

NATIONAL POETRY DAY

25th
anniversary

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Truth

A National Poetry Day
resource created
by CLPE

Key stage 2



Poetryline

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Gingerbread Man

Billy chased me round the playground
with hands full of fists

Billy yelled at me across the football pitch
with a mouth full of stings.

Billy spat, jibed and cawed
as I ran away singing...

"You can't catch me, I'm the gingerbread man."

Billy had red hair.
I was cruel and called him names.

© Joseph Coelho

published in **Werewolf Club Rules**,
illustrated by John O'Leary (Frances Lincoln 2014)



www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk

Gingerbread Man is a poem about being teased.

It is important that, prior to this session, teachers are aware of any children in the class who may have had issues with being teased or picked on, as this may be a sensitive topic. Use PSHE sessions to fully explore the issues around this subject, alongside the focus poem, which is a good springboard for beginning discussions.

Watch a video of poet Joseph Coelho performing this poem with the children: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poems/gingerbread-man>.

- Allow them time to consider the poem they heard.
- What does it make them think?
- How did it make them feel?

Now give out a copy of the poem to mixed pairs and groups and re-read the poem. Allow time to discuss the poem in groups or pairs.

- What is the truth in this poem?
- When did you realise what the truth really was?
- What were your thoughts in the first part of the poem?
- What did the poet do to make you think this?

They may pick out how the poet has used a variety of verbs in the first part to show the aggressive actions of the boy; **chased, yelled, spat, jibed, cawed**. They may note the repetition in the figurative phrases, **hands full of fists, a mouth full of stings**.

- What does the repetition of **full of** make you think about this boy? They may also note that the stanzas all start with **Billy**.

- Why do you think the poet has decided to repeat his name three times at the start of the poem?
- What effect does this have on you as a reader?
- What effect does the opposition of starting the final line with **I have**?
- How do you feel about the two characters?
- What has the poet done to evoke these feelings?

Look at the way the poem is arranged on the page.

- What effect does the break between stanzas have?
- What does the space between allow us to do as a reader?
- Why do you think the line of the song sits alone?

Consider the 'I' in the poem. Why do you think they are choosing to share this moment?

- Consider the use of tense in the poem; do you think this is an immediate confession or something they have come back to?
- What is the impact of the confession coming in a single line right at the end of the poem?
- What are readers left thinking and feeling?
- What questions are they left with after reading?

Allow the children time to re-read the poem for themselves and think about any personal connections they have with it.

- Have they ever had a similar experience?
- Can they reflect back on a time where they did something they now know was wrong?
- What might be the benefit of sharing a truth in writing in the way the 'I' in the poem has here?

Allow time and space for children to consider truths they might like to share in writing:

- a time when they have behaved in a way they now know was wrong
- a fictional situation based on a seed of truth from real life
- something no one else knows about them; a hobby they enjoy or a talent they have that they haven't had an opportunity to share
- their feelings about something or someone that is special to them.

Listen to poet Joseph Coelho talk about how he writes: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/interviews/coelho-joseph>

and allow the children time to make notes about different things they might want to write about. Look back on the techniques and devices used by the poet that they found effective and allow them to consider how they might create similar effects on their readers. Then watch Joseph talk about how he works on his poems and allow the children to follow the same process, working up their own ideas until they feel they are ready for publication. When they publish, they may want to print their poem as Joseph Coelho did in his book, **Werewolf Club Rules**, or record a video performance of it as they saw him do.

If your class are interested in Joseph's work and would like to study the full **Werewolf Club Rules** collection, there is a free teaching sequence available on Poetryline: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poets/coelho-joseph>

