

Wain: LGBT Reimaginings of Scottish Folklore by Rachel Plummer and Illustrated by Helene Boppert (The Emma Press)

These poems bring Scottish folklore into the modern age while still retaining their ancient beauty and timeless quality. They demonstrate that the old stories have transformative power and the fairy creatures they speak of can be mutable and shapeshifting. Readers are transported to the Scottish landscape and its surrounding sea where they meet selkies, kelpies, brownies, nimblemen and finfolk.

This collection was shortlisted for the CLPE Poetry award in 2020.

Overall aims of this sequence:

- To explore and understand the importance of poetry as a genre
- To know how to listen and respond to a wide range of poems from a single poet collection
- To understand that poems are written for different reasons
- To explore how poetry is presented on the page to enhance our understanding
- To interpret poems for performance
- To gain and maintain the interest of the listener through effective performance of poems
- To recognise how a poet uses poetry as a voice to express their own feelings and views
- To develop the skills of reader response through the use of book talk, close reading and critical reflective study of a selection of poems
- To 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 Upper Key Stage 3. Teachers will need to read the text fully themselves and use their professional judgement about whether the themes in the text are appropriate for their specific pupils.

Overview of this Teaching Sequence:

The collection deals with a number of themes directed at older pupils including exploring LGBT themes, considering marginalised voices as well as self-identity which provide fruitful links to PSHE and SRE. This sequence provides the opportunity to reflect critically upon and respond to the ways in which language is used to express, convey, represent, symbolise and signify pertinent points, themes and messages. Reader response and group discussion alongside personal reflection on the poems explored form an integral part the sessions detailed in this sequence. This teaching sequence is designed to be delivered over 10 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 sections. The first section considers the themes of Scottish folklore, and the nature and landscape of Scotland reflected in the poetry. The second section introduces the focus poet, Rachel Plummer, and explores her motivation for reimagining Scottish folklore through the lens of LGBT experiences. Throughout the sequence pupils are given the opportunity to explore poetry performance and to lift the words off the page. The final part

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

Teaching Approaches:

- Reading aloud
- Looking at Language
- Re-reading
- Book talk reflections
- Learning about writing from published poets
- Watching a poet perform

Outcomes:

- Identification of poetic language and devices
- Performances of the poet's poetry
- Evaluation of performances
- Text Analysis
- Poetry Journal with ideas and inspirations for writing
- Free writing of poetry
- Response to provocation questions
- Own poems related to themes introduced in the collection

Exploring poetic forms and devices:

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

Rhythm
Rhyme
Refrain
Anaphora
Alliteration
Metaphor
Simile

Cross Curricular Links

PSHE

- This book offers a range of opportunities to cover a diversity of themes in the PSHE programmes of study including how stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (e.g. how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice).
- Supporting resources can be found here:
 - <https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/future-fawcett-resources>
 - <https://www.liftinglimits.org.uk/stereotypes/gender-stereotypes-in-schools/>

- <https://thegec.org/Education>
- <https://www.nwgnetwork.org/barnardos-launch-free-lgbtq-resources/>
- <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/best-practice-toolkits-and-resources-0>
- <https://www.theproudtrust.org/training-and-education/secondary-education-resources/>
- <https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/national-programmes/schools-and-teachers/lesson-activities-and-assemblies/>
- <https://no-outsiders.com/>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/rse-ks4-teaching-inclusivity-at-school/zf82cqt>
- <https://learning.parliament.uk/resources/your-story-our-history-lgbt-legislation/>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/subjects/ztv9j6>

Art

- Spend time looking at the illustrations in the anthology and consider how they fit in the context of the text. Consider how they are placed next to or within the text and the impact that this has on the reader's experience.
- Through the exploration of Helene Boppert's illustrative style, art is used as a means of visualising and representing responses to the poetry in the collection. Following on from this you may want to use a range of materials, as well as a focus on specific techniques, for observing real objects and representing imagined experiences. Responding to the pupils' artworks afterwards will allow them to explore the effectiveness of techniques and materials used.

Geography

- The pupils can explore the geography and landscape of Scotland and why this is so central to the collection, particularly how this informs the imagery used. Support can be found in the glossary at the back of the book.
- They can also explore why a sense of place and where a person comes from can be central to their identity and therefore why this might influence their writing.

Links to other texts and resources:

Scottish Folklore:

- *An Illustrated Treasury of Scottish Folk and Fairy Tales*, Theresa Breslin, illustrated by Kate Leiper (Floris Books)
- *An Illustrated Treasury of Scottish Mythical Creatures*, Theresa Breslin, illustrated by Kate Leiper (Floris Books)
- *The Coming of the Unicorn, Scottish Folk Tales for Children*, Duncan Williamson (Kelpies)
- *The Flight of the Golden Bird, Scottish Folk Tales for Children*, Duncan Williamson (Kelpies)
- *Scottish Folk Tales for Children*, Judy Paterson (The History Press)
- *The Anthology of Scottish Folk Tales* (The History Press)

- *Celtic Tales: Fairy Tales and Stories of Enchantment from Ireland, Scotland, Brittany, and Wales*, Kate Forrester (Chronicle)
- *Tales of the Seal People. Scottish Folk Tales*, Duncan Williamson (Interlink Books)
- *The People of the Sea. Celtic Tales of the Seal-Folk*, David Thomson, introduction by Seamus Heaney (Canongate)
- *Scottish Myths and Legends*, Daniel Allison (House of Legends)
- *Scottish Folk and Fairy Tales from Burns to Buchan*, ed. Gordon Jarvie (Penguin Classics)
- <https://www.scotland.org/features/scottish-myths-folklore-and-legends>
- <https://www.youtube.com/c/ScottishStorytellingCentreEd/about>

Selkie stories:

- *Tales of the Seal People. Scottish Folk Tales*, Duncan Williamson (Interlink Books)
- *The People of the Sea: Celtic Tales of the Seal-Folk*, David Thomson (Canongate)
- *The Brides of Rollrock Island*, Margo Lanagan (David Fickling Books)
- *The Selkie's Mate*, Nicola Davies, illustrated by Claire Jenkins (Graffeg)
- *A Stranger Came Ashore*, Mollie Hunter (Kelpies)

Find out more about the poet Rachel Plummer:

- <https://rachelplummer.co.uk/about/>

Other significant poetry collections for KS3:

- *Rising Stars*, Ruth Awolola, Victoria Adukwe Bulley, Abigail Cook, Jay Hulme, Amina Jama (Otter-Barry Books)
- *Clouds Cannot Cover Us*, Jay Hulme (Troika)
- *Overheard in a Tower Block*, Joseph Coelho, illustrated by Kate Milner (Otter-Barry Books)
- *Everything All At Once*, Steven Camden (Macmillan)
- *England: Poems from a School* ed. Kate Clanchy (Picador)
- *She Is Fierce* ed. Ana Sampson (Macmillan)
- *She Will Soar*, ed. Ana Sampson (Macmillan)
- *Somebody Give This Heart a Pen*, Sophia Thakur (Walker)

Literature that addresses LGBTQ+ themes:

- *Indigo Donut*, Patrice Lawrence (Hodder)
- *Eight Pieces of Silva*, Patrice Lawrence (Hodder)
- *Far from You*, Tess Sharpe (Orion)
- *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*, Emily M. Danforth (Penguin)
- *Parrotfish*, Ellen Wittlinger (Simon and Schuster)
- *Two Boys Kissing*, David Levithan (Egmont)
- *Proud* ed. Rachel Boden (with specialist guidance from Uli Lenart, Gay's The Word) Foreword by Juno Dawson (Stripes)
- *Queer There and Everywhere*, Sarah Prager (HarperCollins)
- *Dance on My Grave*, Aidan Chambers (Definitions)

Weblinks:

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

Teaching Sessions:

Session 1: Reading aloud and Responding to Poetry

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

Focus poem: 'Bride, Goddess of Spring', page 55.

- Before this session, ensure that individual poetry journals (small notebooks, which could be handmade) are available for each pupil to use throughout the unit to note ideas and inspirations. The pupils can make notes in these during the sessions and also between the sessions, whenever they feel inspired to write or draw, they can also be a place for working up drafts of their own poetry.
- Without revealing the title of the collection, author or front cover, read aloud the poem 'Bride, Goddess of Spring'. Ask the pupils for their initial responses to the poem. *What do you like about it? What do you notice about the words that are used and the rhythm of the poem? What do you notice about the character in the poem? The message and meaning of the poem? The way the poem makes you feel? The tone of the poem? The images the poem makes you see? Any figurative language that is used? Can you make connections with it? Do you have any questions about it? Is there anything you dislike about the poem?*
- Now give the pupils individually or in pairs, a copy of the poem. Allow time and space for them to read and respond to the text, text marking with their thoughts, feelings, questions and ideas about the piece and space to share ideas and interpretations. At this point, allow the

pupils to reflect as a reader, without telling them to look specifically for poetic techniques or devices, although it is fine if they do this naturally.

- Give time for the pupils to share their initial responses to the poem and support this discussion through questioning; *What do you think about the poem? How does the poem make you feel now you have explored it on the page? What makes you feel like this? Why do you think the poet has chosen to write about this topic? Why the poet has used a particular word or phrase? Which words or phrases do you like or that add meaning or feeling? Are there repetitions of words, lines or stanzas? Are there patterns of line length? Is the poem written in a way that makes a shape on the page? What impact does this have on you and your enjoyment of the poem?*
- Now read the poem aloud to the pupils again and ask them to think about the poem again; *what questions do you have about the poem and what connections can you make with shared or real life experiences? How is spring evoked? Is this how you might describe spring? How might spring be different in the place described by the poem to how you may have experienced it? Does the mention of a goddess remind you of anything? Have you heard any poems or other literature before that reference gods or goddesses?*
- At this point, if the pupils are not familiar with Scotland and particularly Edinburgh, then it might be useful to provide opportunity to locate the places referenced in the poem and to find images of the places described, considering particularly what this suggests about the collection; *Why might a sense of place or a particular culture be significant to a poet's work? Have you explored poetry before that evokes a particular place or sense of a place? Do you think the poet themselves might be Scottish? Why? Why not? Or do you think this place is significant to them? Are there any places that are significant to you? Why are they significant? In what way does this place contribute to your sense of self or your identity?*
- The pupils may have also begun to make intertextual links to myths and legends, or folklore that they are familiar with already or other poetry that describes and evokes nature. Allow pupils to share and discuss these reflections.
- Ask the pupils to reflect on whether there is anything in the poem that feels unexpected or that might seem different from other traditional tales, myths or folklore that they have heard before, such as the Goddess having wives and not a husband; *did this line surprise you? Why? Why not? In what way might this be different from stories you have experienced before that reference gods and goddesses? Do you think this could be significant to the poetry we are going to explore in this collection?*
- Now give the pupils opportunity to lift the words of the poem off the page, considering the impact that this has on their understanding and enjoyment of the poem. As they read the poem aloud encourage them to walk around as they are saying the words of the poem out loud. *What do they notice about the rhythm of the poem as they walk around reading out loud? Does reading it aloud this way and moving with the poem change how they respond to the poem? How does this make the writing feel poetic?*
- The pupils will notice that the phrase 'You are' is repeated multiple times to begin the lines in the poem. Consider with the pupils how this creates a pattern and rhythm which affects the way the poem is spoken out loud. You may want to explain that the deliberate repetition of

the first word in the poem in order to achieve an effect is known as *Anaphora*. Consider with the pupils what impact this device has on them as they listen to the poem read aloud again.

- For example, can they notice how this repetition creates a driving rhythm; *why do you think the poet has decided to use this technique? What impact does the repeated use of 'you are' have on you as a reader? Who is defining what 'Bride, the Goddess of Spring' is or is not? Do you think the Goddess would have defined herself in this way? Why do you think Bride might weep?*
- Reveal the front cover and title of the collection, as well as the author at this point. Establish with the pupils what they might already know about folklore – particularly Scottish, and why these poems might be considered 'reimaginings' of traditional folklore.
- Consider the title of the collection; *Wain* (also spelled *Wean* in Scots) and define this word with the pupils if they are unfamiliar with it, discuss its significance and why they think the collection may have been called 'child'.
- You may want to explore Scottish vocabulary within the study of this collection, particularly considering the impact that a poet's first language, use of dialogue, slang and colloquialisms as well as accent may have on their identity and therefore writing. Supporting resources for exploring Scottish language can be found here:
<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/100-key-scots-words/>
- You may want to share a range of traditional Scottish folk tales with the pupils at this point, or assign a set to read for home learning or outside the session, so that the pupils are able to compare more easily the original versions with Rachel's reimaginings as you explore the collection together. (Supporting resources can be found in the links to other texts and resources section above.)
- You may also want to provide opportunity for the pupils to share folklore or traditional tales from their own heritage and culture in order to draw out contrasts and comparison between these tales and to consider what their function in society has been.
- The pupils will notice that many of the stories include the sort of stereotypical characterisations that are common to traditional stories, folk tales and fairy tales from around the world. Beauty and marriage are prioritised by – or on behalf of – many of the female characters; strength and handsome features are prioritised for the male characters; and as in all fairy tales, stepfamilies are demonised – whether mother, father or siblings. When exploring the stories with pupils, it would be worth recognising these negative stereotypes, support them in making intertextual links with other stories which feature this sort of representation, and discussing how a modern retelling might surprise the reader by choosing to subvert this sort of categorisation.

Following this session, encourage the pupils to note anything down in their poetry journals that resonated with them from the session, such as a sense of place or culture that is significant to their own identity, language that they enjoyed or would like to find out more about, language they use themselves that contributes to their sense of self, ideas or themes that they would like to explore further.

Session 2: Book Talk and Performing Poetry

Discussion about books forms the foundations for working with books. The same is true of working with poems. Pupils will need frequent, regular and sustained opportunities to talk together about the books and poems that they are reading. The more experience they have of talking together like this the better they get at making explicit the meaning that a text holds for them. Poetry is a dense form and one which has connections with art and music. Therefore, to support their reading and understanding pupils need opportunities to respond to the poems they encounter in a variety of ways.

Focus poems: 'Nessie', page 42 and 'Nessa's Song' page 44

- Prior to this session or at the start of the session you may want to refer to the glossary in the book to define what both the Loch Ness Monster are and what Nessa (Loch Ness) is.
- Give the pupils individually, in pairs or in small groups, copies of the focus poems. Allow time and space for them to read and respond to the poems, text marking with their thoughts, feelings, questions and ideas about the poems and giving time and space to share ideas and interpretations.
- Building on the way in which you explored the initial poem in the first session, you may also want to use these prompts to support their discussion:
 - **Read with the eye:** look at the poem laid out on the page. Look at a poem as you would a painting, a photograph, a sculpture. What does it look like?
 - **Read with the ears:** read aloud poems that appeal – hear their 'music', their sound.
 - **Responding to what is unique:** read a poem at least twice – finds its heart, an idea, a feeling.

Benton and Benton (1999)

- Give time for the pupils to share their initial responses to the poems and support this discussion through questioning; *What do you think the about the poems? How do the poems make you feel? What makes you feel like this? Why do you think the poet has chosen to write about this topic? Do these link in any way to the poem we explored in the previous session? In what ways? Why do you think the poet has used a particular word or phrase? Which words or phrases do you like or that add meaning or feeling? Are there repetitions of words, lines or stanzas? Are there patterns of line length? Is the poem written in a way that makes a shape on the page? What impact does this have on you and your enjoyment of the poem?*
- Consider the way in which the poems continue to explore the myths and legends attached to a particular place, in this instance the Scottish Highlands and encourage the pupils to draw out comparisons with other myths and legends that exist about places that they might be familiar with.
- Repetition is a feature of traditional tales and folklore, as they were originally moulded for the ear, repetition also features in the poems explored. *Do you think Rachel Plummer may be emulating this tradition of storytelling in the poetry she has created? Why do you think repetition is used so frequently? What impact does this have?*

- Continue to explore and reflect upon the themes in the poems so far that the pupils notice; *what do you notice connects or links the three poems? What themes or ideas is Rachel Plummer exploring? Why do you think she might have been inspired to write these poems particularly?*
- In the poem 'Nessa's Song', repetition and strict verse are used to tell the story of the servant that displeased the goddess of winter, Beira, who was transformed into Loch Ness, but in this reimagining Rachel also makes this a love story. *What do you think of this? Why do you think she chose to use this form? Have you read any other love poems that use this form? Why use repetition in this way? How does this impact on you as a reader? How does this style contrast with the other poems you have explored?*
- Consider also the change in voice in the poem; this time it is the subject of the poem that is speaking, who has been given a voice; *what impact does this have on you as a reader? How does this compare with the other poems? Which style do you prefer? Why?*
- Considering the poem 'Nessie', reflect on the way in which the poem provides further contrast to 'Bride, the Goddess of Spring'. In the first poem the pupils explored, Bride was clearly defined by the poet, reinforced by the repetition of 'You are' whereas in the poem 'Nessie', the 'monster' has no need to be defined, especially not by others. This might lead you on to a broader discussion of how and why people try to define and categorise one another, especially when it comes to ideas of gender, sexuality, class, religion. Pupils might also want to reflect on contemporary ideas of gender and identity fluidity in contrast to strict definitions that have existed in the past, reflected in the poem.
- You may also want to reflect on the theme of water that features so far, considering why this might be significant. Perhaps exploring the idea of water as a place of transformation – a place especially in which you can be freed from the usual constraints of the physical body, looking out for this as you continue to read the poems in the collection together.
- Take a moment to explore the illustration that accompanies 'Nessie' and consider the use of watercolour. Consider the theme of water and the watercolours used in the illustration, considering why this might be significant; *How does the media chosen link to themes, concepts and style of the poetry so far? What do you notice about the fluidity of lines and shapes within the illustration? Do you think this may be significant?*
- Looking at all three poems explored so far ask the pupils to choose one that they would like to perform; *If you were to perform one of your most memorable poems, how might you do this? 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 tell the story of this moment? Will you use any movement or action?*
- 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.
- Following this, give the pupils time to write in their poetry journals in response to the poems heard so far.

Session 3: Response to Illustration and Performing Poetry

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

Focus poem: 'Blue Men of the Minch' page 15

- Organise the pupils into pairs or small groups and begin by looking at the illustration that accompanies this poem on page 17 without revealing the title of the poem or the poem itself.
- Allow the pupils time to look at the illustration in depth and pose questions or thoughts about the image - you might want to layer the discussion as suggested here, or if the pupils are well practised at exploring illustration, ask them to annotate copies of the picture with post-it notes and then develop the discussion starting with the children's ideas.
- Draw attention to the whole illustration; *what do they notice immediately? Where is their eye drawn to in the picture? Why do they think that? Are different people drawn to different aspects of the image? Why? Are there any questions they have about the space or objects in this focused space? What do they notice about the colours? What do you notice about the illustration in terms of its style, palette, and realism of presentation?*
- Starting with the picture as a whole and then zooming in on the detail you might want to consider: Location: *Do we know where we are? What clues have we been given?* Point of view: *What point of view have we been given? What information does that give us?*
- Move on to focus in on the characters. Look at their body positions to give clues about the characters and the scene that is being depicted. *Who do you think they are? What could the poem be about? Are there any themes or ideas that you have explored in the previous poems that you think will be explored in this poem as well? What predictions can you make from the observations you have already made?*
- Once sufficient time has been provided, conduct a whole group discussion, sharing their speculations and what they have inferred about the poem based on the illustration.
- Now read aloud the title and the poem to the group asking for their initial responses; *was there anything you liked about this text? Was there anything that you particularly disliked...? Was there anything that puzzled you? Were there any patterns...any connections that you noticed...? Was there any language that was particularly memorable? What connections can you make between the illustration and the text?*
- Before exploring the pupils' responses to the poem further, allow them to perform the poem, as the poem is structured as a dialogue between two people, this will support their interpretation and understanding of the poem.
- Allow time for the pupils to discuss ways of working, taking control and making independent decisions about how their performance of the piece would best enhance the meaning. *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 the meaning and emotions behind the words? Will you use any movement or action? Will you emphasise the rhythm in the words?*
- Give time for the pupils to build up their performance, text marking with performance notes and ideas, practising, editing and polishing to a finished performance.

- If you are completing this session before, 20th November 2020, this could be filmed and submitted for the CLiPPA shadowing scheme competition to win poetry prizes, including the opportunity to perform this poem as part of the 2021 award ceremony, see: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/clippa/clippa-schools-shadowing-scheme>
- Following this, reflect on the ways in which preparing for performance and performing the poem, enhanced their enjoyment and understanding; *How did the call and response form used affect your performance? Did this impact on your enjoyment of the poem? Why do you think Rachel crafted this poem as a call and response, how does this add to the meaning? What story is she telling? How did this performance compare to the performances you created in the previous sessions? What do they notice about the difference between reading a poem silently to yourself, hearing a poem read aloud and seeing a poem performed?*
- Now that the pupils have lifted the words from the page you can draw out further the poetic devices and techniques used by the author and consider what impact they have on the reading of the poem, and the reader's response. For example, the pupils may notice repetition is used again throughout the poem, that there is a rhyming pattern, they might comment on the poet's use of imagery and metaphor, as well as how the poem is presented on the page.
- This would also be an opportunity to explore in greater depth the folklore reflected in the poem. For information, the Blue Men of the Minch, also known as storm kelpies, are mythological creatures inhabiting the stretch of water between the northern Outer Hebrides and mainland Scotland, looking for sailors to drown and stricken boats to sink. And a Kelpie is a shape-shifting water spirit inhabiting the lochs and waters of Scotland.
- Encourage the pupils to draw out any intertextual connections they can make to other stories like this that they may already be familiar with, such as the Greek sirens, half-bird, half-female creatures in Greek mythology, as well as the Charybdis, a sea monster in Greek mythology, as well as the monster Scylla. They may also make connections to mermaids, who were considered to bring bad luck, as they might lure a sailor to give up his cargo and drag him to his death under the sea.
- Reflect on why stories such as this feature so commonly across different cultures, countries and time; *why do you think humans found ways of explaining nature and natural phenomenon in this way? What do you notice about the personification of the dangerous waters the sailors would have to inhabit? What do you notice about the ways in which different cultures have gendered these stories? Commonly these 'temptress' like creatures lure men to their deaths, why do you think historically that nature is commonly gendered as female and the humans who try to control and tame it male? Interestingly the gender of the storm spirits in this poem has not been altered by the poet, what do you think about that?*
- You may also want to share the legend that Rachel Plummer describes on page 71, that the sharpness of the sailor's tongue and a poetic wit would be able to defeat the storm kelpies, *what does this suggest to you about the culture in the highlands and Islands of Scotland? Why might oral language, storytelling and poetry be important to these cultures?*
- Following this discussion, give time and space for the pupils to note down and responses, thoughts or ideas that they might have in their poetry journals.

Session 4: Reading and Responding to Poetry

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

Focus Poems: 'No Man' page 4 and 'Kelpie' page 6

- Read aloud the poem 'No Man' and give time for the pupils 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? How do you relate to the poem personally? What immediate responses does it evoke? What questions do you have around the poem?*
- Now allow time for the pupils to re-read the poem for themselves. *What do you think the idea at the heart of the poem is now? What were the words and phrases that were most memorable to you and unlocked your understanding of the poem?*
- Re-read the poem and give mixed groups, pairs or individuals a larger scale copy of the poem to discuss, text mark and annotate with responses. This might be language they think is effective or needs clarification, comments or questions about phrases or parts of the poem, personal connections or ideas about what the poem means to them, or comparisons or contrasts with the other poems explored so far.
- Now look at the poem on the page, comparing devices used with those seen in the poems read and explored already. *Without reading the words, what stands out to you about the way the poet has used line breaks and how line spacing is used? What does this bring to your understanding of the poem? How does it enhance your response to this moment as a reader?*
- Finally, think about the mood of this poem in relation to others read so far. *What are the similarities and differences between this and other poems you've looked at and performed? If this poem were to be performed, how do you think this should be done?*
- Explore further the ideas expressed in the poems, sensitively allowing for an open discussion and supporting pupils to talk about their interpretation of the themes. Explain that traditionally Kelpies are male, *why do you think Rachel Plummer may have altered this in this poem? In what way does this link to the notion of reimagining Scottish folklore?*
- Now read the poem 'Kelpie' supporting the group to respond and react to the poem, sharing 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? How do you relate to the poem personally? What immediate responses does it evoke? What questions do you have around the poem? What do you think the idea at the heart of the poem is now? What were the words and phrases that were most memorable to you and unlocked your understanding of the poem?*
- Again, consider the repetition of the phrase 'they said' which begins majority of the lines in the poem; does this remind you of anything we have explored before? What impact does this have on your reading of the poem? What does this make you think about? Does it connect with anything you have seen or experienced in real life?

- Consider further the themes explored in the poetry collection and particularly this poem; *why do 'they' want to tame her? Who do you think 'they' might be? Does this remind you of anything you have already discussed? What do you think of the notions of women 'should be'?* Students may be able to link this to a wider discussion around ideas such as the media representations of women as well as traditional gender roles and stereotypes that exist within culture.
- To conclude the session, use this as an opportunity to talk together about the personal connections the pupils had with the poems. *Do they feel they could connect with the poems shared? What could they relate to in the subject matter, the characters presented, the language used?* The considerations could form the basis of a class debate about the impact of stereotypes. *When have you felt constrained, held back or limited by gender or other stereotypes?*
- Following this, you may want to give time for the pupils to write in response to the poems and any issues raised in the discussion.

Session 5: Response to Illustration and Illustrating Poetry

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

Focus Poem: 'Nimblemen' page 22

- Read aloud the focus poem 'Nimblemen', without sharing the accompanying illustration. Give the pupils some paper and appropriate materials, such as watercolours and as you re-read the poem ask the pupils to draw or paint what they imagine. Re-read the poem several times aloud as the pupils create an image.
- After they have completed their drawings the pupils could annotate the pictures with key vocabulary or phrases which support their understanding or interpretation. For example, *'the disco-ball moon', 'flicking our well-glittered hair', 'a discotheque thrumming with neon'*.
- Ask the pupils why these words or phrases in particular stood out to them; *what made them so vivid or memorable? What sense of mood or atmosphere is created?*
- Share the accompanying illustration in the book and encourage the pupils to compare their own images with the image from the book, stressing that Helene Boppert's illustration is a response to the poem just as theirs is, and there is no right or wrong way to do this - just a range of individual interpretations. *What details of your own and Helene Boppert's illustrations do you think are most effective? Why do you think she chose to illustrate the poem in the way she did? What do you think she is trying to convey in her interpretation? What were the similarities and differences with your own images? What features of the writing do you think she has picked out to illustrate? How has the essence of the poem been captured in the drawings? In what ways do the pupils think the illustrations complement or enrich the words*

on the page? In what ways might the illustrations influence the reader's experience, understanding and appreciation of the poem?

- Share the interview at the back of the book with the illustrator Helene Boppert (page 73) who suggests that she 'let go of a concrete representation...to draw more of, stylised, vague impression'; *do they recognise this in the illustration? Can they see that in her creations? Why do you think she might have taken this approach?*
- Now give time for the pupils to select their favourite poems from the collection read so far and to illustrate them in any way they want.
- Once they have settled on their chosen poem/s, allow them the opportunity to produce an illustration in a medium of their choice that best captures the essence of or represents the meaning of the poem they have chosen. Place the selected poems around the room and encourage pupils to position their drawings next to their chosen poem.
- Allow pupils to have time to view the different artistic interpretations of their classmates and note any observations, feelings or reflections on post-its. Encourage them to place these post-its around the relevant poem and art work.
- Facilitate a class discussion that encourages the pupils to reflect on the variation of interpretations. Encourage pupils to consider the ways in which the language choices can influence how we picture the scenes depicted.
- Reflect on how the tone of the poems can trigger different emotional responses. Consider how the subject matter can provoke different responses depending on our personal points of reference.

Session 6: Responding to Poetry

Providing pupils with space and time to respond to a poem, before they are asked to consider technicalities, supports them as readers and writers. Over time they will begin to draw together their preferences on theme, rhyme and even on form.

Focus Poems: 'Selkie' page 1 as well as a reflection on all the poems read and explored from the collection so far

- Reflect on all the poems that have been shared so far. It would be a good idea to conduct a 'poetry papering' exercise where you copy all the poems and blu-tack them up on the walls around the classroom, allowing the pupils to walk round, re-reading and remembering and choosing the ones they liked best.
- You could give them post-its to write their names on and stick on the poems they liked most – to allow them to really think critically about their choices, you might want to give just one or two to each pupil.
- Give time and space for the pupils to talk about the poems they have selected, talking about why they have chosen the ones they did. You could ask them to write short explanations for their choices and stick these around copies of the poems. *Were some poems more popular than others? Why was this? What do they think they have learnt about poetry from looking at*

this book and the activities they have done? How do they feel about poetry? Do they enjoy listening to it? Performing it? Writing it?

- Now focus on the ideas raised by this collection specifically; *can you see the reimagining of the traditional folklore in the poems we have explored together? What do you notice? What do you think Rachel Plummer's interests, pre-occupations or motivations are? Are there common themes or ideas emerging from your discussion of the poems?*
- Turn to the interview with Rachel at the back of the book and particularly the question 'How did you get the idea to start writing *Wain*?' on page 71. Allow the pupils to reflect on her comments and how she has worked to reimagine the traditional folklore to include an LGBT perspective.
- Give the pupils time to watch the following interviews with Rachel and to respond to her comments and the ideas shared:
 - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p07px0h5>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmKdRk6pmjs>
- You may also want to share the following quote from Rachel with the children and discuss their responses to the ideas expressed, particularly reflecting on whether they can see these ideas explored in the collection:

'I think science and poetry often come from the same place – that sense of wonder at the universe, and a desire to describe it, to talk about it and try to work it out. When you're talking about something that can't easily be put into words, and that deals with the big questions of life: why are we here? what is life? what is our place in the universe? Well, then poetry can happen.' Quote taken from the following article which you may also want to share with the pupils: <http://reviewsmagazine.net/let-them-love-language-interview-with-poet-rachel-plummer/>

- At this point you might also want to encourage the pupils to comment on whether they write in their own time, how they feel when they write poetry, why they write and so on. Consider if they think this is similar to or different from Rachel's motivations. Reflect on why people write poetry more generally. For example, *are all poets motivated by the same things? Are all poems written from the same inspiration? Why? Why not?*
- Following this, share the poem 'Selkie' with the pupils as this was the first poem she wrote in the collection and in response to the idea of reimagining Scottish folklore through an LGBT lens.
- This time, rather than starting with reading the poem aloud yourself, share the following performance of the poem by Rachel Plummer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pjzeeozWBo>
- Allow time for the pupils to enjoy the performances and savour the poetry, language and her performance style.
- Ask the pupils to consider what they notice particularly about her performance style; *could they characterise it in any way? Is there anything that adds to her performance style that is uniquely hers? Is there anything that brings the poems to life in a way that another person*

reading it wouldn't be able to do? Can they now 'hear' her voice when they look at her poems on the page?

- Re-read the poem and give mixed groups, pairs or individuals a larger scale copy of the poem to discuss, text mark and annotate with responses. This might be language they think is effective or needs clarification, comments or questions about phrases or parts of the poem, personal connections or ideas about what the poem means to them, or comparisons or contrasts with the other poems explored so far.
- If the pupils are unfamiliar with Selkie stories you may want to explore a selection with the group or explain that there are many stories about selkies and these are especially strong around the coasts of Scotland and Ireland. In traditional selkie tales when a selkie sheds her, or sometimes his, sealskin, so that she can live with a human partner and have children, it is inevitable that one day the desire to don the sealskin again and return to the sea will be too strong to resist.
- Consider the reimagining Rachel Plummer has crafted here: *What do you notice about the transformation described in the poem? Why do you think the selkie was a chosen folklore tale to explore a transgender experience? What do you notice about the repetition of secret in the poem? What impact does this have on you as a reader? In this case the casting of the skin is a final act and one that brings happiness – how is this in contrast to the original selkie myths? How does the imagery allow you to empathise with (or gain a window into) the experience of the character described?*

Session 7: Supporting pupils' own poetry writing

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

- Re-watch the interview you watched of Rachel Plummer in a previous session but this time ask the pupils to focus on what her advice is on writing poetry:
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p07px0h5>
- Consider her comments; 'Read work that you love... consume art... share your own art' and allow the pupils time to talk about what she said that resonated with them or surprised them. *Does her advice encourage them to want to write? What could they draw on from what she says to inspire them to get going?*
- Now revisit the collection as a whole. *What sorts of things does she choose to write about in her poems?* Draw out some of the common themes such as:
 - Culture and history
 - Folklore, myths and legends
 - Nature
 - The language of a particular place
 - Writing about existing characters in Literature
 - Self-identity

– Gender identity

- Explain to the pupils 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? What is your passion or interest? What do you want to write about? What is your experience? Heritage? Is there a place of significance you would like to write about? Or your culture and language? Perhaps you are motivated by the exploration of identity politics? Might you choose to write about some of the same things Rachel Plummer has explored?*
- Also look at the back of the book in which Rachel gives ideas and suggestions on how to get going with poetry writing, based on ideas explored in the collection on pages 75-76.
- 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?*
- 2015 CLIPPA winner Joseph Coelho talks about the importance of keeping a note of ideas in a notebook or on a phone, before selecting those to work up into a draft, 2017 winner Kate Wakeling talks about splurging ideas onto a page, writing really freely and seeing what comes out. *How do these compare with Rachel’s reflections? How do you like to write, or which way do you think you might like to try out?*
- Give time for pupils to work with their poetry journals, making notes of different ideas for poems or having a go at ‘splurging’ some ideas onto the page.
- Now give time for the pupils 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 pupils 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
- Pupils could think about their own themes or topics to explore through poetry. Perhaps they could present a view on a theme or topic of interest or concern to them as Rachel Plummer has done with her LGBT reimaginings.

Session 8: Generating ideas and Writing

Pupils’ writing can be improved if they, a partner or their teacher reads it aloud at an early stage, giving it life and breath and helping the young poet see the patterns and tunes they have created. Just as an author would work with an editor, pupils should be given opportunities to help each other by reading their writing aloud and responding as readers. This allows them to support each other as they compose and structure their ideas. Writers can tell response partners what they are pleased with in their writing, particular devices or parts of the poem they may be struggling with and gaining a picture from the reader of how their writing impacts on them. Response partners should be encouraged to reflect on the impact of the poem on them as a reader. Pupils can then re-draft parts of their work, based on these conversations.

- Explore the videos on the Poetryline website in which the featured poets offer advice to young people who want to write poetry: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poet-interviews/what-advice-would-you-give-budding-poets>
- Reflect on the suggestions given and particularly any that resonated with the pupils in your class. For example, John Agard suggests that you can write poetry about anything ‘as long as it touches you’ or if ‘you have emotional engagement’ with the subject matter. Sarah Crossan suggests taking time to ‘wait for the words to come’, to ‘walk around and move’ to the sound of the words and then to record ideas on paper ‘to slow the process down’. And Jackie Kay talks about being ‘authentically yourself’.
- Reflect on the ideas that the pupils have been noting in their poetry journals throughout the unit. *Which ones do they feel strongly enough about to take through to writing?* Perhaps they will have been inspired by the themes explored in the collection *Wain* and would like to use their poems to explore similar themes.
- Keep notes and observations yourself during this time and model how you might come up with ideas for poems. Show the pupils how you as a writer come up with ideas and poetic language inspired by experiences you have had, things around you or your own imagination.
- Demonstrate how you use these to draft initial ideas, making additions, changes and improvements as you write. Share attempts through reading aloud to experience how the poem sounds off the page and collect responses from the pupils and then explore how to re-draft for publication, thinking about how the poem looks on the page.
- Allow the pupils time and space to go through this process with their own poems, giving time for you as the teacher or other pupils to respond to their poems, making changes or additions and re-drafting if necessary.
- Think about a theme or topic you could explore in a poem. Model writing a poem based on one of the topics discussed throughout the sequence during a shared writing session, talking through the choices that you are making as a writer to bring the experience alive for the reader.
- Explore a poet’s writing process in the videos available on the Poetryline website: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poet-interviews/how-do-you-work-your-poems>
- Discuss what they could learn about writing from a published poet; *What advice do they give here that you might find helpful in expanding on some of the ideas and concepts you have in your poetry journals? What might you choose to try themselves?*
- Reflect on the ideas that the pupils have been noting in their poetry journals throughout the unit. *Which ones do you 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 style of Rachel Plummer or write in your own way? Will you use any of the poetic devices you have explored in Rachel’s poetry, such as rhyme, repetition, metaphor, imagery?*

- Allow time for pupils 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 9: Drafting and Editing

Pupils' writing can be improved if they, a partner or their teacher reads it aloud at an early stage, giving it life and breath and helping the young poet see the patterns and tunes they have created. Just as an author would work with an editor, pupils should be given opportunities to help each other by reading their writing aloud and responding as readers. This allows them to support each other as they compose and structure their ideas.

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

Session 10: Presenting poetry through performance

After listening to poetry, pupils may want to write their own poems. These, too, can be recorded with music or sound effects, and kept together with a class anthology. Alternatively, individual collections

of poems can be built up by each pupil and presented both in book form and performed or recorded; collections of this kind can show the range of subjects and forms explored.

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

Reflection on the collection as a whole

- Revisit the poems that have been explored throughout the sequence and 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?*
- Think about the collection more broadly:
 - *Who do you think the collection is aimed at?*
 - *Does the collection as a whole 'speak' to you? Why? Why not?*
 - *How is the collection arranged? How do you respond to this as a reader?*
 - *What did you feel about the themes addressed throughout the collection?*
 - *What did you enjoy about the style of poetry explored?*
 - *What were you able to discern about the poet's viewpoint?*
- Now focus on the poems that pupils 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?*

