



NATIONAL POETRY DAY

4TH OCTOBER 2018

Key stage 2

Change

**A National
Poetry Day
resource created
by CLPE**

Russian Doll

All you see is outside me: my painted smile,
the rosy posy shell, the fluttery eyes,
A butter-won't-melt-in-my-mouth-type me.

But inside there's another me, bored till playtime.
The wasting paper, daytime dreamer.
A can't-be-bothered-sort-of me.

And inside there's another me, full of cheek.
The quick, slick joker with a poking tongue.
A class-clown-funny-one-of me

And inside there's another me who's smaller, scared.
The scurrying, worrying, yes miss whisperer.
A wouldn't-say-boo-to-a-goosey me.

And inside there's another me, all cross and bothered.
The scowling hot-head, stamping feet.
A didn't-do-it-blameless me.

And inside there's another me, forever jealous
who never gets enough, compared.
A grass-is-always-greener me.

And deepest down, kept secretly
a tiny, solid skittle doll.
The girl that hides inside of me.

Rachel Rooney



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From *The Language of Cat* by Rachel Rooney,
Frances Lincoln Children's Books

Activity:

- **Read the poem out loud to the children.** *How does the poem make you feel when you hear it? Scribe children's responses around a copy of the poem, or allow time for them to write their own responses on post-it notes that can be stuck around a copy of the poem on display. Link the poem to personal connections; do they always feel and behave in the same way? Do people have a certain perception of them based on what they see? Is this really what they are like on the inside? Can they relate to the idea of their feelings changing in different situations?*
- **Watch Rachel Rooney perform the poem** at: <https://vimeo.com/72834008> and further investigate the feelings that are described by the poet: bored, cheeky, scared, cross and bothered, jealous. *Have the children experienced these feelings before? Can they relate to the descriptions of the feelings explored?*
- **Focus on the title, Russian Doll.** *Have the children seen one of these before? What are they like? Why do you think the poet might have chosen this title? Traditional Russian dolls contain a set of seven dolls to match the seven stanzas in the poem. Having an actual Russian Doll for the children to see, will help to consolidate understanding of the poem and the form the poet has chosen.*
- **Read the poem aloud again**, opening the dolls as each new verse starts to share this idea with the children. *What do they notice about each doll in the set? In a standard set, they should all look similar but have slightly changing characteristics, such as their clothing or the patterns on the front of the doll.*

Look at the first verse again, unpicking the words and phrases she has chosen and why this relates particularly to how the doll looks on the outside, similarly with the last verse and how she feels on the inside. *What is different about the doll in the centre to all of the others?* Investigate the juxtaposition of the words that describe this doll; although she is solid, she is also tiny and a skittle (easily knocked over).

- **Come back to looking at the poem on the page** and the choice of matching the seven dolls to seven verses; *what is similar in each verse? What changes?* Here you can also start to look at the poetic devices used, such as assonance, alliteration and repetition. Either as a whole class or in mixed groups, pairs or individually, mark up the poem with the children's ideas.
- **Look at the words and phrases used** to show how the 'me' shows their changing emotions on the outside. Ask the children to reflect on their own behaviour; *how might someone looking in on them see they were bored, cheeky, scared, cross and bothered, jealous? Would they do the same things or different things? How might they show this emotion in a facial expression? In a body position?* Explore and experiment with different ideas.
- **Give children copies of the poem and split them into seven groups.** Give each group a different verse to focus on for a class performance of the poem. *How will they bring out the emotion of their poem in their performance? How will they change the speed, tone, pitch and volume of their voice? Will they use any specific body positions, facial expressions or actions? Will one voice read or will they layer their*

voices in different ways? Allow time for the children to mark up the poem with ideas before rehearsing, editing and performing their final interpretation of the poem as a whole group, reflect on the effectiveness of each group's verse performance on the audience watching. *How did the performances change within each verse? Was each emotion communicated effectively?*

- **Now get the children to think about the changing faces of their own emotions** through drawing. Ask each child to draw seven different face outlines which will eventually reflect seven different emotions they regularly experience in different situations.
- **Look back at the poem to see that the first verse focuses on how people generally see the 'me' on the outside.** *How do they think people see them? How would they describe this in words?* Encourage them to draw this face first and note words and phrases around the drawing of this face that describe this. Now look deepest, at the doll that hides inside. How do they think their real personality is different to how others perceive them? Draw this in the last outline and make notes of words and phrases relevant to this around the last drawing. Finally think of five other emotions they experience in different situations and repeat the process of drawing and writing words and phrases to describe the changes in their feelings and behaviour.

To extend this activity the children could go on to write their own poem describing the changing faces of their own emotions. They could lean on the structure of the original poem or do something more free which develops the idea in their own way.

