxH7Bm3OVYo>
- And Ehsan Adollahi: <http://tinyowl.co.uk/meet-our-fab-illustrator-ehsan-abdollahi/>
- Other collections that contain poems with a strong focus on family life or rhythmic language, all of which feature on Poetryline <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poets>:
  - *A Great Big Cuddle* by Michael Rosen and Chris Riddell (Walker)
  - *The Dragon with the Big Nose* by Kathy Henderson (Frances Lincoln)
  - *Poems to Perform* edited by Julia Donaldson (Macmillan)
  - *Please Mrs Butler* and *Heard it in the Playground* by Allan Ahlberg (Puffin)
- CLPE's Poetryline website contains a wealth of resources including recordings of Eloise Greenfield's poem being performed and other poets performing their poems and talking about their writing process, which will inspire children in their own performances and writing. These can be found at: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poets> and <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poet-interviews>
- The Poetryline website also contains resources to support subject knowledge around poetic forms and devices: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poetic-forms-and-devices>
- Supporting titles in which representation is positive:
  - *So Much* by Trish Cooke and Helen Oxenbury (Walker)
  - *Ruby's Worry* and *Ravi's Roar* by Tom Percival (Bloomsbury)
  - *Grace and Family* by Mary Hoffman and Caroline Binch (Frances Lincoln)
  - *Anna Hibiscus* by Atinuke and Lauren Tobia (Walker)
  - *Azzi in Between* by Sarah Garland (Frances Lincoln)
  - *How to Find Gold* by Viviane Schwarz (Walker)
  - *Fruits* by Valerie Bloom (Macmillan)
  - *Lulu gets a Cat* by Anna McQuinn and Rosalind Beardshaw (Alanna Max)
  - *If All the World Were ...* by Joseph Coelho and Allison Colpoys (Frances Lincoln)
  - *Luna Loves Library Day* by Joseph Coelho and Fiona Lumbers (Andersen Press)
  - *Jabari Jumps* by Gaia Cornwall (Walker)
  - *Billy and the Beast* by Nadia Shireen (Jonathan Cape)
  - *Julian is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love (Walker)
  - *Hair Love* by Matthew Cherry and Vashti Harrison (Puffin)

- *Astro Girl* by Ken Wilson-Max (Otter-Barry Books)

### Teaching Sessions:

#### 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.
- Create a focus display or poetry corner, where you can display a copy of the front cover of the book when it is revealed in Session 2, a photograph of the poet, 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).
- Talk to the children about the kinds of music they like and listen to regularly outside of school; including particular favourite styles, artists or songs.

### Section 1: Introducing the poet and poetry

#### Session 1: Introducing the poet and the collection

*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.*

- Prior to the session, cover the front of the book to reveal in due course. Show the children the end papers and ask them to consider what kind of text they think this is. What kinds of things do they expect to hear and why? Read aloud to the children the first poem in the collection, *Naming Me*. *Is this what they expected to hear? Why? Why not? What kind of writing do they think this is and how they know this?*
- Now share the poem on the page and read aloud again. 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? Who is Thinker? Who is Jace? What is their relationship? Who is the voice in the poem? How do they know? Does the poem remind them of any other poems they know?*
- Reveal the illustration that accompanies the poem and give the children time to explore it. *Does this confirm what you thought about the poem and who Thinker and Jace could be?*
- Think about the personal connections that the children might make with the poem. *Have any of them had a new pet before? How did it feel when you brought it home? How did you decide what to name it?* Allow children who have had these experiences to share these with the group so that others can understand the emotion behind the poem.

- Now think about Jace - *how do you think he might deliver the line “You’re a poet?”*? Allow time for the children to try out different ways of saying this connected to different emotions, e.g. *is he shocked? Excited? Scared? Delighted?*
- Now, give children time and space to work up this poem for a performance in pairs, working on how to capture this moment and the emotions of the characters involved and how to portray this in their performance. Before 13<sup>th</sup> June 2019, this could be filmed and submitted for the CLIPPA shadowing scheme competition to win the opportunity to perform this poem on stage as part of the award ceremony at the National Theatre, see: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/clippa/clippa-schools-shadowing-scheme>
- Allow time for 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 and interpretation of the poem. *What did each interpretation add to your understanding of the narrative? Could you see a clear picture of the moment?*
- Come back together to take children’s feedback. *Have they read poetry like this before? Who do they think wrote the poem? What are they interested by? Why do they think this? Do they know any other poets or authors that write about this kind of thing?* Encourage them to reference other poetry collections by poets that they may already know, making them accessible to support the discussion, for example:
  - *A Great Big Cuddle* by Michael Rosen and Chris Riddell (Walker)
  - *The Dragon with the Big Nose* by Kathy Henderson (Frances Lincoln)
  - *Please Mrs Butler and Heard it in the Playground* by Allan Ahlberg (Puffin)
- Revisit the endpapers and ask the children to predict who or what the other poems in the collection could be about.
- The children might expect the poems to express a range of topics or human themes rather than a collection that chronicles moments in a family’s life as this one does. Scribe their ideas to revisit later once the children have experienced all the poems and are engaging in book talk around the collection as a whole in later sessions.
- Reveal the front cover and title *Thinker: My Puppy Poet and Me* and discuss if this confirms or changes their ideas about the collection, the poet and the illustrator.
- Now watch the film made by publisher Tiny Owl, introducing us to Eloise Greenfield and this particular poetry collection: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxH7Bm3OVYo>
- *What do the children think or feel about the poet? Is there anything they particularly liked about what they have heard or she says? Was it what they were expecting? Do you already know about her? How is she similar to or different from what you imagined? Would you like to meet her? Why?*
- Watch it again or give them the opportunity to revisit it for themselves. *What does this tell us about the poet and how she feels about children, words and writing?* Scribe the children’s ideas around a photograph of Eloise Greenfield. This could be the start of a poetry display that you and the children create throughout this sequence of work. You can also visit The Brown Bookshelf for further information about the writer: <https://thebrownbookshelf.com/>
- In her semi-autobiographical book *Childtimes: A Three-Generation Memoir* (1979), Eloise describes her childhood as happy in a neighbourhood with strong positive relationships. Read the poem again, showing the printed page and illustration as you read aloud. *What connections can you make between this poem and the poet’s own childhood. How might she want you to feel about the family in the poem?*

- After the session, create a display of books by Eloise Greenfield if you can source them. She is an award-winning author and writer of over forty titles, some of which may be in school, libraries or in print, such as:
  - *Honey, I Love and Other Love Poems* illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon (HarperCollins USA)
  - *Grandpa's Face* illustrated by Floyd Cooper (Puffin USA)
- Alongside this, you might want to create a display of titles that you and the children feel reflect their own realities as Eloise is intent on doing for African-American children. This might be in relation to their heritage, beliefs, family life, gender or community. In her biography, at the Balkin Buddies website (<http://www.balkinbuddies.com/greenfield/>), she spells out her mission as a children's writer. She says it's twofold:
  - to contribute to the development of a large body of African-American literature for children and
  - to continue to fill her life with the joy of creating with words
- Titles you may wish to consider for this age group, amongst others, include:
  - *So Much* by Trish Cooke and Helen Oxenbury (Walker)
  - *Ruby's Worry* and *Ravi's Roar* by Tom Percival (Bloomsbury)
  - *Grace and Family* by Mary Hoffman and Caroline Binch (Frances Lincoln)
  - *Anna Hibiscus* by Atinuke and Lauren Tobia (Walker)
  - *Azzi in Between* by Sarah Garland (Frances Lincoln)
  - *How to Find Gold* by Viviane Schwarz (Walker)
  - *Fruits* by Valerie Bloom (Macmillan)
  - *Lulu gets a Cat* by Anna McQuinn and Rosalind Beardshaw (Alanna Max)
  - *If All the World Were ...* by Joseph Coelho and Allison Colpoys (Frances Lincoln)
  - *Luna Loves Library Day* by Joseph Coelho and Fiona Lumbers (Andersen Press)
  - *Jabari Jumps* by Gaia Cornwall (Walker)
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  - *Julian is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love (Walker)
  - *Hair Love* by Matthew Cherry and Vashti Harrison (Puffin)
  - *Astro Girl* by Ken Wilson-Max (Otter-Barry Books)
- CLPE's Reflecting Realities Report 2018 revealed that there were only 1% of BAME protagonists in children's books published 2017 and 4% of representation generally. It would be worth considering a review of the titles children have access to throughout school that allow your children to see their realities reflected as well as to view worlds beyond their own:
 

<https://clpe.org.uk/search/core/reflecting%20realities>
- In a linked art session, share with the children Tiny Owl's film about illustrator Ehsan Abdollahi:
 

<http://tinyowl.co.uk/meet-our-fab-illustrator-ehsan-abdollahi/>
- Ask the children to respond to what they see of his artwork. Create a display in which the children could find out more about him alongside Eloise Greenfield, including his work as Artist in Residence at Edinburgh Book Festival 2018 and his other illustrated titles:
  - *A Bottle of Happiness* by Pippa Goodhart



- *When I Coloured the World* by Ahmadreza Ahmadi
- *The Secret of Tattered Shoes* by Jackie Morris (Upcoming 2019)
- The children could be inspired and supported to create artwork in the style of Ehsan Abdollahi, particularly the collage techniques he used throughout this poetry collection, using handmade paper. They would also investigate the influence Iranian art and culture has had on his own style of illustration and be given sketchbooks in which to explore their own cultural influences (perhaps involving members of their family) as well as textures, techniques and style of artwork they find appealing.

## Session 2: What Poetry Can Be

*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.*

- Before this session, ensure that individual poetry journals (small notebooks, which could be handmade) are available for each child.
- Create a focus display or poetry corner, where you can display a copy of the front cover of the book, photographs of the poet and illustrator, a copy of the text and other poetry collections that the children know or could be inspired by.
- Begin by asking the children to share their ideas about what they think poetry is; how would they define it? Make a note of their ideas on the poetry display, including misconceptions that it has to rhyme. Ask the children to draw on examples of poems they know if they can, gently drawing out broader notions of what poetry could be. *How do they think Eloise Greenfield would describe poetry? What tells us this?*
- Now reveal the notes that Eloise has written at the end of the collection by reading these aloud. What more do they learn about the poet from reading this? What questions do you have about the poet or poetry after hearing this? Add these to the poetry display on sentence strips around a photograph of Eloise Greenfield.
- Read it again, this time asking the children to think about what she is saying about what poetry can be. Draw out anything that the children find particular appealing or phrases that were memorable or vivid, such as her ideas about 'word-music' and what they think this means in relation to the poetry they know. Compare this to what the children thought of as poetry and discuss any similarities or differences.
- *Is there anything you don't understand? What would you like to find out?* Encourage the children to identify any language relating to poetic devices that they don't understand or would like contextualised, encouraging a discussion to elicit from them what they think they already know about 'wordplay' or 'rap' for example.
- *Have they heard any rap music before? What is it like? Do they like it?* Return to the Tiny Owl film to watch her performance of *Thinker's Rap* at the back of the book and look at how she has the audience participating. Discuss their keeping pulse and the rhythmic quality of the words she has shaped as poet. The children will return to this poem in more depth later in the sequence.

- Ask the children if they know any other poets, and if they have any favourite poems. What do they like about these? How do they make you feel and why? How do you respond to them? Do they make you want to move or be still? What images do they conjure up for you? Record the poets and poems on the focus display and ask children to bring in books or copies with their favourite poems. You can help children to source these in school, if they don't have copies of these. Display these in the poetry area.
- Make time to read aloud and revisit familiar and new poetry every day so that the children are steeped in it as well as providing opportunity for them to see it on the page as well as hear it. Prompt the children to respond to the poems, drawing on what Eloise Greenfield says about poetry: how she hears word-music in her head; how the poetic shape or form fits with her own words; how rap is poetry; how 'poetry uses meaning, rhythm, rhyme, hints, humour, repetition and wordplay to make it come alive.'
  - *How do the poems make them feel? Why?*
  - *Which poems speak to them of their own lives? Which give us insights into another? Which do they prefer and why?*
  - *What do the children notice about the poem on the page? How does that or illustration contribute to meaning? How are the poems shaped on the page and rhythmically through line breaks?*
  - *Which poems inspire them to chime in, move to the rhythm or keep pulse?*
  - *Which have words or phrases that are particularly vivid or memorable? Why? How is language played with in interesting ways?*
- As the children become familiar with a wider repertoire of poetry, their ideas about poetry will broaden and they will be able to contextualise what Eloise Greenfield says about poetry and being a writer. You might also want to draw on a wider range of poet interviews on CLPE's Poetryline website: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poets-videos/poet-interviews>
- At this point, children could be presented with a personal poetry journal of their own in which they will be given opportunity to sketch ideas freely through drawings, observations and creative writing. Ask the children to turn to a blank page in their personal journals and suggest they 'doodle' draw or write anything they want, starting anywhere on the page with their own choice of pen or pencil.
- Provide children with plentiful opportunity to use their personal journals to collect ideas, to write about anything and everything and to refer back to it regularly. This is a personal, creative and free writing journal and therefore it is important that the only graphic marks made are those made by the child or that which they invite.
- They might like to play with words for the sake of language play. They might listen to their favourite music and begin to create 'word-music', drawing on the rhythm and tunes they hear. Some may even start drafting their own poems immediately.
- Invite children to relate to their own personal experiences that they could draw on for their own writing. What or who is special to them? Why is this person, place or thing special? How would they describe them/it? What would you want to tell others about this person, place or thing?
- Lead the conversation on to recording ideas and inspirations in their poetry journey, either as drawings, collections of words, phrases and snippets of ideas or initial drafts of poems in their poetry journal about things that are special to them in their wider life. Allow time for children to think about different places, people and/or things they might want to write about and why, and to draft and write ideas, focussing on descriptive language and language that evokes emotion,



drawing on understandings gained from the poems they have studied. As the children do this, it is important for you to keep up your own journal alongside, modelling ideation, development of ideas and composition, developing ideas into drafts, gaining a response from the children, talking through stuck points and where ideas may not be working and have to be abandoned or how these can be worked around.

### Session 3: Creating a Poetry Anthology

- Prepare a large class poetry journal, ready to collect into it some of the class's favourite poems from this collection and other poems they enjoy as you progress through the teaching sequence. Possible themes drawn out from the collection *Thinker: My Puppy Poet and Me* could include nature, special people and places, self-expression and personal identity. The children could experience poems linked to these themes by a wide range of poets in different ways.
- It would be worth curating a collection of poetry that the children could revisit and read through Poetry Wallpapering in which the children would find the selected poems stuck to the walls of their classroom or library. After providing ample time for the children to read or have the poems read to them, they could choose their favourites or comment on connections they make between the poems or to themes. This would support them to understand the concept of an anthology and how poems are chosen and curated.
- Leave room beside each poem where you can scribe some of what the children say as you talk together about individual poems. Encourage children to add their own individual responses, later using drawing or writing.
- The poems could be recorded to create an audio collection so that the children can listen to the poems independently, perhaps whilst tuning into the printed pages and looking at the illustrations. Children could take these recordings home to share and enjoy with family members.
- Children can draw on this collection when reading on their own or with a friend during independent reading time, or borrow poems from it to take home. As children get to know the book better more poems can be added.
- Children can continue to compile a range of illustrated poetry anthologies drawing on specific themes, linked to interests or the curriculum, or incorporating family favourites or poems, songs and rhymes of cultural or personal significance.

## Section 2: Lyrical Exercises

### Session 4: Special Moments, Special People

*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. Places often hold particular memories for families. They may be tied to a special occasion like a wedding, a birth place or a holiday.*

- Return to the collection *Thinker: My Puppy Poet and Me* and revisit the children's initial ideas about Thinker, Jace and their family.
- Read aloud again the poem *Naming Me* allowing opportunity for the children to explore the illustration alongside the reading. Ask the children to consider the relationships between the

family members and their relationship with their new puppy. *How does Thinker think they feel about him? How would he know? How is Jace's connection different from the others? Consider the ways in which Thinker is communicating in reality compared to his thoughts. Without words, how can Jace seemingly understand him?*

- As this takes on a narrative sequence through each verse, the children could be encouraged to dramatise the interactions from Thinker's viewpoint, creating prosody and intonation in their puppy sounds, as well as being asked to consider the body position, facial expression and gaze he might adopt to communicate his disapproval at being thought of as 'cute' rather than a deep thinking poet. *What do the children think about a dog being a poet? What do you think he sounds like? How could this be translated into words?*
- You might take photographs of the children's enactment of these early moments in naming Thinker and they could then draw on this drama work to consider the rest of the family's viewpoint; perhaps creating a silent tableau or freeze frame as suggested by the illustration or any of these photographed moments. Children could use their poetry journals to explore these alternative perspectives and create a poem which expresses how a given family member feels and what they are hearing and seeing.
- This might be an opportunity to look at the way Eloise Greenfield has structured this poem and what the focus of each verse is. You could explore the way in which she has created line breaks in what might start out as free sentences and how that affects the musicality of the prose, the intonation and the rhythm. The children might find this a supportive structure in writing their own poem or they may write more freely. They might spot the rhyming pattern in the second and fourth line of each verse but they do not need to be constrained by this in their own poetry writing as this could limit the meaning they want to create. It would be worth reminding them what Eloise says in her notes about this: *'Whenever I write a poem using a shape invented by another poet, I have to be sure that the shape and my words can work well together. Otherwise, it would feel wrong, like trying to make a square painting fit into a round frame.'* This is a great starting point for children to realise that their words can be valued and shaped to create poetry that speaks to them rather than merely imitating a given form.
- Ensure you are modelling writing alongside the children and encourage them to read aloud their initial ideas to their group so that they can hear how the words and lines sound as well as what they look like on the page. Encourage them to try and capture the mood of these early moments in the word-music they create. Demonstrate your writing process from ideation to publication. Encourage the children to read aloud and perform or dramatise their poems to the wider group, encouraging their responses.
- Turn over the page and read aloud *Welcome Party* without yet showing the printed poem or illustration. Ask the children to talk about the mood of this poem and how they think this is conveyed by Greenfield in the rhythm and tunes.
- Now read it aloud again, looking at the shape of the poem on the page, without yet revealing the illustration. How does it compare to *Naming Me*? Why do the children think that the poet has chosen not to use verses in this particular poem when they were useful in *Naming Me*? Reveal the spread and discuss how the illustration adds to the meaning created by the poem. Is this what the children expected? Draw attention to the way in which the spread is laid out and the relationship between the poem and illustration. Compare the waving and dancing movement in the illustration and that created by the wavy shape on the page of the poem.

- Ask the children to listen again to the poem read aloud. How does the rhyming structure compare? How does it impact on the way it is read aloud? Which other words are emphasised or memorable in the reading, for example:  
‘Welcome...Dad...Mum...Kimmy...Jace...joke...thank...love...evermore...means...to me...hope...like...poetry...The end.’  
Look at these words in isolation and consider what they convey as a collection and why they are so important in this moment and to Thinker.
- Children may like to respond to this poem read aloud through body percussion or dance or perform it in a musical style to draw out the sheer joy of the welcome party.

### Session 5: 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.*

- Explain that today they are going to explore some of the other poems in the collection and work up one of these to perform themselves.
- In preparation for this session, make copies of the following poems:
  - *Two Poets Talking*
  - *Tell me, Jace*
  - *Jace’s Answer*
- The three poems are conversation pieces and will make an interesting dynamic for performance reading. Prior to exploring these in more depth, you might want to explore conversation or call and response poems in your everyday poetry reading sessions to enable the children to draw on their experiences and make connections in this session. There are several on CLPE’s Poetryline site being performed by the poets that children will find useful to watch:
  - *Please Mrs Butler* by Allan Ahlberg: <https://vimeo.com/73290987>
  - *Shopping* by Valerie Bloom: <https://vimeo.com/220254707>
  - *The Treasures* by Clare Bevan, performed by Julia and Malcom Donaldson: <https://vimeo.com/107985665>
  - *Let Me Do It* by Michael Rosen: <https://youtu.be/y1MAe1eOOoQ>
- Show the children the next two illustration spreads in the collection, concealing the three poems (above) so they can only see the illustration. Ask the children to offer their initial responses to the illustrations. What do they think is happening in each? What do they have in common? To where is our eye drawn? Why? Who is the focus of these images? What are the illustrations telling us about Thinker and Jace? Scribe the children’s ideas around each spread on the poetry display.
- Now read aloud the title *Two Poets Talking* and ask the children to predict what form the poem will take before reading it aloud. *What are the children’s initial responses? How does it make them feel? What form is the poem taking? How is this different from the previous poems they have heard from the collection? What are they both saying about words and poetry? How do they both feel about it? What connections do the children make with what they know about Eloise*

*Greenfield? How much of herself is in Thinker and Jace's sentiments? Why has she written this poem? What does she want us to feel about writing poetry?*

- Read aloud the next two poems, *Tell me, Jace* and *Jace's Answer*, again prompting the children's initial responses. Show them the poems on the page and read them aloud again so the children are sensitised to the print in readiness for independent reading.
- Pin these poems up around the classroom or another space for the children to find and explore at their leisure. You may also want to include the first two poems in the collection, *Naming Me* and *Welcome Party* to provide a wider range of forms and performance opportunity. They can read, pass over, move on and then select one they'd like to talk about with someone else. 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 evoke in them as readers. Tell them to stand in front of the poem they most want to investigate more and allow groups to take the poem back to tables for further work.
- Let them discuss their responses, why they selected this poem, how it made them feel, what they were particularly drawn to, personal connections they have with the poem, what it made them think about or questions it raised.
- Now encourage the children to look more deeply at the poem, exploring the use of language and the musicality and rhythm created by each. Encourage the children to read them aloud and listen out for words that have greater emphasis, recurring sounds through use of assonance, rhyme. Allow them to explore the impact of line breaks and the way in which the meaning guides the intonation children would adopt, even without punctuation, for example in *Tell Me, Jace*, Thinker is asking Jace a series of questions which may not be realised until lifted from the page through performance.
- The children can hear the three poems performed on CLPE's Poetryline which will support their own performance readings: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poets/greenfield-eloise>
- Next, give time for the children to work up their chosen poem for performance. *Would it be best performed individually, in pairs or as a group? How will you pace the performance? How will you use your voice(s) to help share a clear picture of this moment? Will you use any movement or action? Will you emphasise the rhythm in the words?* Give time for the pupils to build up their poems, text marking with performance notes and ideas, practising, editing and polishing to a finished performance. Before 13th June 2019, this could be filmed and submitted for the CLIPPA shadowing scheme competition to win the opportunity to perform this poem on stage as part of the award ceremony at the National Theatre, see: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/clippa>
- Give time for the pupils to watch, reflect on and evaluate each other's performances, this could be done in turn in the order the poems come up in the text. *What did each interpretation add to your understanding of the narrative? Could you see a clear picture of the moment? How did you create a sense of each of the characters through the performance?*

### Session 6: Exploring and Expression Emotions through Poetry

*Children need the permission and opportunities to share and write about themselves, their feelings and important events using poetic forms. In a poem it is possible to give form and significance to a particular event or feeling and to communicate this to the reader or to the listener.*

- It is important for children to be able to recognise the poetry in their own lives by hearing poetry by a range of poets that does the same. They need to see that poetry can be used to encapsulate

moments that are new, funny or familiar or as a more cathartic experience to express feelings such as joy, worry, sadness or frustration. Giving children personal writing journals that they have control over sharing allows them to collect and try out personal ideas before sharing with a wider audience.

- Show the children the illustration that accompanies the poem, *Jace Won't Let Me Go*. Gather the children's responses. *What do they think is happening now?* The children may recognise the yellow school bus of the United States from television programmes and films or note and relate to the school bags the children are carrying. Look more closely at each of the family members, discussing their body positions and facial expression. *What do they think mum is saying to Thinker? Why does Kimmy have her hand to her chest and is looking up at Jace? Why does Jace have his hands in the air, looking at Thinker? What is he saying? What do they notice about Thinker compared to the energy of the human family?* Encourage the children to make connections with their own personal experiences. It may be beneficial to allow time for the children to dramatise this moment in a small group to explore more deeply the relationship between body position, gaze and facial expression with inner feelings and outer expressions.
- Now read aloud the poem and gather the children's initial responses. *Is this what you expected? How does it make them feel? How is Thinker feeling? Have they ever felt like this? Why is he so frustrated?*
- Read the poem again, showing them the poem on the page and illustration together as you do. *Why do the children think that he is looking so calm and well-behaved in the illustration? How does this relate to what he is saying and thinking in the poem? What does he want? How does he think behaving nicely will help him? Do you think he looks like this by the end of the poem when Jace says "No, No, No, No! YOU! CAN'T! GO! How do you think his demeanour will change now? Allow the children to dramatise this moment in their groups, expressing the frustration, anger, confusion or sadness they might anticipate Thinker might feel as a consequence.*
- Ask the children to consider why Thinker isn't allowed to go to school with Jace. *Do the children identify more with Thinker or Jace? Why? Can the children appreciate Jace's point of view? Is it really Jace's decision? What would they say to either character? How could they calm Thinker down? What do they think Jace will be feeling once he is settled on the bus or throughout his day at school?*
- Give the children time and space to explore some initial ideas in their poetry journals to help them express their empathy for Thinker or Jace. They might play around with a poem that they could write to either character to soothe or reassure him.
- Read *Kimmy* to the children which gives us an insight into Thinker's time with Jace's little sister while Jace is at school and how much he loves the sound of Kimmy's laughter. *How would you describe Thinker's emotions now?* Read the poem again, asking the children to listen out for the way the pair's playfulness and the bounciness of the ball is illustrated in the both the poem and the illustrations. Look at the poem on the page, drawing attention to the repetition created by the lists and how that is mirrored by the illustrative technique of sequencing moments across the spread. The poem is placed on the page as part of the arc created by the images, as if bouncing.
- *What would be the poem that Thinker could write for Kimmy other than the one he has already written? Is there anyone that is special to the children that they have fun with in this way?*
- Listen to *My Brother* being performed on CLPE's Poetryline: <https://vimeo.com/331647070>
- *How does his twin make Thinker feel? How does this compare with his response to Kimmy?* Listen to the poem again, showing them the poem on the page and illustration. *How does the poem*

*sound? How does the patterning of the poem support our understanding of the bond between the twin dogs? Draw attention to the common rhythm shared by each line and the impact of the rhyming couplets that might mirror the close relationship, different from the rhyming pattern noted earlier in previous poems.*

- Revisit all three poems, *Jace Won't Let Me Go*, *Kimmy* and *My Brother*, and allow time for the children to explore them for themselves. If they were to perform one, which would it be? Allow children to work individually, in pairs or in groups to have a go at performing one of the poems, working hard to express the emotions Thinker feels as he writes in their performances. Talk to the children about how they might use their voices, facial expressions or gestures to help bring the emotion behind the poem to the listener. Give time for the pupils to build up their poems, text marking with performance notes and ideas, practising, editing and polishing to a finished performance. Before 13<sup>th</sup> June 2019, this could be filmed and submitted for the CLiPPA shadowing scheme competition to win the opportunity to perform this poem on stage as part of the award ceremony at the National Theatre, see: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/clippa/clippa-schools-shadowing-scheme>
- At the end of the session, encourage them to think of a memory, a moment, a person or interaction that made them feel strongly in some way and allow them time to express this in their poetry journal, through writing, doodling or drawing. *How might they shape this into a poem? How would it sound? How would it look on the page?*
- Be really clear that their poetry journals are just for them to keep and try out their own ideas for writing and that it is up to them at this stage if they want to share their personal writing with a response partner or adult. As the children do this, it is important for you to keep up your own journal alongside modelling ideation, development of ideas and composition, developing ideas into drafts, gaining a response from the children, talking through stuck points and where ideas may not be working and have to be abandoned or how these can be worked around.

### Session 7-8: Nature in poetry

*Imagery, in a literary or poetic sense, is the author's use of description and vivid language, deepening the reader's understanding of the work, by appealing to the senses.*

*There are different types of imagery. These include:*

- *Visual imagery refers to sights and allows the reader to visualise the subject, objects or events in the poem.*
- *Auditory imagery refers to sounds and reminds the reader of common or specific sounds as a point of reference to deepen understanding.*
- *Kinaesthetic imagery is related to movement and reminds the reader of body movement or positions that are familiar or imagined – such as the feeling of flying.*
- *Smells and tastes can be referred to as olfactory or gustatory imagery respectively.*
- *Tactile imagery refers to texture and feeling.*

*All imagery is aided through the use of other poetic devices, such as simile, metaphor, personification, onomatopoeia, etc.*

- Listen to *In the Park* and *In the Park 2* being performed on Poetryline: <https://vimeo.com/331647424>
- Allow time for them to reflect on their initial responses. *Did they like the poems? Could they relate to them? Whose voice are we hearing in each of the poems? Do the children think they can hear*



*Thinker's internal monologue or is it a family member they can hear? Why? What do they think the poems mean? How would Thinker's poems sound with nobody around? Why might barking sound like poetry? Why would Eloise Greenfield want to make this allusion? You might play a range of vocalisations from different kinds of dogs in different moods and reflect on the musicality expressed by each.*

- Draw attention to the illustrations. What season is being portrayed? How does Springtime make you feel? Why? How does it feel for Thinker and his family to be in the park amongst the flowers and green trees? What kind of poem would Thinker or Jace write as an ode to Springtime? What might they be thankful for? You could show them Grace Nichols performing her ode to sun in her poem, *Sun is Laughing*: <https://vimeo.com/34548544> or read aloud Ruth Awolola's *Love Letter to the Stars*: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poems/love-letter-stars>
- Turn over to the next spread and read aloud *Weather Haiku*. *What do the children think of this poem? How does it make them feel? What images form in their mind's eye? What do they notice about the shape of this poem compared to the others they have heard?* Explain to the children that a haiku is a special form of poetry that originates from Japan that contains only 17 syllables, broken up into three lines of 5-7-5 syllables respectively. Give pairs of children a copy of the poem to re-read and explore how the poet has been able to create an image in such a short space of time. You might show them other examples of haiku or even just short poems that express what the poet want to say in just a few short lines.
- Now read aloud *Birds Fly* and think about how the birds are described and how Thinker feels about them? What does he yearn to do? Why? *How is this poem similar to or different from 'Weather Haiku'? Which did you prefer? Why?*
- This would be an ideal opportunity for the children to practise performing one of these poems, and have a go at seeing if they can convey Thinker's feelings in the way they perform. How could they use their voices, facial expressions or gestures to show his thoughts and feelings? Give time for the pupils to build up their poems, text marking with performance notes and ideas, practising, editing and polishing to a finished performance. Before 13<sup>th</sup> June 2019, this could be filmed and submitted for the CLIPPA shadowing scheme competition to win the opportunity to perform this poem on stage as part of the award ceremony at the National Theatre, see: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/clippa/clippa-schools-shadowing-scheme>
- Come back to look at the two poems and illustration on the spread and give the children time to reflect on the relationship between the poems on the page and the illustration. Look at the printed shape of each poem that Greenfield has created through her choice of words and line breaks. *What do the children notice? What do they have in common with each other and with the illustration? How does the shape on the page contribute to the meaning being created and the poet's feelings about the birds in flight?*
- In order to fully appreciate Thinker's awe of the natural world around him, you might show the children films of birds like larks in flight, swooping and flapping high into the sky. Children could draw their impression of the birds in flight as they watch and note how watching them makes them feel. Perhaps the film maker has accompanying music that add to the sense of exultation, such as Ralph Vaughan William's 'Lark Ascending'. Children could respond to the music through art and writing in their poetry journals. You might choose other films or music inspired by nature such as Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* allowing the children to choose a season they feel inspired by, as Thinker is by the birds that fly free.

- Many poets convey their ideas and messages through nature; paper the classroom with other examples of poems, exploring nature such as:  
*Out and About: A First Book of Nature Poems* by Shirley Hughes (Walker)  
 Poems from *The Train to Ricketywick* section of *Fantastic First Poems*, edited by June Crebbin (Puffin)  
 Poems from *I Go Outside* section of *Here's a Little Poem*, edited by Jane Yolen and Andrew Fusek Peters (Walker)
- Select a number of different poems, illustrating different poets, styles and forms. Photocopy the poems and pin them up around the classroom or another space for the children to find and explore at their leisure, reading them aloud if they need. They can read, pass over, move on and then select one they'd like to talk about with someone else. 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 evoke in them as readers. Let them look for connections, ask questions, explore what they like about poems and the use of language.
- Take the children out into a space in the natural environment, to find things to draw, sketch or take photographs of as inspirations for writing. Begin to make notes in your poetry journals about how to capture these things and moments in words. Some children may write words, phrases or wisps of lines, other may begin to draft more fully fledged poems, drawing on poems they have heard or read. As the children do this it is important for you to also continue to keep your own journal alongside modelling ideation and composition for them, sharing your ideas and thought processes as you write.

### Session 9: Exploring events in poetic narratives through drama

*Many poems are narrative and provide examples of compact dramas, waiting to be opened up into their full dramatic form. This is not true of all poems; but there are some that are capable of being expanded into dramatic performances. Dramatisation need not stop at the single incident described in the poem, but can range forwards and backwards in time around the poetic moment.*

- Read aloud the first line of *You Can Go* without revealing the title or what comes next. Look at the illustration and ask the children to predict what it is the family are going to tell Thinker. Why are they all smiling as Jace says "Guess what, Thinker?" Look back over the poems so far in the collection and reflect on what Thinker would want to hear most. Gather the children's suggestions which could be scribed into speech bubble templates around the illustration.
- Now listen to the poem being performed on Poetryline: <https://vimeo.com/331646772>.
- *How did this poem make you feel when you heard it? How is it similar to other poems by Eloise Greenfield that you have read so far? How is it different?*
- Provide mixed pairs or groups with a copy of the poem to re-read, discuss and explore in more detail. *Whose voice does this poem take on? Why has the poet written it in role as Jace? How do you think Jace feels about telling Thinker about Pets' Day? Compare this to his experience of having to say "NO!" very firmly earlier on. How do we know he is looking forward to Pets' Day too? What kinds of things does he think they might do? Is there anything he might be worrying about? What tells us this?* Play the performance of the poem again and encourage the children to listen out for the way in which it is read; the pauses and the intonation used to create dramatic effect.

- Encourage the children to look at the poem on the page and the way Thinker is told this piece of good news; how the information is offered in such a tantalising way, line by line. What impact does this have? How would it change the poem if Eloise Greenfield had Jace say:

‘Guess what, Thinker?  
You can go  
because tomorrow is Pets’ Day at school...’

- What difference would it make? How would it change Thinker’s imagined reaction?*
- Act out the poem in groups of five, to show how both Thinker reacts to each line of the poem as the child in role as Jace reads it aloud, delivering the news to him with expression and intent. How does each family member respond as they observe the pair interact? Encourage the children to carefully consider how they would position themselves in relation to each other and in response to what they are seeing and hearing, as well as making decisions about their gaze and facial expressions. How would the scene change from the one illustrated to the one they imagine once the poem ends? Children might create a silent tableau of this for dramatic impact or create a new illustration as a group in the style of Abdollahi, using hand-painted paper collage.
- Children might like to write in role as their chosen character in their poetry journals, sharing their feelings about Thinker being allowed into school. They might imagine as a group and dramatise what came before this moment captured in the poem. *How did Jace and his parents react when they first heard about Pets’ Day? How was the news shared; in a letter or earlier in class? How did Jace tell his parents? Would he have shared any worries they have about the puppy being in class? What might they have said? What might happen after Thinker has been told in the time leading up to Pets’ Day itself? What might happen during Pets’ Day?*
- Read aloud the next poem *Pets’ Day*, taking the time to explore the illustration and the spread overleaf. *How does the poem make you feel? Why? How do you think Jace and Thinker feel? What words or phrases tell you that? What images did the poem form in your mind? What are the illustrations telling us? What is the significance of the full illustration spread? Why is this such an important moment for both characters? What have they both been worried about?*
- Look carefully at *Pets’ Day* on the page. Does it remind the children of the structure of any other poem in the collection? Return to *Naming Me* and consider why Greenfield has chosen to create verses through which Thinker can relate the sequence of events. Re-read the poem and ask the children to share their favourite part of the poem; perhaps they empathise with Thinker’s sadness at not being able to be himself, perhaps they enjoy the idea of each pet showing their special skills and making everybody laugh. Use the verses to support the children to identify which part of the poem they particularly liked.
- Children could work in groups to dramatise this scene in role as different people or animals in the classroom, perhaps exploring the emotional shift from Jace’s anxiety, Thinker’s sadness to tension as to how everyone will react to Thinker’s behaviour to relief and joy as everyone joins in.
- Now read ‘That’s My Puppy’ and consider the emotion Jace is now feeling. *How does it make the children feel to hear Jace tell Thinker he is ‘cool’? How would Thinker feel?* You could engage in a Hotseating activity in which you invite ‘Jace’ in to class, using a signifier such as the green T-shirt and rucksack to become teacher in role. Children could be encouraged to ask ‘Jace’ questions or share how they feel about his relationship with Thinker and his concern that he would be ‘shamed’ by the puppy poet.

- The children could be encouraged to share their personal experiences of feeling embarrassed, proud or even relieved. *How do they relate to Jace's anxiety that Thinker would 'shame' him? Is this fair? Have they ever been embarrassed by someone; a pet, a parent or sibling? How did it make them feel? How did it make the other person feel? How did they overcome this? What might they say to this person now they have read this poem and understood both viewpoints? What lessons can we learn about allowing everyone to be themselves and being proud of who we are?*
- You may also feel that a session writing some words in their poetry journals may help to explore and work through these issues. Children may want to decide if theirs is a poem they want to share or write just for themselves if dealing with sensitive issues. 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 10 : Exploring rhythm

*Music and poetry have always gone together. The earliest poems are likely to have been sung and chanted, and many of the elements that make poems hang together – rhyme, meter, alliteration, repetition and refrain – are musical in character.*

- For this session, you will need to be in a large space where the children can move freely and you have access to music.
- Play the poem *Thinker's Rap* being performed on Poetryline: <https://vimeo.com/331649843>
- Ask the children to offer their initial responses. *How does it make them feel? What is the mood of this poem? How is it being read? What do children know about rap or hip hop?* Return to Eloise Greenfield's note at the back of the book in which she says, 'About rap, some people don't believe that it is real poetry. I say that it is poetry, absolutely. Like other kinds of poetry, it uses meaning, rhythm, rhyme, hints, humour, repetition and wordplay to make it come alive.' What do children think about this?
- Play some suitable hip hop or rap tunes to allow the children to soak up the rhythm of the music and respond with their bodies. The following examples would all be suitable for children of this age; however, lots of other examples of work by these and other artists will need to be vetted before sharing more widely with pupils for suitability of language and appropriateness of imagery in their lyrics and music videos:
  - Kriss Kross: *Jump*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPB84Plv8tc>
  - A Tribe Called Quest: *Can I Kick It?*: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7D\\_JwglM-y4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7D_JwglM-y4)
  - Loyle Carner: *Florence*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZUiD2Ym1u0> (children may make links with this song and *Kimmy*)
  - Moni Love: *It's a Shame*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iz4UDt4nOp0>
- Switch the songs back and forth, exploring different ways of moving rhythmically.
- Allow the children to respond to the music. *What did they like? What did they dislike? Did they have any personal connections with any of the music? Does it sound like anything else they have heard? Did it raise any questions for them?*
- Play the poem being performed again. *Can they hear the rhythm in this performance?* Explore which words he places emphasis on as he performs, how the lyrical language flows, lines that rhyme and where he pauses. Read the poem aloud for the children again, emphasising the musicality, rhythm and natural pulse of the rap and allowing them to hear the rhyming words and

feel the uplifting tone in Thinker's voice. Encourage them to move around the space, tap the beat or keep pulse as they wish. They may just start with nodding their head, tapping their hand on their leg or tapping their foot on the ground.

- Give time for the children to look at a copy of *Thinker's Rap* for themselves in small groups, splitting this lengthier poem into manageable parts and focussing the children on finding the rhythm in their lines to build up their own group performance. They will need to read and re-read their given lines over and over to find the lyrical flow and rhythm needed for the performance. Encouraging the children to walk around rhythmically while they practise will help them to find and secure the rhythm and use the rhyme to help them remember the words. Some may also find it helpful to move their hands to help with this.
- Give plenty of time for the children to rehearse their own lines, then come back together as a group and give time and space to put the whole poem back together as a performance; rehearsing, trying out new ideas and working up to a finished performance. Before 13<sup>th</sup> June 2019, this could be filmed and submitted for the CLiPPA shadowing scheme competition to win the opportunity to perform this poem on stage as part of the award ceremony at the National Theatre, see: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/clippa/clippa-schools-shadowing-scheme>
- Allow time for 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 and interpretation of the poem.

### Section 3: Writing Poetry

#### Session 11: Writing about writing

*Throughout the writing process it is important for children to be given materials and space to allow them to plan and compose ideas in different ways. Some children might come straight to drafting full of ideas for poems, others might need to draw or bring in an object to inspire language and ideas. Some may need to collect words and phrases, snippets of conversations, or memories as a starting point, others might like to free write and splurge ideas onto the page, coming back to make sense of it and pull out what works after writing. The writing community developed in the classroom should be sufficiently flexible to take these different needs into account in the early drafting process.*

- Start the session by reflecting on the collection as a whole. You might read it aloud to the children as you might a story to give them a sense of the narrative that the poet has created. Engage the children in book talk using Aidan Chambers' prompts from *The Reading Environment and Tell Me, Children, Reading and Talk* (Thimble Press 2011) and scribing their responses around a copy of the front cover:
  - *Tell me...*
  - *What did you like about the collection? What did you dislike? Why?*
  - *What connection did you make? What patterns did you notice?*
  - *Do you have any questions? Did anything puzzle you?*
- Go on to elicit deeper responses:
  - *What lessons can we learn from this collection of poems? What is the poet trying to tell us? What would she want her own children and grandchildren to learn about themselves and each other?*



- *How much time passed between Naming Day and Pet's Day? What about between each poem? Days or weeks? Are there any clues in the poems or the illustrations?*
- *Where were you as the reader? Were you beside the characters or looking on from somewhere?*
- *What does this collection tell you about poetry? How does Eloise Greenfield want you to feel about writing poems?*
- *Watching Eloise Greenfield in the Tiny Owl film again, thinking about her messages in the book and through this collection, how do you think she feels about writing? What does writing do for her? Share with the children that she says that she was bored in her day job as a young woman and began to experiment with writing which she enjoyed. She was also deeply motivated by the idea that she should contribute to the lack of literature for children like her own who did not see themselves reflected in the stories and books they read. This has been her mission ever since and she has won many awards over the years. What might you learn about writing from her reflections?*
- *Give the children time to consider what motivates them to write and invite them to share their views. If someone was to ask you how you feel about writing, what would you say? Do you like it? Are there any types of writing you prefer doing? What feelings do you experience before a piece of writing? During writing? After you've finished a piece of writing?*
- *Do you think Eloise always finds it easy? What sorts of things do you think inspire her to write when she's feeling stuck? What is she interested by? What does music mean to her and her poetry? Who inspires her to write? What kinds of things might she enjoy observing in everyday life?*
- *Revisit the collection as a whole. What sorts of things does Eloise Greenfield choose to write about in her poems? Draw out some of the common themes, such as:*
  - Community
  - Family relationships
  - Identity and self-worth
  - Expressing emotion
  - The natural world
- *Explain to the children that in the next few sessions, they are going to be writing their own poems on topics or themes that they are interested in. Where might their inspirations come from? Might they choose to write about some of the same things Eloise Greenfield has explored?*
  - *Share her thoughts on writing poetry in an interview recorded on The Brown Bookshelf website:*  
<https://thebrownbookshelf.com/28days/eloise-greenfield/> (You might want to prepare the children by telling them she wrote a poem about Harriet Tubman, a famous woman who rescued many slaves before abolition. You might read them a biography, such as the 'Little People Big Dreams' version (*Harriet Tubman* by Maria Isabel Sánchez Vegara, illustrated by Pili Aguado (Frances Lincoln)) so that they can fully access what Eloise is trying to express about using voice appropriately and for impact in her poetry.):  
*'I think struggling with words is the name of the game. I write many drafts. Sometimes I end the day happy with a passage, but when I read it the next day, I see problems. I say to myself, "What in the world was I thinking?" Then I get back to work on it because nothing can leave my hands until I feel that it is my best work. Thank goodness, I've never had writer's block. If I did, I would probably*



*attribute it first to having too much going on in my head and in my life. I'd try to clear some of that out to leave space for subconscious creativity.*

*The challenge, always, is to find the right words, words that have the right meanings, sounds, and rhythms, words that go inside characters and show their complexity, their needs, their strengths and weaknesses, words that move the story from one scene to the next, etc., etc. It's important to remember that in creative writing, as opposed to formal writing, we have the freedom to break rules. Children understand the difference when it's explained to them. The poem, "Harriet Tubman," begins "Harriet Tubman didn't take no stuff/ Wasn't scared of nothing neither." If I had written, "Harriet Tubman didn't accept any abuse./ She wasn't afraid of anything either," the poem would have been weakened, and so would Harriet.'*

- *What is Eloise telling us about choosing the voice appropriate to the impact you want to create? Why was it important to adopt Harriet Tubman's voice rather than writing about her in formal voice? What does the poet do when she is stuck for words? How might we go about clearing our minds and relaxing?*
- Listen to other poets talk about their inspirations for writing poetry: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poet-interviews/what-inspires-you-poet> and how they go about writing their poetry: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poet-interviews/how-do-you-go-about-writing-your-poetry-0> What ideas can they pick up from this? In his video, *How I write a poem*, Michael Rosen, CLIPPA winner in 2016, talks about starting in the middle of a memory: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/interviews/rosen-michael>. How do these compare with Eloise's reflections about word-music and finding the right shape for your own words? How do you like to write, or which way do you think you might like to try out? Do you have a special memory of a person, an animal, a place or a moment that you would like to write about?
- Give time for children to work with their poetry journals, making notes of different ideas for poems or having a go at 'splurging' some ideas onto the page, playing with language or starting in the middle of a memory.
- 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 journal in this section of the sequence. Our [recent research](#) highlights the importance of teachers as writers of poetry.

### **Session 12: Writing own poems, gaining a response**

*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?
- Think about a theme or topic from your own journal that you could explore in a poem. Model writing 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 bring the experience alive for the reader.
- *Think about the form the poem will take; will you follow the rhythmic style of Eloise Greenfield or write in your own way?* Make sure children this young don't feel constrained by what Eloise calls another poet's shape. They may be more comfortable to write in free verse and find it easier to express their thoughts and feelings in this way. Some children may feel more confident writing in pairs or in a group to get going.
- 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, adjusting rhythms or making suggestions to improve the writing.
- Think together about how the poem could be presented on the page to enhance the meaning and the reader's understanding.

### **Session 13: Editing and presenting of own poems, including through performance**

*At the final stage of the writing process, it is important that children are given time to support each other with transcription proofreading, looking at spelling, punctuation and grammar and consider the quality of the writing as a whole, prior to publication.*

- 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 you have a poem that you have read aloud to a partner, discussed and explored changes that you are happy to present to a wider audience, start to think about how that poem could be best presented. *What form will it take? How will it look on the page? How will you use line breaks, spacing on the page to enhance the meaning or emotions behind your poem? Will you hand write it? Will you publish using ICT? What script or font will you choose? Will you make any specific decisions about the way certain words look or are placed on the page? Will you illustrate the poem? If so, how will the words and illustration sit and work together?*
- Allow plenty of time and space for the children to make a final draft and then publish their work accordingly. Publish your own work as a teacher writer alongside that of the children.
- When they are happy with the way their poem looks on the page, think about how this could lift 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.

### Session 14: Hosting a poetry festival

*Poetry is rooted in word games, wordplay, song and rhythm, and it's particularly important that it should be heard as well as read. Children need opportunities to read poetry aloud, perform, dramatise, join in and hear poets perform their own work. 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.*

*Allow time and space for children to rehearse and polish performances before presenting to an audience. Provide opportunities for children to perform publicly at school events or as part of competitions like CLPE's CLIPPA shadowing scheme.*

- Following this, hold a poetry festival for children to perform their own original compositions to parents, members of their local community or other classes in the school.
- 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 techniques they have learnt from listening to poems performed on Poetryline. *What they will need to consider when performing their own poems?*
- Some children might be keen to perform, others may not want to, so could work on illustrating their poems for display at the event, making a programme for the event, filming or photographing performances to write up for the school newsletter or website or being responsible for gathering props others might need. Some children might not want to perform their own work but might be comfortable to introduce others. Negotiate roles so that all children feel comfortably involved with the event.
- It would be wonderful if teachers and other adults who have worked alongside the children as part of the sequence also felt confident to perform some of their own poetry as models of writing at the event. With appropriate permissions you could share video performances with us at [poetry@clpe.org.uk](mailto:poetry@clpe.org.uk).

### Session 15: Reflection on the collection as a whole

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

- Revisit the poems that have been explored throughout the sequence. To draw together all the work done in this unit, hold a discussion about the collection as a whole. *Did you engage with this style of writing? What are your most memorable poems? Which spoke to you the most? Why? What have you learnt about poetry that you didn't know before? Would you be encouraged to read more poetry after studying this collection? Why? Why not?*
- Now focus on the poems that the children have written. How did you feel about writing poetry before looking at this text? How do you feel about it now? If your feelings changed, why was this? What kinds of poems were your favourite to write? What did you find it easiest to write about?

- Display the children's own poems prominently in the reading corner, library or a shared area so they can be read by a wider audience, with some of their favourite poems from the collections and written reflections about their own writing displayed alongside.