



Bear

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 67 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. This week, Joseph Coelho imagined what it would be like if we were to transform into a bear, thinking about the features of a bear, how it might behave, and all the things it might do. Here's another poem about a bear by Joseph. I wonder what impression you'll get of this bear as you read the poem...?

Look at the poem:

Read the poem aloud. You might do this yourself, with a friend or someone else could read it to you:

The Bear

**This lumbering bear is old.
This lumbering, bumbling bear
has shuffled over rugged
imagined mountains.
Urged his bulk, slow and strong.
Slow as geography.
Strong as tree growth
through the forests of his mind.**

**This hulking brown bear
furred in shag pile.
Cloaked in dusty winter coats,
sways to the tune
of the camera flash.
Eyebrows worn smooth,
his back is bald from sitting.**

**This ungainly bear
takes two dreamy steps
from a cage bathed
in decades of eyebrow fur,
rusted with blood specks.
He swaddles out to the first
deep earth beneath his paws,
the first thick wind through his thick fur
as his seasoned desires of water and wood
and grass and stone
roll out the colour of his imaginings.**

**This heavy bear,
this happy bear,
this home bear.
Sighs out to freedom.**



Think about the poem:

Consider the poem you just heard or read. What is happening in the poem? What experience is being described? Read the poem a second time. What does it make you think about the bear? How does it make you feel about the bear? Why do you think this is?

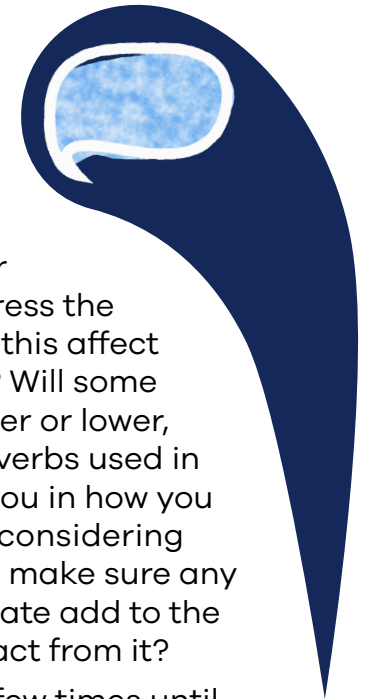
Think about the experience being described here – the bear being released into the wild from captivity. Where are animals held in captivity? Why do you think this happens? Can you think of reasons why it might be beneficial or detrimental to keep animals in captivity?

Look at the language:

- Read the poem again and **circle or underline all the different words that Joseph Coelho uses to describe the bear**. These might be adjectives to describe its appearance, verbs that describe its actions or behaviours, or adverbial phrases, which describe how, when, or what took place in the moment being described. You may also notice that **Joseph Coelho uses simile to compare characteristics of the bear to other things**.
- Look back at the **words you have identified**. What do they tell us about the bear? How do they make us feel about the bear? Do you feel the same throughout the poem, or do your feelings change throughout? Which words and phrases make particular impact on you? Why do you think this is?

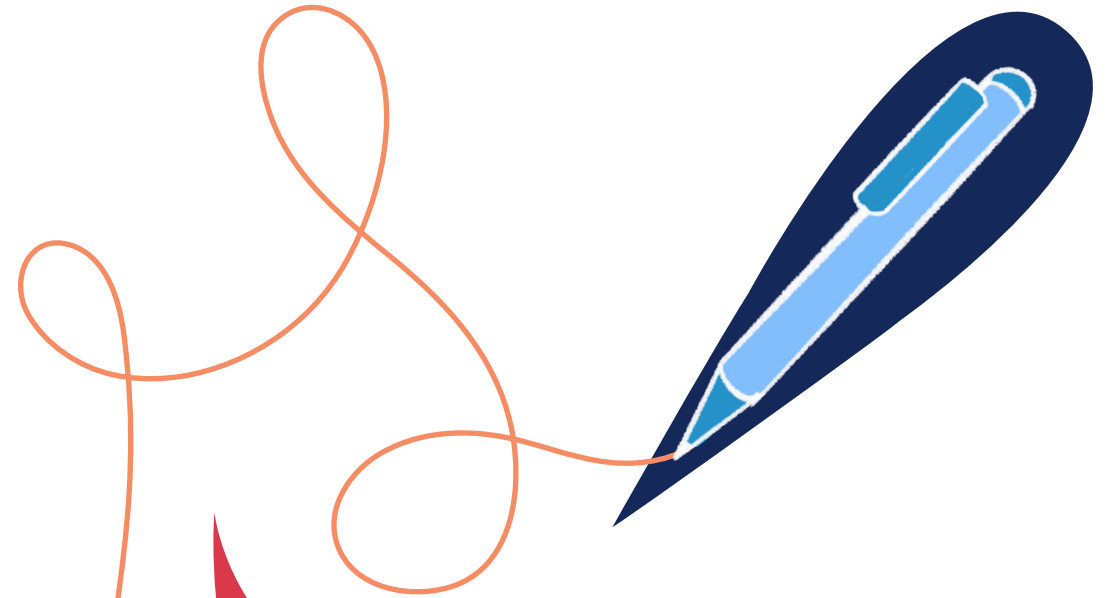
Perform the poem:

- Think about how you might perform this poem to an audience. **How might you use your voice, facial expression and body language to bring the bear's experience to life** for an audience? How will you express the emotions involved? How might this affect the pace of your performance? Will some parts be louder or quieter, higher or lower, faster or slower? Consider the verbs used in the poem. These might direct you in how you choose to use your voice or in considering actions to include. How will you make sure any actions you choose to incorporate add to the performance, rather than detract from it?
- Rehearse your performance a few times until you are happy with it, **then perform it to someone else**. What sense did your audience get about this moment from the way you performed the poem? What did they think you did that was most effective?



Write your own!

- Consider **another experience where an animal might be held in captivity**, like in zoos, farms, circuses or laboratories. You might find this article on the Newsround website useful to read: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/64660428> which explores arguments for and against keeping animals in zoos.
- Try to **consider this from the perspective of a particular animal, who is being held in captivity**. What is its experience like? What do they experience on a day to day basis? What might they think about their experience? Do they appreciate being fed and cared for? Do they long to be free, and in the wild? Is there a combination of both?
- Start to use your thoughts and ideas to **draft a poem about your chosen animal**. You might choose to write from the third-person perspective of someone looking at the animal held in captivity, or you might choose to write from the first-person perspective of the animal itself. You can use language to describe the animal's appearance, behaviours and characteristics, as Joseph Coelho did in the original poem, and **include language that engages us emotionally with the experience of the animal**.
- When you have drafted your poem, read it again, thinking about whether you need to add or change anything, before **writing it out in your best handwriting or typing it up for someone else to read**. How did they feel about your animal as they read your poem? Why was this?



Find all Poetry Prompts as well as more information about Joseph Coelho at booktrust.org.uk/childrens-laureate

Find and explore more poems about animals and their habitats on CLPE's website.

This sequence of activities was designed in partnership with CLPE. CLPE is a UK-based children's literacy charity working with primary schools to raise the achievement of children's reading and writing by helping schools to teach literacy creatively and effectively, putting quality children's books at the heart of all learning. Find out more about their work, and access further resources and training at: clpe.org.uk.