

SLAM! edited by Nikita Gill

Macmillan 9781529028300

Collected by poet Nikita Gill, *SLAM! You're Gonna Wanna Hear This* is a joyful celebration of the ground-breaking poets making their voices heard on the spoken word scene. Empowering, inspiring and often hilarious, SLAMs are a platform for well-known and emerging talent from all walks of life where every style of poetry has a home.

With poets such as Raymond Antrobus, Sophia Thakur and Dean Atta guest starring alongside up-and-coming poets, this is the perfect introduction to the world of modern poetry. Each poet will introduce their poem, tell you a little bit about themselves and give you a tip for preparing brilliant performance poetry.

The collection does not shy away from challenging themes and subject matter. Teachers are advised to read the entire anthology before introducing it to pupils in order to decide the suitability of poems and how best to mediate the content with their own classes.

This collection was shortlisted for the 2021 CLPE Poetry Award.

Overall aims of this teaching sequence.

- To explore and understand the importance of poetry as a genre
- To know how to listen and respond to a wide range of poems from an anthology
- To interpret poems for performance
- To gain and maintain the interest of the listener through effective performance of poems
- To recognise how a poet uses poetry as a voice to express their own feelings and views
- To explore how poetry is presented on the page to enhance our understanding
- To explore how a poet selects, crafts and shapes language to convey meaning
- To draft, compose and write poems based on personal interests, experiences and emotions using language and form with intent for effect on the reader

This teaching sequence is designed for a Year 7 or Year 8 class.

Overview of this teaching sequence.

This teaching sequence is designed to be delivered over 12 sessions, but teachers will want to use their own judgement about the length of time their class will need to spend on each of the sessions.

This sequence provides the opportunity to reflect critically upon and respond to the ways in which language is used to express, convey, represent, symbolise and signify pertinent points, themes and

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messages. Reader response and group discussion prior to personal reflection on poems explored form an integral part of a number of the sessions detailed in this sequence.

Pupils will have the opportunity to read poetry, listen to poems being read, offer personal responses to the poems, to prepare them for performance and to write their own. The whole sequence builds towards the chance for the class to write and perform their own poems on a subject of interest to them.

The pupils will have the opportunity to use the knowledge they have gained about form and structure throughout the sequence to decide how to present their poem on the page as well as consider how these could be performed to an audience. The poems can be published in a class anthology to be shared with the school community in a variety of ways.

Teaching Approaches	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Watching a poet perform ▪ Reading aloud ▪ Looking at Language ▪ Re-reading ▪ Book talk reflections ▪ Learning about writing from published poets ▪ Free writing of poetry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Text Analysis ▪ Identification of poetic language and devices ▪ Performances of the poetry in the collection ▪ Evaluation of performances ▪ Poetry Journal with ideas and inspirations for writing ▪ Own poems related to themes introduced in the collection

Exploring poetic forms and devices:

This collection gives an opportunity to explore the following poetic devices:

- Rhythm
- Rhyme
- Assonance
- Alliteration
- Metaphor
- Simile
- Enjambment
- Repetition
- Refrain

There are many opportunities to reflect on the ways in which spoken poetry can be translated on the page and, vice versa, how poetry on the page can be interpreted for performance.

Cross Curricular Links:

History

- The poem **History Remembers** by Ishika Jha (page 79) prompts us to be critical and alert readers of history and consider the ways in which different primary and secondary sources and historical artefacts might show bias and present a prejudiced or subjective view of key events or figures from the past. The Historical Association provides a wealth of resources and prompts to support a considered reading of visual and written sources of information about the past: <https://www.history.org.uk/student/resource/3211/using-historical-sources>

Computing

- If children choose to create recordings of the poems that they write at the end of the sequence, they might need access to video editing software to add effects, voiceover, to layer in additional imagery or text or to add music.
- Word-processing software might be used by students to publish their finished poems.

Music

- Some of the poets included in the collection utilise music in their performances (e.g. Sophia Thakur or Rakaya Fetuga). You might explore the connection between performance poetry, spoken word artists and lyric writing, such as the link between spoken word artists like Gil Scott-Heron ('The Revolution Will Not Be Televised') and the emergence of rap as an art form. Talk to children about the music that they like and the influence of lyrics and lyric writing on a song's appeal to them. Later, when refining, publishing and performing their poems, children might choose to add a musical element to the finished performance. Consider what resources they might need to support them in that element.

Links to other texts and resources:

Performing Poetry:

- *Take the Mic: The Art of Performance Poetry, Slam, and the Spoken Word (A Poetry Speaks Experience)*, Marc Smith and Joe Kraynak (Sourcebooks)
- *Slam Your Poetry: Write a Revolution*, Miles Merrill and Narcisa Nozica (NewSouth Publishing)

Books by Nikita Gill:

- *Where Hope Comes From* (Trapeze)
- *The Girl and the Goddess* (Ebury Press)
- *Great Goddesses* (Ebury Press)
- *Fierce Fairytales* (Trapeze)
- *Wild Embers* (Trapeze)

Books and pamphlets by poets featured in the collection:

- *Sargam/Swargam*, Fathima Zahra (Oxford Brookes University)
- *Lost in London*, Troy Cabida (Blurb)
- *Titanic*, (Outspoken Press)
- *Jam is for Girls*, Shagufta K Iqbal (Burning Eye Books)
- *The Black Flamingo*, Dean Atta (Hodder Children's Books)
- *A Warning to the House that Holds Me*, Amina Jama (Flipped Eye Publishing)
- *Four Brown Girls Who Write*, Roshni Goyate, Sharan Hunjan, Sheena Patel & Sunnah Khan (Rough Trade Books)
- *Post-Colonial Banter*, Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan (Verve Poetry Press)
- *The Perseverance*, Raymond Antrobus (Pinned in the Margins)
- *All the Names Given*, Raymond Antrobus (Picador)
- *Somebody Give This Heart a Pen*, Sophia Thakur (Walker Books)

Please note that the above collections were not necessarily published for Key Stage 3 readers, but were intended rather for a wider audience. As such you will want to familiarise yourself with the content fully prior to adding them to class or school libraries.

Selected books previously shortlisted for CLiPPA:

- *Rising Stars*, Ruth Awolola, Victoria Adukwei Bulley, Abigail Cook, Jay Hulme and Amina Jama (Otter-Barry Books)
- *Overheard in a Tower Block*, Joseph Coelho, illustrated by Kate Milner (Otter-Barry Books)
- *Everything All at Once*, Steven Camden aka PolarBear (Macmillan)
- *Rhythm and Poetry*, Karl Nova (Caboodle Books)
- *Booked*, Kwame Alexander (Andersen Press)

Weblinks:

- You can download an audiobook recording of this collection from audible:
<https://www.audible.co.uk/pd/SLAM-Youre-Gonna-Wanna-Hear-This-Audiobook/1529028329>
You can hear 4 free sample poems from the recording on Macmillan's Soundcloud account:
<https://soundcloud.com/pan-macmillan>
- Several links to performance poetry events and recordings can be found on the BBC website:
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0499vc7>

- The Young Poets Network will have news of next year's Roundhouse Poetry Slam event when details are available: <https://ypn.poetrysociety.org.uk/poetry-opportunities/roundhouse-poetry-slam/>
- Access performances by a wide variety of poets on the CLPE website: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetry/videos>
- Learn more about the Young People's Laureate for London, a project that aims to give young people a voice through poetry: <https://www.spreadtheword.org.uk/projects/young-peoples-laureate/>

Teaching Sessions:

Session 1: Introducing the form and the collection

- If possible, before this session, create a focus display or poetry corner, where you can share a copy of the front cover of the book, a photograph of each of the poets, a copy of the text and other poetry collections that the pupils know or could be inspired by (see linked texts above).
- Introduce the children to the term: poetry slam. Have you heard of a poetry slam? If so, where have you heard it? Has anyone attended a poetry slam? How do you think it might compare with other poetry that we have heard, read, written before?
- If children are unfamiliar with the concept of slam poetry and spoken word artists, then you may wish to explore some definitions online and watch some slam performances. Amongst the many slam event recordings available to access freely on line, the following suggested clips feature performances by poets who are included in this collection:
 - Tanaka Fuego (**Therapy**): <https://bit.ly/therapytf>
 - Rakaya Fetuga (**Deleted**): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XyeF17Os5MI>
 - Dean Atta (**How To Be A Poet**): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGA64BXfJRI>
 - Suhaimah Manzoor-Khan (**British Values**): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkDoTGCD2-g>
 - Shagufta Iqbal (**Truth**): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Glv93OWMBIU>
- Be aware that some of the poems performed tackle challenging themes. Watch any recordings yourself to ensure the contents are appropriate for your students and in line with school policy prior to sharing with the class.
- After watching a few selected recordings, give the children time to discuss and share their responses to the content, the tone, the performances, the atmosphere, etc. Encourage them to consider how it relates to any preconceptions they have about poetry or performance poetry specifically. *Having watched some performances, how would you define a poetry slam now? What words would you use to describe those performances? What did you find particularly effective or engaging about the performances? Does it remind you of any other forms of performance that you have experienced? Have you ever attended a slam event or*

something similar? Would you like to? Do you know the names of any poets who might have performed in slams like this?

- Read aloud Nikita Gill's introduction to the collection. Afterwards, ask the class to respond to what they heard. *How might you summarise Nikita Gill's feelings about this form of poetry performance? Were there any ideas, words or phrases that really stood out to you? Did any idea connect with you? Do you share any of Nikita Gill's beliefs or point of view shared in the introduction? Did it remind you of anything? Do you have any insights into why Nikita Gill might have chosen to curate this selection of poems?*
- Give children their own copy of the text (pages v to vii) to re-read and text mark – either independently or in pairs. Ask them to identify any words or phrases that might help us to reach a definition of what is special about the poetry in this collection, and the poetry that is performed at slam events. After children have had sufficient time to select and highlight those words or phrases, invite them each to share, discuss and define some of those words and phrases. Students may also wish to work together to establish definitions of any vocabulary that is unfamiliar to them or of which they are uncertain.
- Children might draw out concepts explored within the introduction that demonstrate the danger that poetry as an art form, as a piece of literature might be **“sequestered”** and **“misconceived as an area of elite literature”**. *Is that a term that has positive or negative connotations? What would a synonym for “sequestered” be? What about an antonym? How might that relate to the performances we watched at the start of the session?* They might have highlighted some aspects of Nikita Gill's definitions and descriptions of slam poetry: *“language of fire, fury and freedom”, “poetry... for everyone”, inciting “revolution”, relatable, mixing “humour with tragedy”;* she draws comparisons with Shakespeare; she uses words like *“inclusive”, “accessible”, “unpretentious”, “truth”, “manifesto”*. *How might we summarise this definition? How might it push back against ideas of elitism?*
- Having watched some slam performances and read the introduction, what do we expect from this collection? What might we expect in the language, rhythm, tone, theme and subject matter across the poems? Children might also share if they have any familiarity with Nikita Gill through her publications or via her social media presence (Nikita Gill shares a great deal of poetry – and advice about writing poetry – on her Instagram page: https://www.instagram.com/nikita_gill/?hl=en).

Session 2: Poetry to explore identity

The experience of being read to is likely to be the real foundation of children's knowledge of poetry, and is also going to be a major influence on how they write themselves. So it is important that it should be as rich, interesting and ‘ear-catching’ as it can be. It is important that voices other than the teacher's should be heard interpreting a poem. In this way, a range of accents, dialects and voices can be introduced into the reading. It can be particularly valuable for children to hear the poets themselves reading their own poems. This allows authentic voices to be heard.

- Before this session, ensure that individual poetry journals (small notebooks, which could be handmade or customised) are available for each pupil. These notebooks will provide a safe place for them to gather ideas; words and phrases that they find particularly memorable or effective in poems that they read and hear, or that come to mind during class discussions. They might also use these books to begin drafting and revising poems later in the sequence.
- Start the session by introducing children to the first poem in the collection: **'Box'** by Rakaya Fetuga (page 1). If you watched any of Rakaya's other performances during the first session, you might remind the class of what they liked or responded to in the poem(s) they viewed. Before reading the poem, you might invite the children to reflect on the one-word title and what it might signify for the poem to follow.
- Read aloud the poem. Then, invite the children to share their initial responses. How did the poem make you feel? What did it make you think about? What did you like or dislike in the poem? Did it remind you of anything you've heard before? Were there any words or phrases that you found particularly memorable?
- Listen to Rakaya Fetuga perform her own poem at a 'Minds Over Matter' event (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=shSt6NT8U6s>). Invite the students to share their response to the performance as well as the text. *What do they like about the performance? How does she use her voice throughout the poem to engage and make impact on the listener?* They may discuss, for example, how she varies her rhythm, tone, tempo or dynamics, and how this affects their understanding or emotional engagement. *Were there any aspects of the poem – any particular language choices or poetic devices – that were more noticeable to them, or particularly effective in the performance?*
- Next, give the children a copy of the text for them to re-read more closely. Encourage the children to look more deeply at the poem, exploring the use of language. You can use this as an opportunity to introduce children to the names of specific forms or devices to look at what makes their chosen poem poetic. You might introduce this by way of what Michael Rosen calls 'secret strings' (*What is Poetry?* Walker). He talks about the importance of discovering how the poet might have used assonance, alliteration, imagery, rhythm and sound. *Can they identify any of these in their chosen poem?* They might note the repetition of 'I am...' or 'I'm' to start lines throughout the poem. *What is the impact of repeating that phrase? Why might she switch to the contraction at times? Could she have used the contraction throughout, or do the two words spoken separately affect the delivery/performance? They might explore where she chooses to use rhyme and assonance – and how those repeated sounds might spotlight particular words or ideas, or affect the rhythm of the line?*
- Encourage them to re-read sections of the poem aloud as they discuss it so that they can feel the impact of those choices on the spoken text. They might draw out particular words or phrases that are specific to different black communities around the world, as well as words and phrases linked to popular culture – *what is the impact of that level of specificity? How might it relate to the theme of the poem?* They might also consider the impact of

transcriptional choices, such as the choice not to divide it into separate verses, or where she has chosen to break sentences across multiple lines. They can look at where she has used quote marks around phrases or linked words together using hyphenation, discuss why she might have done this and how those choices might affect meaning and performance.

- As children share their observations and insights with the class, read and consider Rakaya Fetuga’s introduction to the poem. *How does the finished poem – in both written and performance forms – reflect the feeling she describes when writing it? How might trying to find a voice to represent such a diverse group feel both unifying and confining? Where can they see that idea coming through in the text?*
- Having discussed the first poem in the collection, move on to share the final poem: ‘**Space**’ by Sharan Hunjan (page 141).
- As before, after reading the poem aloud, invite the children to share their initial responses. *What did the poem make you think about? How did it make you feel? What did you like or dislike in the poem? Did it remind you of anything you’ve heard before? Were there any words or phrases that you found particularly memorable?*
- Listen to Nikita Gill performing Sharan Hunjan’s poem on the CLPE website: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetry/poets/nikita-gill>. Invite the students to share their response to the performance as well as the text. *What do they like about the performance? Were there any aspects of the poem – any particular language choices or poetic devices – that were more noticeable, or particularly effective? What choices has Nikita Gill made when lifting the poem from the page? How does this differ in performance from Rakaya Fetuga’s performance of ‘Box’? Why might the rhythm and tone of this poem suggest a different style of performance?*
- Then, give the children their own copy of the poem to re-read more closely. As before, encourage the children to look at the way in which the poet has selected and crafted the language, the deliberate choice of words and phrases as well as the way in which they are laid out on the page. Children might note the use of a second person perspective in the narrative voice which suggests both a speaker and an audience. *Who might be speaking and who could they be addressing? Do you think there is only one voice in the poem, or multiple voices? What suggests that?* They might draw out the choice to echo words like ‘you’ and ‘shrink’ in the second verse and how that might affect meaning or emphasis. Encourage them to reflect on the ways in which they have heard the poem read aloud and how those lines were interpreted in those performances. *Would they read it the same way? Why/why not?* The choice to not punctuate the end of any lines until the final two offers the reader a broader interpretation of where sentences end and where they continue. They might highlight the use of enjambment where sentences are broken across lines or across verses. *How does that impact the rhythm, pace and interpretation of phrases? How might it emphasise certain words and phrases at the start and end of lines? How has Sharan Hunjan varied line lengths and what impact do they have?* Amongst other devices, children might discuss the impact of alliteration in ‘**boundless bountiful beautiful space**’ or the sequences of verbs in ‘**dust and**

twist and turn’ or ‘run or jump or shout or fly’ or the assonance and punctuation in the line ‘In fact, it is black’.

- After children have annotated and discussed ‘Space’, draw them back together to compare the two poems. *What did the poems have in common? Were there similarities in form, structure, language choices, theme or subject matter? In what ways were they different? Was there a poem which they preferred? Why is that? Why do you think Nikita Gill might have selected these poems to book-end the collection?*
- You might ask children to capture their discussions and observations about the two poems in a visual organiser that they can refer back to in future sessions, or you might scribe children’s reflections on flipchart paper as they feed back to the class and add these to the Working Wall.
- Finish the session by inviting pupils to reflect on the words and phrases that were most memorable or impactful and note these in their poetry journals. Encourage them to reflect on what made the particular words or phrases appealing.

Session 3: Poetry as a form of expressive and personal narrative

- Play the class the recording of Nikita Gill performing Michelle Nathan’s poem ‘Enough’ (<https://clpe.org.uk/poetry/poets/nikita-gill>). Allow them to discuss their initial responses. *What did this poem make them think about? How did it make them feel? What made them feel this way?*
- Then, as in Session 2, re-read the poem and invite pupils to discuss responses using Aidan Chambers’ basic questions from his book *Tell Me (Children, Reading and Talk) with The Reading Environment (How Adults Help Children Enjoy Books)* (Thimble Press): *What did you like about the poem? What didn’t you like? What puzzles are there? What did it remind you of?* Children might make connections with other poems they’ve read, other narratives (in books, TV or film) or they might make a personal connection if it reminds them of experiences within their own family, perhaps also around the eating of a particular meal or routines.
- Now, give each pair of children a copy of the text of the poem (pages 33-38) so that they can re-read the poem, exploring the language more deeply as well as looking at the structural choices made with layout and other transcriptional elements. Prompt children to consider the themes of the poem. *What is the poem about? What sort of ideas does the poem seem to be exploring? How do you feel about those ideas? How has the poet drawn out those themes in the choices she has made?* Children might observe that the poet is telling a story, relaying an anecdote about a moment in her life. This type of poetry is sometimes referred to as narrative poetry and is often written in free verse. You can find a description of these forms and devices on the CLPE website along with examples of each: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetry/poetic-forms-and-devices>. Michelle Nathan, in her introduction to the poem (p33) refers to it as an ‘ode to family...[and] to food’. Children might also explore

the ode as a form of poetry and consider which aspects of this poem might mimic the structure, language or intent of an ode.

- As they work together to draw out some of the language choices and poetic devices introduced in the previous session, encourage children to read aloud the text so that they can hear the impact of the assonance, rhyme, alliteration, rhythm, line and verse breaks. The sections of the poem written in free verse don't have a strong regular rhythm, but the decisions made by the poet about where to place the line breaks, where to place punctuation and how long to make each line, all impact the pace, rhythm, tempo and tone you may use when reading each verse. *Does that rhythm change? What impact does it have?* For example, the children might identify the way in which the opening two verses sound very conversational – like someone telling a story, perhaps even reminiscent of the start of a stand-up routine, speaking with assurance to an audience. *Could they hear those line breaks in the performance that they watched at the start of the session?* They might also draw out and discuss the impact of the repetition (for example verses 3, 4 and 5 all starting with the same two words; the places in which she incorporates a more regular rhythm and rhyming pattern; the use of direct speech; the use of humour (the adapted quote from *Top Gun* at the bottom of page 34; or the moment in which her auntie pours the soup on her hand – with that regular metre and alliteration in 'spicy soupy liquid gold'). In the penultimate verse, they might discuss the impact of the short, rhyming lines as the poem builds towards its conclusion.
- Draw the class together, taking feedback from each group about any features that they had identified and discussed and what impact these had. Move on to discussing what they think are the main themes of the poem. Through both forms (the narrative which is retelling the story of a visit to family in Sri Lanka, and the ode which is a celebration of the auntie), the poet draws out more broadly the ways in which we connect to family, heritage and identity through language and through family rituals which often revolve around the preparing and sharing of meals.
- You might choose to support the children in making connections to other texts with similar themes by reading aloud or providing copies of poems such as '**Crab-apples**' by Imtiaz Dharker or '**Indian Cooking**' by Moniza Alvi (<https://www.poetrybyheart.org.uk/poems/indian-cooking/>) with which to respond, compare and contrast. Both poems can be found in the anthology *Midnight Feasts*, edited by A.F. Harrold and illustrated by Katy Riddell (Bloomsbury). You could also make further connections by reading other poems from *Slam!* which are centred around family relationships: '**Monuments and Prayers**' by Karishma Sangtani (page 31) and '**Little Man of the House**' by Shagufta Iqbal (page 40).
- At the end of the session, give children time with their poetry notebooks to jot down any words or phrases or ideas that they wanted to capture from today's discussions and that they might use as stimulus for their own poems. Encourage them to think about the themes of the poems we've read so far – what connections do they make with their own experiences, their own lives when they think about identity, heritage, culture, family and food. *What forms have they enjoyed? What devices?* Invite them to start drafting their own ideas. This may just be

rough notes of ideas, snippets of lines, or they may start crafting initial ideas for a poem of their own.

Session 4: Poetry as a form of self-reflection

- Start the session by sharing and reflecting on some statements about children’s own self-image and use of (or perception of) social media in connection to this (prompts and quotes all taken from the [Somebody Like Me](#) report published in January 2017).
- In turn, display or read aloud each of the following statements. Ask children to reflect for themselves on the extent to which they personally agree or disagree with the statement. Ensure that the class share a common understanding that there is no expectation that they have to share their response to these statements, but that if they choose to do so this is a safe and secure forum for listening, not judging, and that nothing shared will be shared outside the room or used against anyone or that no one will react in a way that makes anyone sharing experience feelings of shame or disgrace, or be treated in a less favourable way because of anything they choose to share.
 - ***How I look is important to me.***
 - ***What others think of the way I look is important to me.***
 - ***I often worry about the way I look.***
 - ***I make sure I look as good as possible in the photos I put online.***
- Next, read aloud the poem ‘**Self-portrait with an iPhone**’ by Dean Atta (page 55). You might also listen to Dean Atta performing the poem himself in an extract from the audiobook version of this collection: <https://soundcloud.com/pan-macmillan/self-portrait-with-an-iphone-written-and-performed-by-dean-atta>
- Allow time for the pupils to discuss and share their initial responses to this new poem; What does this poem make you think about? How does the poem make you feel? How do you relate to the poem personally? Do you think the poem has a particular message or theme? What is similar or different to the poems read so far? Some children might also make links with their knowledge of the poet’s other work, such as his verse novel *The Black Flamingo* (Hodder Children’s Books) which was the CILIP Carnegie Medal Shadowers’ Choice in 2020.
- Now allow the pupils to look at this poem on the page and re-read it for themselves. Allow the children time to focus on the poem in more depth and to mark up the poem with their observations, thoughts, questions and ideas about what the poet has done in terms of language choice, form and structure to share his reflections with the reader. Encourage them to read the lines aloud so that they can hear the impact of the line and verse breaks. *Which words and phrases are emphasised by Dean Atta’s decision to structure the poem in this very regular and slightly regimented way? When does he change the syllable length of a line?* Often, a syllabic regularity in form is also linked with a regular rhythm and/or rhyme structure. *What is the impact of his choice not to have the poem rhyme? How does that affect the way you read the poem?* Although the poem does not rhyme, children might draw out the effect

of the assonance, for example in the line “*top model even at rock bottom*”. They might also note the deliberate word choice and sentence structure in the final line of the poem and what that might mean about how the speaker feels at this moment.

- Share some quotes from teenagers who were interviewed as part of the *Somebody like Me* research shared earlier (see below for suggestions) and consider the extent to which these relate to their own observations, their own experiences, or the experience and reflections shared in Dean Atta’s poem.

“Because of what other people say, you dress a certain way. Because they’ve said something, you pressure yourself.”

“If you wanna post a picture, you have to make sure it’s on point, otherwise you won’t post it.”

“I Photoshop every one of my profile pictures, I kid you not. I get rid of my spots, I get rid of my double chin. It genuinely takes me 25 minutes to make a profile picture.”

“Do you know how much make-up my friend puts on and how many hours it takes her to put it on, just to take a picture and put it on Instagram? I’ll be on the phone to her for three hours and then she takes it off five minutes later.”

“You have to get like, the perfect photo, or like, you’ll get a snide comment from someone. You take numerous selfies to get the right one.”

- Ask children to consider this poem in relation to each of those read and discussed so far: ‘**Box**’, ‘**Space**’, and ‘**Enough**’ (as well as any others that you might have selected to read aloud). *What do they have in common in terms of theme or subject matter? Why might poetry be an effective form in which to explore some of these ideas? What does it offer? Do you know other forms of writing – and performing – that also provide this space?* Share the top tip from Shagufta Iqbal which followed her poem ‘**Little Man of the House**’ which children may have read in the previous session:

“Performance poetry is more about honesty and authenticity and vulnerability than performance and over exaggeration. It is about starting a conversation and speaking with your community.” (p42)

- Discuss the extent to which they can see this approach and ethos is reflected in the poems shared and explored so far.
- To conclude the session, listen to another poet, Karl Nova, talk about the role writing poetry plays for him: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/karl-nova-how-has-poetry-helped-you-explore-your-identity>
- Consider how the poems we have read from this collection might also be considered as a “record of your feelings, thoughts and moments” or “a point of reflection” for each of these poets too. Then, give time for children to begin to collect ideas in their poetry journals of feelings, thoughts or moments that they’d like to reflect on. These might be inspired by the poems read during the sessions so far, the discussions held in class, or the quotes shared from the research. Some may even start drafting their own poems immediately. Encourage them to

carry on collecting ideas and inspirations and maybe having a go at writing their own poems in between sessions in this way.

- After this session, you may wish to follow-up on some of the issues raised in additional PSHE sessions. See below for online resources:
 - The PSHE Association have produced a guide to ‘Key Standards in Teaching About Body Image’. You can download the PDF here: <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/key-standards-teaching-about-body-image>
 - The Be Real Campaign has put together a toolkit of resources for school to support students’ body confidence and interactions with media. You can apply to download the toolkit here: <https://www.berealcampaign.co.uk/resources/body-confidence-campaign-toolkit-for-schools>
 - The survey upon which it is based can also be downloaded here: <https://www.berealcampaign.co.uk/research/somebody-like-me>

Session 5: Performing Poetry

If poetry is not given a voice, if it just stays on the page as a printed object, then it is not going to come alive for most children. Giving voice and sound to poetry is an important key to unlocking the meanings and music contained in each poem. It is through performing poetry that the quality of rhyme and verse form, and the power of language can be explored and realised. Presenting poetry to an audience in this way might also lead children to recognise more clearly the humour in a poem or reflect more thoughtfully on its meaning.

- Start this session by listening to Steven Camden (spoken word artist and previous winner of CLIPPA in 2019) talk about his tips for performing poetry: <https://clpe.org.uk/videos/video/steven-camden-what-advice-would-you-give-performing-poetry>
- As a class, discuss what they heard in the video, summarising his advice and considering how it relates to the performances that we’ve already seen from the poets in this collection. Explain that today, we’re going to work together on a performance of one of the poems in the collection. But, first, we’re going to read it and think about what it is saying, what it means to us so that we have that ‘point of connection’ that Steven Camden refers to.
- Read the poem ‘**ENG/LAND**’ by Bridget Minamore (page 21).
- Allow time for the pupils to discuss and share their initial responses: *What does this poem make you think about? How does the poem make you feel? What makes you feel like this? What do you think the poem is about? How do you relate to the poem personally? What is similar to or different from the poems read so far?*
- Now, allow the pupils to look at this poem on the page. Read the introduction and invite the children to respond to it. *How would you summarise what Bridget Minamore was feeling conflicted about when thinking about and writing the poem? As they re-read the poem, can*

they see echoes of that conflict in the language and structural choices she has made? Can they recognise some of that 'bizarre' feeling in the poem? Give the children time, individually or in pairs, to re-read the poem to themselves. Explain that they might want to read sections aloud quietly to hear again how the words, the rhythm, the spaces sound. Allow the pupils to mark up the poem with their observations, thoughts, questions and ideas about what the poet has done to share her conflicted feelings around personal identity, nationality and nationalism (you may need to spend time clarifying children's understanding of these terms). *How might her use of spacing, line breaks, capital letters, punctuation and italics give you a clue about how you might read this poem? How might you effectively communicate the emotions in the poem and its layers of meaning to a listener?*

- Once the children have had time to annotate the poem and share their observations, explain that they are going to work in groups to direct and rehearse a class performance of the poem. Divide the poem into 4 or 5 sections and split the class into the same number of groups, allocating a section to each, giving the students a shorter and more manageable section of the poem to learn and rehearse. Although students won't be expected to memorise the whole poem, the more they are familiar with it and the less they have to look down at the page, the more effective their performance will be.
- Refer back to the poetry readings that we've seen and enacted so far to reflect on some of the approaches we might use to devise an effective performance. *Which words, lines or phrases would be best performed individually, or in pairs? Are there any lines or phrases that would be most effectively shared chorally? How will you pace the performance? How will you modulate your voice(s) to help communicate both meaning and feeling? Will you use any movement or action, or would that distract from the meaning?*
- When children have had enough time to discuss and text mark their section of the poem, trying out different ideas and hearing how they sound, they can move on to rehearsing their section of the poem.
- After sufficient rehearsal time, come together as a class to rehearse the whole poem. Decide together as a class how best to link the sections together, perhaps by repeating a line that ends one section at the start of the next.
- Once the performance is ready, you might choose to perform the poem for another class in the phase or film the performance to add to the school website or class blog. If you are completing this session before 11th February 2022, this could be filmed and submitted for the [CLiPPA shadowing scheme](#) competition to win poetry prizes. Alternatively, if some of the students particularly connected with this poem, they might like to work up independently a reading of the text performed by a smaller group which could also be submitted for the shadowing competition.
- After the children have performed the poem, come back together to share any new thoughts, comments, observations or questions. *Did re-reading and learning a small section of the poem highlight any further layers of meaning; or any uses of language that you found particularly*

effective or impactful? Did performing the poem help you see it in a new way? Did you notice anything that you hadn't seen on the first or second reading?

- If the children have been inspired by these performances, they may also want to work up a performance of one of the poems already studied, that they particularly connected with, to record for the shadowing competition. You may wish to share this [advice for a successful performance](#) to help them make decisions around how to perform their chosen poem.

Session 6: Connecting with Poetry

Allowing ample time for pupils to explore and make personal choices and reflect on what resonates with them personally through activities like poetry papering is an important investment that can heighten engagement with and response to poetry. Rather than looking at a poem as a puzzle that needs to be solved, or to be mined for specific language and technique, we need to encourage a personal and emotional response as a way in to looking at what it was about the writing that garnered the response.

- Explain that today they are going to explore some of the other poems in the collection and work up one of these to perform themselves.
- In preparation for this session, make photocopies of a selection of the following poems:
 - **'Sargam'** by Fathima Zahra (p4-5)
 - **'My City and I'** by Xinyue Jiang (p6-7)
 - **'Not Dying for London'** by Troy Cabida (p11-12)
 - **'Language'** by Duranka Perera (p13-15)
 - **'Lost in Translation'** by Aman Grover (p16-20)
 - **'Monuments and Prayer'** by Karishma Sangtani (p31-32)
 - **'你好/Hello'** by Jinhao Xie (p49-54)
 - **'Ask A Village Girl'** by Roshni Goyate (p61-63)
 - **'How Now Brown Cow'** by Sunnah Khan (p64-66)
- Pin these poems up around the classroom or another space for the children to find and explore at their leisure. They can read, pass over, move on and then select one they'd like to talk about with someone else. This encourages the children to enjoy the experience of simply reading a poem, to relish the uncertainties of meanings and the nature of the knowledge and emotional responses that poems invoke in them as readers. Tell them to stand in front of the poem they most want to investigate more and allow groups to take the poem back to tables for further work.
- Let them discuss their initial responses, why they selected this poem, what it made them think about, how it made them feel, what they were particularly drawn to, personal connections they have with the poem, whether it reminds them of other poems in the collection or questions it raised for them.
- Now encourage the children to look more deeply at the poem, exploring the use of language. Remind the children of the names of specific forms or devices that they might look out for that

they have used in previous sessions: rhythm, rhyme, assonance, alliteration, repetition or patterns, imagery including personification, metaphor, simile. Encourage them as well to consider how the poet has chosen to present the poem on the page – how have they used line and verse breaks, spacing and punctuation to affect meaning?

- Next, give time for the children to work up their chosen poem for performance. *Would it be best performed individually, in pairs or as a group? How will you pace the performance? You may find this [advice for a successful performance](#) useful to share. They will need to read and re-read their given lines over and over to find the lyrical flow and rhythm needed for the performance. Encouraging the children to walk around rhythmically while they practise will help them to find and secure the rhythm and use the rhyme to help them remember the words. Some may also find it helpful to move their hands to help with this. *How will you use your voice(s) to help share a clear picture of this moment? Will you use any movement or action? Will you emphasise the rhythm in the words?* Remind them of the advice we've discussed about effective performance and the videos we've watched from many of these poets. *How will you most effectively communicate meaning and your emotional connection to the poem?* Give time for the pupils to build up their poems, text marking with performance notes and ideas, practising, editing and polishing to a finished performance.*
- After the children have had sufficient time to rehearse, allow space for them to perform their poems for the rest of the class. Before 11th February 2022, this could be filmed and submitted for the [CLiPPA shadowing scheme](#) competition to win poetry prizes.
- Then, ask the children to feed back on the interpretations of different groups, evaluating the effectiveness of different techniques and styles and what these brought to their understanding and interpretation of the poem. *What did each interpretation add to your understanding of the narrative? Could you see a clear picture of the moment? Do they feel they could connect with the poems shared? What could they relate to in the subject matter, the characters presented, the language used? Were there any common themes or ideas expressed across the range of poems performed?*

Session 7: Exploring other interpretations of poetry for performance

- Start the session by introducing children to another poet featured in this collection: Raymond Antrobus. While some of the poets featured in the collection have only recently risen to prominence, either performing at slam events or having their work published, Raymond Antrobus has been published since 2012 and has been the recipient of several awards including the Ted Hughes Award, the Sunday Times Young Writer of the Year Award, and The Guardian Poetry Book of the Year. You can find out more about the poet and his work on his website: <http://www.raymondantrobus.com/>
- Read aloud his poem '**Dear Hearing World**' (page 76-78) including his introduction.
- Allow time for the pupils to discuss and share their initial responses: *What did the poem make you think about? How did you feel as you listened to the poem? What makes you feel like this?*

What do you think the poem is about? The poem's title and its structure suggest that it is taking the form of a letter or an email – a document intended for an audience. *Who do you think it is addressing? What do we know about the narrator? What aspects of the poem do you relate to personally? What do you like or dislike?*

- Now share a copy of the poem so that the children can reread it, looking more closely at the author's use of language, form and poetic devices, as well as being able to see the way the poem looks on the page. *What words or phrases do you find particularly impactful or effective?* The children might draw out the way in which Raymond Antrobus returns to language and imagery related to sound and consider the ways in which that connects to the wider message and theme of the poem; for example, the use of '**sounder**' as an adjective and how we might define this term. They might discuss the meaning within sentences such as "**We are indeed the same volume, all of eventually fade**" and why he might have communicated the idea using that imagery.
- You might also suggest that they mark up any imagery or language in the poem with which they were unfamiliar or would like to explore the definition. Encourage them to work together initially to consider potential definitions for some of the less familiar terms. Then, after sufficient time, bring them back together to support each other as a class in developing and deepening their understanding, and discussing the impact of some of those language choices. For example, children find want to explore what "**the fate of Lazarus**" might signify. Some students might not have seen the abbreviation **BSL** or know why a deaf child might have seen the "**annihilation of their language**." Becoming more familiar with some of the history behind the poem will support a deeper understanding of the emotion behind it. They might explore the connection between the 'Lazarus' imagery, the personification of "**confidence... gone to an early grave**" and the "**ghosts [which] haunt... tongue-tied hands**" within the second verse.
- Once children have had time to re-read, annotate and discuss their response to the poem, watch Raymond Antrobus perform the poem at the 2019 International Griffin Poetry Prize event: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJulxbSspYM>
- Invite the children to share their response to this reading. *How does it affect your understanding? Were there elements of the poem that stood out differently? Were there words or phrases that affected you in different ways? How did you feel about the poem and the performance? Do you feel differently having heard it read aloud by the poet? If so, in what way? How does the poet's use of sign language, body language, facial expression, vocal expression affect your response to the text? To what extent did it add to your understanding?*
- As a class, discuss what they feel makes for an effective performance of a poem. They might consider their own experiences of engaging in performance during this sequence of work as well as their response to the wide range of performances that they have seen by the poets included in this collection.
- Discuss other ways in which poetry can be lifted from the page, interpreted and shared with an audience, then share a filmed interpretation of '**Dear Hearing World**' directed by Adam

Docker and incorporating musical accompaniment with a reading by Raymond Antrobus and a performance by Vilma Jackson (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJEU5Vg4ITc>).

- Give children time to discuss and share their response to the short film: *what did you like about this interpretation of the text? Did it surprise you? Did this performance affect your feelings about the poem? Why/why not? What choices have the filmmakers made in interpreting it for this art form? Where did they choose to film it? How did the choice of location – and the way in which they photographed that location – add to the performance? How did the actor use facial expressions, movement, gestures and sign language to communicate aspects of the poem? How did the sound design affect our response? How did they incorporate music, silence and sound effects? What impact did other aspects of the filming have on our appreciation of the text?* The children might talk about the lighting, colour, camera angles and camera movement, the costuming, the composition of the frame, the inclusion of text on the screen, etc. *What did the film remind them of? Have they seen short films or videos like this before?*
- Discuss some of the ways in which we have experienced the poetry in this collection so far: we have heard it read aloud, we have seen it printed on the page, we have heard it performed on stage, and now we have seen it interpreted as a short film with voiceover, subtitles, music and movement. *What other elements of performance or different art forms might support us in lifting a poem from the page and clearly communicating our meaning and our feelings to an audience?* The children might discuss how poems might be sung, accompanied by live music, danced, enacted, or interpreted visually as a painting or sculpture.
- You might look at some further examples of poets in this collection who use different elements as key components of their performance, either at slam events or during other performances. For example, Rakaya Fetuga’s performance of [Prejudice](#) at Windrush Day 2020 which incorporates music throughout, or her filmed performance of [Du Bois](#) which incorporates music, projection, colour, lighting and voice over. Discuss the ways in which the additional elements of performance add layers to the performance and affect our response or interpretation.
- Spend some allowing children to consider whether they would want to incorporate other elements of performance into their own poems and how they could ensure that would continue to emphasise and support the communication of meaning and feeling – and not detract from it.

Session 8: Poetry as a means of activism and protest

Poetry requires careful consideration of word choices; order and arrangement to best convey the thoughts and feelings of the poet and inspire a response from the reader. This makes poetry a powerful and effective art form that can inspire profound, deep and meaningful responses and engagement.

- Start the session by sharing the headline of a blog that was published on The Guardian website in December 2010: **What’s poetry’s role in protest politics?** (you can access the full

blog here: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2010/dec/15/poetry-protest-politics>).

- Discuss the children’s response to the question being posed by the writer. *What is protest politics? How would they define a protest? Are they aware of any significant protests from the past few years, or from history within living memory? What different forms of protest are they aware of? Who tends to be protest? And what might they be protesting against?* Finally consider the ways in which poetry could - or does - play a role within those protests. This might be a speech given by an activist renowned for the power of their words, it might be poets responding to recent events by sharing their poems on social media or on television, or it could be the wording of placards and banners during marches related to climate change or the Black Lives Matter movement.
- Read together the opening paragraph from the collection of Protest Poetry found on the Poetry Foundation website:

“Pithy and powerful, poetry is a popular art form at protests and rallies. From the civil rights and women’s liberation movements to Black Lives Matter, poetry is commanding enough to gather crowds in a city square and compact enough to demand attention on social media. Speaking truth to power remains a crucial role of the poet in the face of political and media rhetoric designed to obscure, manipulate, or worse. The selection of poems below call out and talk back to the inhumane forces that threaten from above. They expose grim truths, raise consciousness, and build united fronts. Some insist, as Langston Hughes writes, “That all these walls oppression builds / Will have to go!”. Others seek ways to actively “make peace,” as Denise Levertov implores, suggesting that “each act of living” might cultivate collective resistance. All rail against complacency and demonstrate why poetry is necessary and sought after in moments of political crisis.”

(<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/101581/poems-of-protest-resistance-and-empowerment>)
- Give the children time to re-read the paragraph for themselves and ask them to draw out any words or phrases that capture what the writer suggests makes poetry an effective and necessary form of communication for protest. Return to the question posed by the Guardian blog. *After reading this paragraph, what do they think poetry’s role in protest might be?*
- Explain that in this session, we’re going to be reading a selection of poems that have been collected together under the heading ‘Protest’ within this collection.
- Start by watching Suhaiymah Manzoor Khan perform her work, **This Is Not A Humanising Poem**, at the Last Word Festival, Poetry Slam Final in 2017: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9Sz2BQdMF8>).
- As in previous sessions, allow time for the pupils to discuss and share their initial responses: *How does the poem make you feel? What makes you feel like this? How do you relate to the poem personally? What do you like or dislike? What is similar to or different from the poems read so far? How do you think the speaker is feeling? What makes you think that?*

- Now allow the pupils to look at the poem on the page (page 71-74) including the paragraph written to introduce the text. As they re-read and discuss the poem, ask them to annotate it with any observations, thoughts, questions and ideas about how the poet has shaped and crafted language to share her feelings and her thought process when it comes to crafting a ‘humanising’ poem, to needing to “prove [her] humanity”. Return to the words and phrases drawn from the Poetry Foundation text. *What elements of the poem might be considered pithy, powerful, or examples of speaking truth to power, talking back to inhumane forces, exposing grim truths, raising consciousness, or building united fronts?* The children might draw out the comparison made in the opening verse. *Why might the poet compare the force of writing to the force of the siren? What connections do you make as a reader/listener when you hear that? What does it remind you of? What is the impact of her repeated use of pronouns (them, their, you, we, us) throughout the poem? How does she use humour and references to popular culture in the text? What is the effect when she drastically changes the length of the verses? How is the rhythm and the pace of the poem altered by the repeated line openings and expanding sentence lengths in the verse which begins ‘**Instead / love us when we’re lazy**’? How does she draw attention to some of the inherent contradictions she observes in society?* They might also draw out the repeated use of the imperative verb form to start many of the lines in the poem, and the impact of that structure and present tense, and the extent to which that gives the poem an urgent immediacy.
- Once the children have had time to annotate the poem and share their observations, hand out a small pack of further poems from this section of the collection for them to read and discuss in smaller groups:
 - ‘**History Remembers**’ by Ishika Jha (page 79-81)
 - ‘**Poppy Fields and Cedar Trees**’ by Shagufta Iqbal (page 82-83)
 - ‘**Inheritance and New Ways of Looking**’ by Zainab Dawood (p84-86) (please be aware that the poem includes an ethnic slur to depict the experience of facing abuse)
 - ‘**Bitter State**’ by Duranka Perera (page 93–95)
- Explain to the class that you’d like them to read all of the poems in the pack and then to select one to present to the class. Their presentation may include an explanation of why they selected that particular poem; anything they’ve noticed in terms of the poet’s use of language, form and poetic devices; the ways in which the poem relates to the theme of ‘protest’; and a performance of the poem (or part of the poem if it’s a longer text). Encourage the children to work together to discuss and annotate the poem, responding to the language and ideas portrayed within it, exploring the way in which the poet has crafted language for impact, as they did earlier for Suhaiymah Manzoor Khan’s poem. Then, as they did in Session 6, they will need to decide how best to lift their poem from the page. How will they use the variety of voices within the group to communicate with clarity the emotion and meaning that they found within the poem? *What is at the heart of the poem? How did it make you feel? How can you share that feeling with others? Might it be that the poem is shared out, or it could be that one*

voice performs the bulk of the poem while the other voices join in on selected words and phrases? Encourage them to reflect on what they have found effective in other performances.

- After each group has shared their poem, discuss this selection as a whole. Why might these poems all share the same section of the book? How are they similar to/different from each other, as well as in comparison to the rest of the collection? Are there common themes, ideas, patterns and devices that they can see echoed across the collection so far?
- Return to the prompts offered by the Guardian blog and the Poetry Foundation website about the role of poetry as a form of protest. Now that they have read and explored these poems more fully, *what role do they think poetry has? What power might poetry have to be an agent of change? How might protest poetry provide an important voice to less represented members of the community?*
- Invite children to return to their poetry notebooks and think about what issues they feel passionately about. *What might they like to protest against? Are these similar concerns, worries or injustices as these poets, or is it something different? When you think about those issues, how does that make you feel? What words or phrases could you use to communicate your feeling and your point of view in a poem?* Invite them to spend some time jotting down ideas in their notebooks that they could return to later.
- Following this session, provide the children with opportunities to read the other poems in this section of the book. In addition to the poetry published in this collection, you might also provide children with the opportunity to read or listen to further examples of poetry which have been written and shared as protest or in response to recent events, such as ‘**Hollow**’ by Vanessa Kisuule written following the toppling of the statue of Edward Colston in Bristol in June 2020 (<https://medium.com/poem-of-the-day/vanessa-kisuule-hollow-ce44cf0413c6>), or ‘**Harbour**’ by Grace Nichols which reflects on the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown (<https://www.mmu.ac.uk/write/harbour.php>), or ‘**The Hill We Climb**’ by Amanda Gorman recited at the inauguration of the US President in January 2021 (<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/20/amanda-gorman-poem-biden-inauguration-transcript>).

Session 9: Support Pupils’ Own Writing

It is important to give time to be able to play with and develop ideas for writing before making decisions about form and structure. Pupils should be encouraged to appreciate their prerogative as writers and build confidence over time to determine which ideas are the right ones to develop and which can be abandoned without labouring or shame.

- Read aloud ‘**When to Write**’ by Sophia Thakur (page 96). Give time for children to share their initial response to the poem. *What does it make them think about? What do they like about the poem? How do they feel after listening to the poem? What does the poet express about the value of writing?* Explore with the children their personal connections with the feelings expressed here – *how does the view connect to their own feelings about writing?* Consider too

how the views expressed in this poem about the values of writing might connect with the other poems that they have heard and read so far. This poem was included in the 'Protest' section of the book alongside poems that we discussed in the previous session – *why might Nikita Gill have included it there? How does it connect with those poems?*

- Allow children to see a copy of the poem on the page and read Sophia Thakur's introduction to the text. *How do the introduction and the poem itself make them think and feel about their own writing? Have you ever felt the urge to write that the poet describes in this poem? How does she select and shape the language in the poem to communicate those feelings of urgency or necessity? In her introduction, she says that she sometimes rhymes: where does she choose to utilise rhyme in this poem? What impact does it have – on the rhythm, pace or feel of the poem? How might it affect the reader? How does she use repetition? Read the poem aloud; where can you hear the assonance and alliteration as well as the rhyme? How does it affect the way you read the text?* They might also draw out the impact of her imagery and figurative language – e.g. "fists are ready to paint faces", "skin lingers high above..." and "shyness strangles...". *Where does she choose to use metaphor and personification? What impact do they have on you as a reader?*
- Look back at some of the top tips related to writing included in the collection (For example, Aman Grover on page 20, Bridget Minamore on page 26, Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan on page 75 and Shagufta Iqbal on page 83). Allow the children time to talk about what is suggested in these extracts, how it might relate to the content of Sophia Thakur's poem and the extent to which it resonates with them. *Does the advice encourage them to want to write? How do they feel about that freedom offered by the free verse form versus the supportive structure of other forms of poetry? Do they like the idea of following their own rules? What are the challenges of being honest and vulnerable in their tentative writing? What could they draw on from what is said to inspire them to get going?*
- Consider our experience of the whole collection so far. *What sorts of things have the poets represented within it chosen to write about in their poems?* Draw out some of the common themes such as:
 - Self-identity
 - Duality
 - Making Connections
 - Language and Communication
 - Family and Heritage
 - Protest
- Explain to the children that in the next few sessions, they are going to be writing their own poems on topics or themes that they are interested in. *Where might their inspirations come from? Might they choose to write about some of the same things these poets are exploring?*
- Give time for children to work with their poetry journals, making notes of different ideas for poems or having a go at drafting some ideas on the page, which at this stage might be jotting

down overheard lines of dialogue, or creating mind maps around themes or titles, or listing words and lines that might be useful later.

- Now give time for the children to reflect back on the ideas they've collected and think about which they feel might be most successful to take forward to a draft piece of writing in the next session.
- It is important for you as a teacher of writing to reflect on your own feelings about writing alongside the children and review ideas you have collected in your journal in this section of the sequence. Our [recent research](#) highlights the importance of teachers as writers of poetry.

Session 10: Writing your own poems and gain a response

It is important to develop children as reflective writers by giving ample opportunity throughout the writing process to talk about themselves as writers, enable them to voice their views, listen to others and develop new knowledge and understanding.

Children's writing can be improved if they, a partner or their teacher reads it aloud at an early stage, giving it life and breath and helping the young poet see the patterns and tunes they have created. Just as an author would work with an editor, children should be given opportunities to help each other by reading their writing aloud and responding as readers. This allows them to support each other as they compose and structure their ideas. Writers can tell response partners what they are pleased with in their writing, particular devices or parts of the poem they may be struggling with and gaining a picture from the reader of how their writing impacts on them. Response partners should be encouraged to reflect on the impact of the poem on them as a reader. Children can then re-draft parts of their work, based on these conversations.

- Start by exploring the writing process of poets such as Ruth Awolola and Amina Jama:
 - Ruth Awolola: How do you go about writing your poems? <https://bit.ly/RuthAWrite>
 - Ruth Awolola: How do you work on your poems? <https://bit.ly/RuthAWork>
 - Amina Jama: How do you work on your poems? <https://bit.ly/AminaJWork>
- You can find further videos of poets discussing these questions on the CLPE Poetry page: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetry/videos>
- Discuss what they could learn about writing from different published poets. What advice do they give here that they might find helpful in expanding on some of the ideas and concepts they have in their poetry journals? What might they choose to try themselves?
- Reflect on the ideas that the children have been noting in their poetry journals throughout the unit. *Which ones do they feel strongly enough about to take through to writing?*
- Think about a theme or topic from your own journal that you could explore in a poem. Model writing a poem based on one of the topics discussed during one of the sessions, talking through the choices that you are making as a writer to bring the experience alive for the reader.
- Discuss the form the poem will take. *Will you use any of the poetic devices you have explored in the poetry that you have heard and read during this sequence of work; such as rhyme,*

repetition, alliteration, assonance? You may have children in the class who are very adept at using rhythm and rhyme in their writing; they may, for example write lyrics in their own time. Some may have been switched on to writing by this collection, which might be very different from other poetry texts they have seen in school and presents an open invitation for self-expression. Other writers may prefer the free verse structure used by many poets in this collection and have been drawn to poems intended for performance and may find it easier to express their thoughts and feelings in this way.

- Allow time for children to draft their own poems around the themes and subjects of their choice, then allow them to read these aloud to themselves, perhaps while walking around or moving so they can feel the rhythms of their writing before sharing with a response partner to lift the words off the page, hearing how they sound when performed.
- Give time for response partners to ask the writers questions, discuss parts they aren't sure are working, adjusting rhythms or making suggestions to improve the writing.

Session 11: Editing and Publication of Poems

At the final stage of the writing process, it is important that children are given time to support each other with transcription proof reading, looking at spelling, punctuation and grammar and consider the quality of the writing as a whole, prior to publication.

- Give further time for children to redraft any parts of their poems that they discussed with their response partner in the previous session, or to work on their poems further if they need time to do this.
- When they have a poem that they have read aloud to a partner, discussed and explored changes and have refined the poem to the point at which they are happy to present to a wider audience, start to think together about how that poem could be best presented. *What form will it take? How will it look on the page? How will you use line breaks, spacing on the page to enhance the meaning or emotions behind your poem? Will you hand write it? Will you publish using ICT? Will you make any specific decisions about the way certain words look or are placed on the page?*
- Allow plenty of time and space for the children to make a final draft and then publish their work accordingly. Publish your own work as a teacher writer alongside that of the children. Ensure you obtain each child's consent before publishing their work. This might lead on to wider explorations around the concept of copyright. You may wish to draw on the resources CLPE produced in partnership with the ALCS to explore this in more depth: <https://clpe.org.uk/teaching-resources/ALCS-resources-on-copyright>.
- When they are happy with the way their poem looks on the page, think about how this could lift off the page and be performed to an audience. Give each child a photocopy of their finished poem and allow them to mark this up with performance ideas as they have previously with poems from the collection. *Will you perform on your own? Do you need others to support*

you? How will you use voice, body movements and facial expressions to enhance the listener's engagement and understanding?

- Ensure time is given to try out ideas and rehearse performances of children's own poems.

Session 12: Hosting a poetry festival

Poetry is rooted in word games, wordplay, song and rhythm, and it's particularly important that it should be heard as well as read. Children need opportunities to read poetry aloud, perform, dramatise, join in and hear poets perform their own work. If poetry is not given a voice, if it just stays on the page as a printed object, then it is not going to come alive for most children.

Allow time and space for children to rehearse and polish performances before presenting to an audience. Provide opportunities for children to perform publicly at school events or as part of competitions like CLPE's CLiPPA shadowing scheme.

- Following this, hold a poetry slam event for children to perform their own original compositions to parents or other classes in the school. Most poetry slams are competitions where prizes are awarded to the best poem and the best performer in the festival. You might work with the children to decide whether they would like the event to have a competition element or whether they would prefer to simply structure it as a sharing celebration of their work. If you decide to hold a competitive slam, then The Reading Agency have published a guide to organising the event: https://readingagency.org.uk/children/M4T_running_a_poetry_slam%5B1%5D.pdf
- For the children performing at the event, ask them to consider what they learnt from listening to the poems being read aloud and performed by the poets featured in this collection. *What will they need to consider when performing their own poems?* You might read back through and discuss some of the top tips featured after each poem: *what does it make them realise about the importance of taking time, about breathing, about practice, about making sure that you connect emotionally to the poem and communicate that emotion to the audience?*
- Watch a video of spoken word artist Steven Camden performing on stage at an event: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTAsDue9buY> Discuss what they thought about this performance. *What does he do to engage the audience and bring them into this moment with him? How does the staging support the focus on words?* Use this to find out about children's own feelings about performance. *Would they like to perform to an audience in this way? Why or why not?* Some children might be keen to perform, others may not want to, so could work on illustrating their poems for display at the event, making a programme for the event, filming or photographing performances to write up for the school newsletter or website or being responsible for gathering props others might need. Some children might not want to perform their own work live but might be comfortable to record a poem to camera to share at the event, publish their poem in writing to include in the programme or compère the event, introducing others who want to perform. Negotiate roles so that all children feel comfortably involved with the event.

- It would be wonderful if teachers and other adults who have worked alongside the pupils as part of the sequence also felt confident to perform some of their own poetry as models of writing at the event. With appropriate permissions you could share video performances or written examples of pupils' and teachers' poems with us by emailing these to: poetry@clpe.org.uk.

Reflection on the collection as a whole

After listening to poetry, children may want to write their own poems. These, too, can be recorded with music or sound-effects, and kept together with a class anthology in the listening corner. Alternatively, individual collections of poems can be built up by each child and presented both in book form and performed or recorded; collections of this kind can show the range of subjects and forms explored.

- Revisit the poems that have been explored throughout the sequence. To draw together all the work done in this unit, hold a discussion about the collection as a whole. *Did you engage with this style of writing? What are your most memorable poems? Which spoke to you the most? Why? What have you learnt about poetry that you didn't know before? Would you be encouraged to read more poetry after studying this collection? Why? Why not?*
- Now focus on the poems that students have written. How did you feel about writing poetry before looking at this text? How do you feel about it now? If your feelings changed, why was this? What kinds of poems were your favourite to write? What did you find it easiest to write about?
- Display the children's own poems prominently in the classroom, library or in a shared area in the school so they can be read by a wider audience, with some of their favourite poems from this collection and others that have inspired their own work.