

Poetry Prompts: Week 80

The final poetry prompt

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 80 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. This week, Joseph Coelho was joined by actor and comedian Inel Tomlinson to create a poem based on the theme of laughter. Here's another poem by Joseph that describes the infectiousness of laughter, spreading between people. See if it makes you laugh too!

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 Laugh

It started as a tickle
as a wriggle on my lips.
It turned into a giggle,
a wiggle of the hips.

It turned into a jitter,
a titter of the teeth.
My face is turning red
and it's begging for release.

It gasps into a guffaw!
Into a great big belly laugh.
If I whoop any louder
"Call the security staff!"

Now it's spreading to my friends
in snickers, chuckles and snorts.
If we roar any louder
we'll get a school report!

Now our sides are splitting!
We're on the floor laughing!

We cannot stop!
We will not stop!

It's threatening to choke!

And all because of the telling
of a wonderfully silly joke.

From *Smile Out Loud* by Joseph Coelho
(Wide Eyed Editions, 2022)



Think about the poem:

Consider the poem you just heard or read. What was happening in the poem? What did it make you think about? How did it make you feel? What made you feel this way?

Think about how the poem connects to your own experience. Can you recall a time where you have laughed like this? This might either be your own laughter building up over time, or laughter spreading through a group of people. What made you laugh? What happened to your face and body? How does it feel to laugh in this way?

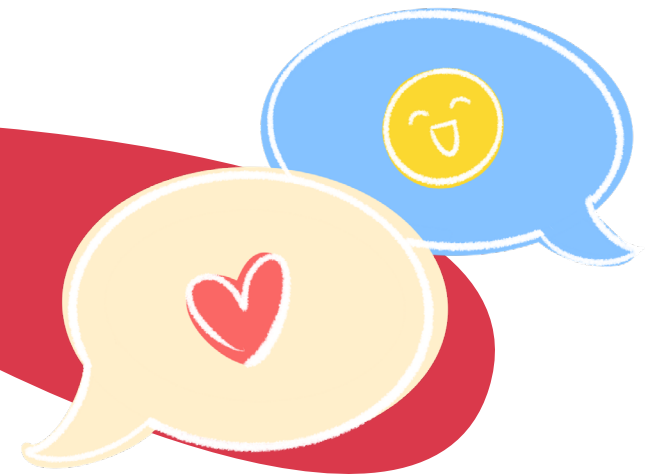


Perform the poem:

- Think about how the **laughter spreads and becomes more powerful as the poem goes on**. How might you show this in a performance of the poem? How might you use your voice to share the build up? How might this change as you get to the final verse? Will some parts be louder or quieter, faster or slower, higher or lower? How will you pace your performance or use facial expression to bring out the emotion or tell the story? 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 did they think was most effective about your performance?

Look at the language:

- Read the poem again. **Circle or underline words or phrases that are used to describe the laugh**, for example, '*jitter*', '*guffaw*', '*whoop*'.
- Now look at each of these words in turn and think about **how they are similar and how they are different**. Is one louder, more powerful or more obvious than another? **Try to act each of the words out** to explore their meaning and the slight differences between them.



Write your own!

- Come back to think about **a moment that made you laugh**. What do you remember most about this moment? What or who started you laughing? Did you laugh out loud straight away or did your laughter build up as in the original poem? What happened in your face and your body as you were laughing? How could you describe this to someone else?
- Start to **write all the ideas you have about this moment** on to a piece of paper. It might be words that describe the laugh, phrases or sentences that explain what happened, or the reactions of other people. Don't think too much about what you are writing, or how it is organised, just **fill your page with anything that comes to mind** when you think about this moment.
- Now, start to use the writing you've produced to **draft a poem of your own**. Think about how you might draw on what Joseph Coelho did in the original poem, for example, how he described the laugh and how it built up over time, the way in which the laugh made the narrator and the others around them react.
- When you're happy with what you have drafted, **write it out in your best handwriting or type it up** to share with someone else. When you've finished, you may also want to illustrate your poem.



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

Find and explore more poems 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.