

Poetry Prompts: Week 61

Reuse and recycle

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 61 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. This week Joseph Coelho was joined by special guest Konnie Huq in his poetry prompt video. Together, they wrote poems about ways in which we can reuse or fix things. Here's another poem which shows us how objects can be discarded or recycled and the impact this might have.

Look at the poem:

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

Plastic Pollution

The water bottle I threw away
in a central London bin
rolled from the bin collectors,
was kicked into the Thames
and now floats its way out to sea,
broken down by the sun,
nibbled by fishes.

The chocolate wrapper
that blew from my hands
on a windy playground after school
never came down.
It has circled the world forty times
over mountains and forests
over deserts and jungles.

The bubble wrap that covered
my brand new bike
fluttered from the dump to a field
buried by earth and roots
suffocating the ground.

The plastic bag I recycled
became part of a rucksack,
that carried a student's books
and art projects
and games and lunch
until it too, was ready to be recycled again.

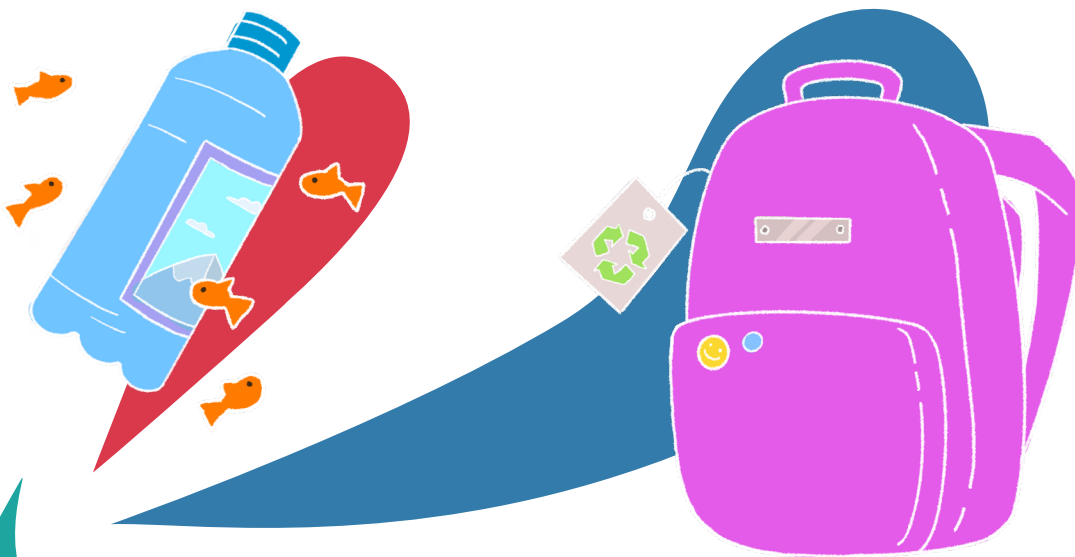
From *Poetry Prompts: All sorts of ways to start a poem* by Joseph Coelho
(Wide Eyed Editions, 2023)



Think about the poem:

Re-read the poem again and think about how each verse makes you feel. Do your feelings stay the same throughout the poem or do they change in the different verses? Why do you think this is?

Consider the poem you just heard or read. What is being described? What do you find out about the impact of the rubbish we throw away?

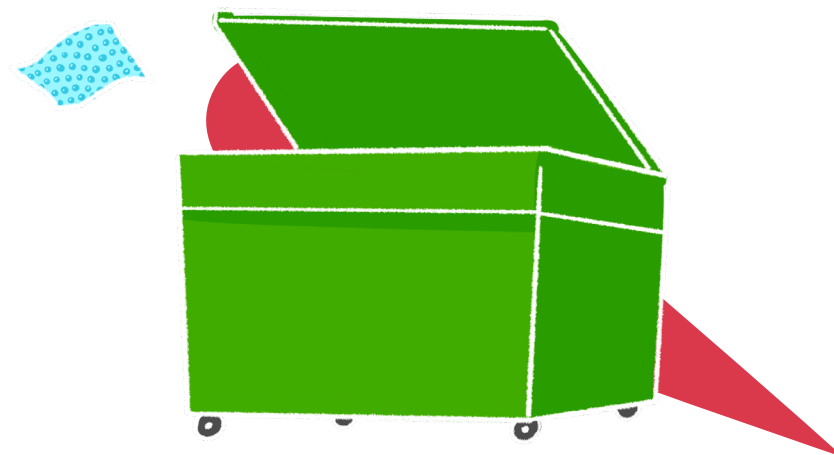


Look at the language:

- The poem contains lots of verbs, which illustrate what happens to each piece of rubbish. **Take a pen or pencil and see if you can find the verbs and circle or underline them.** What do these verbs tell us about the piece of rubbish and the impact it could have on the environment?
- Think about the way the last verse differs from the other verses. How do we know the rucksack was used for a long time? Did you know that plastic bags could be recycled into rucksacks? Do you know any other items that can be made from recycled plastic? **You can find out about a project in South Africa where plastic bags are used to make school bags for children.** The bags also include solar panels to help provide light for the many students without electricity at home: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=za22A7P299o>.

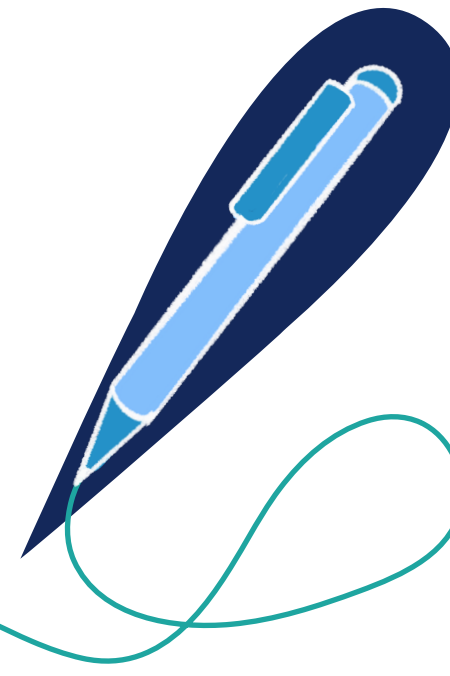
Perform the poem:

- Consider how to **bring out the feelings associated with each verse in a performance** of the poem. How will you contrast the final verse where the plastic bags are recycled with the other verses where the rubbish impacts on the environment? How can you use your voice in different ways to draw the audience into this moment, conveying the emotion in the words? Will some parts be louder or quieter, faster or slower, higher or lower? How will you make sure any actions you may include add to the performance, and the listener's understanding of the situation and the emotions associated with it, rather than detract from it?
- Rehearse your performance a few times until you are happy with it, then **perform it to someone else.** What were they left thinking and feeling at the end of the poem? Was this different from how they felt in the rest of the poem?



Write your own!

- Think about how to **write your own poem about things we throw away and the impact they might have**. If we discarded a glass bottle, a crisp packet or a cardboard box, what might happen to them? What impact might they have on the world around us? **Have a go at writing your ideas into a verse for a poem of your own**. Think about verbs which could describe how the object might have been discarded, how it might travel, such as '**rolled**', '**blew**' or '**fluttered**', or what it might do to things in the natural world, like when the bubble wrap was '**suffocating**' the ground, or what things in the natural world might do to it, like when the fish '**nibbled**' the water bottle. You should also **think about how the words you choose might make your reader feel** about the object and the impact it has.
- When you're happy with your verse, **you could add more verses about other discarded objects**. You might also try a verse about an object that is recycled. How will the verbs you choose and the way you describe the object change the way your reader feels?
- Put your ideas together in a draft of a poem and read it to yourself. Think 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. What did your poem make them think about? How did it make them feel? What made them feel this way?



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

Find and explore more poems about environmental issues 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.