



National
Literacy
Trust

Change your story

Young Bristol Poets

Early Years Resource
National Writing Day

‘To the Countryside’

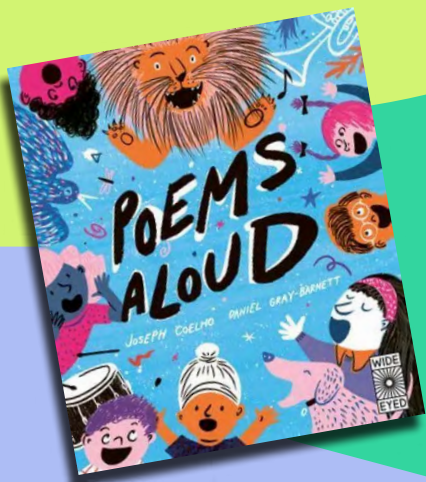
Poems Aloud: An anthology of poems to read aloud

Young Bristol Poets

Delivered by the National Literacy Trust in partnership with Bristol City Council, Young Bristol Poets is a city-wide programme that uses poetry, performance and cultural experiences to inspire children's writing and creativity.

We are inviting all Bristol schools (EYFS–KS3) to take part in **Young Bristol Poets**, launching on **National Writing Day (24 June 2026)** and continuing throughout the **Autumn term**.

This exciting city-wide writing campaign gives Bristol's young people the opportunity to create and share poems inspired by their city, exploring themes of home, identity and belonging. During the Autumn term, schools will receive a comprehensive **poetry resource pack** for EYFS, KS1, KS2 and KS3 teachers, designed to inspire creative writing.



To the Countryside by Joseph Coelho
is from *Poems Aloud: An anthology of
poems to read out loud*
by Joseph Coelho and Daniel
Gray-Barnett
(published by Wide Eyed Editions)

We have created a selection of activities to support children to build their connection to their local area and the city of Bristol, whilst also exploring poetry.

Please use the activity ideas below as a guide. You know your children best so select the activities that are most appropriate for their age and stage of development and the group size you are working with; or use these ideas as inspiration to develop your own plans. With a little adaptation, this approach to exploring poetry could be applied to other poems.

Primarily, it is important to respond to children's reactions, thoughts and ideas about the poem. You may find the children's observations take your activities in a different but just as productive direction.

The aim of this resource is for children to:

- develop their knowledge of, and connection to their local environment.
- become familiar with and enjoy a new poem.
- develop listening and observational skills.
- engage in conversation and express their feelings.
- develop new vocabulary.
- explore and notice differences in sights and sounds.

Curriculum links:

These activities link to the EYFS curriculum in the areas of personal, social and emotional development, communication and language, literacy, understanding the world and expressive art and design.

Resources

- Poetry book – *Poems Aloud* by Joseph Coelho
- [youtube.com/watch?v=ixCdHgzb9HY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixCdHgzb9HY) (0:00– 0.35 & 1.20 – 2.55)
- Images of the local area, landmarks in Bristol City and the surrounding countryside (please enhance the selection provided with additional local images)
- Large paper and drawing/mark-making materials
- Outside space
- Audio recordings of sounds of the city /sounds of the countryside



Introduce the poem & the poet

Share the poem *To the Countryside* by Joseph Coelho with the children.

After reading the poem, gather responses from them. Ask questions, such as: *What did you think/like about the poem? How did it make you feel? Did it make you want to do anything? Is there anything you didn't like?*

To begin with, children may find it difficult to share their thoughts and you may need to model answers for them, or suggest options, such as: *Did it make you feel calm and still or did it make you want to move or make a sound? Show me how it made you want to move.*

Read the poem again and ask the children if they notice anything new.

Introduce the word, poet and explain that Joseph Coelho wrote all the poems in the *Poems Aloud* anthology.

Watch Joseph Coelho reading [To the Countryside. Poems Aloud with Joseph Coelho - YouTube.](#)

Give children the opportunity to talk about the reading. *Did you like it? What was different about it?*

Ask the children if they can recall Joseph Coelho's explanation of the performance technique used for this poem (*diminuendo* - a decrease in loudness)? Invite the children to practice making their voice quieter, as you repeat sounds from the poem together:



Beep, beep, beep.



Hush, hush, hush.

You could also explore the opposite of *diminuendo* together, *crescendo* (a gradual increase in volume), before having a go at reading the poem as Joseph Coelho intended.

Explore 'the city' and 'the countryside'

Re-read the poem. Remind the children of some of the elements they noticed about the poem, and how they told you it made them feel.

Draw attention to the words city and countryside. Ask the children questions to prompt discussion, find out what they already know and to extend their understanding of the differences between the city and countryside:

Can you tell me about what a city is?
Can you tell me about the countryside?
What sort of place do you think we live?
Is it more like a city or the countryside?
Have you ever been to a city?
Find out if the children have ever visited Bristol City Centre and what they can tell you about it.
Have you ever been to the countryside?
What did you like/not like about it?



After all children have had chance to share, explain some of the differences between the city and countryside, and address any misconceptions. Talk to the children about Bristol, and where they live and what it is called (town, suburb, city, village etc).

Share pictures of objects and places that you might find in the city (including images of Bristol) or countryside and ask them to help you sort them into groups.

Re-read the poem again. Encourage the children to join in with some of the repeated sounds now they are familiar with the poem.



Notice the sights of Bristol

Re-read the poem. Help the children to recall what they learnt about the city and countryside in the previous session.

Draw attention to the poem's illustrations. Find out if they know what the person who draws pictures for a book is called, show them Daniel Gray-Barnett's name on the front cover, and explain that he is the illustrator who drew pictures for all the poems in the *Poems Aloud* anthology.

Encourage the children to talk about what they see, and to notice the differences on each half of the illustrations. If needed, support the children by asking, for example; *Where can you see elements of nature or things growing? Where do you notice more vehicles and buildings? Is there a difference in the colours used in the illustrations? Why do you think that might be?*

Review the images of Bristol, your local area and the countryside; and discuss what kinds of things you are more likely to see in a city or in the countryside. Create a simple list of things you would see more of in the city, and things you would see more of in the countryside. You could choose to add simple drawings to each item to support with the next activity.

Image credit: Neil Phillips



Invite the children to create their own illustrations about Bristol and the countryside. You could do this on a large scale, inviting children to work collaboratively on a large illustration, based on Daniel Gray-Barnett's, with a pathway travelling across the two pages.

Ensure all children have an opportunity to contribute, using their own knowledge of Bristol to support their drawings where appropriate. For example, they may choose to draw the harbour, Cabot Circus shopping centre or Bristol Temple Meads train station. If possible, provide adult support. The conversations that take place as the children draw will build on their understanding and enable misconceptions to be addressed.

Gather together to discuss the elements included in the final illustration. Display it for all to see.



Listen to the sounds of Bristol

Re-read the poem. Help the children to recall what they learnt about the city and countryside in the previous sessions using the pictures and illustrations to support.

Remind the children that in the poem it talks about sounds “*roaring in our ears*” and “*mumbling*” and “*hushing in our ears*”. Explain that you are going to go outside/on a walk to spot any sounds from the poem, or any different sounds that might “*roar, or mumble, or hush in your ears*”.

If possible, choose both a noisy and a quiet/natural location, either in or close to your setting. This activity could be completed as two separate sessions, as different times of day may affect the noises you can hear. Alternatively, use an audio/video recording to provide a contrast with the types of sounds accessible in or near your setting.



When you arrive at your first location, sit down and encourage the children to close their eyes and listen. Ask the children if they can hear any sounds *“Roaring in their ears? Mumbling in their ears?”* etc.

Repeat at the second location and ask the children if they notice any differences in the types of sounds they can hear.

When you return to the classroom, or later in the day, work together to make a list of the sounds you heard. Add verbs to describe how you heard them, for example, *“The banging on a building site, BANG, BANG, BANG jolts in our ears”* or *“The leaves in a tree, rustle, rustle, rustle, whisper in our ears”*. There is no need to write full verses for each sound. Adapt it to the children you are working with.

Children may need support with identifying possible verbs to match the sounds they heard. Offer choices such as *“Do you think the leaves whispered in your ear or crumpled in your ear?”*

Read the completed sound list back to the children. You could choose to add them to the children’s illustration, to create your own poem.



What next?



- Use the experiences from the activities above to further refine and develop your own poem about Bristol, inspired by Joseph Coelho's.
- Use real images of Bristol, the local area and the surrounding countryside to create a collage illustration, including images of real places, vehicles and animals.
- Build on your exploration of the sights and sounds of Bristol by using other senses; when children have visited Bristol City Centre, or the countryside ask them: *Did you notice any smells or textures? What might it feel like to touch the city or the countryside? How might it taste?*
- Explore diminuendo further, maybe by using musical instruments to represent sounds in the original poem or their own.
- Focus on the illustration and journey aspect of the poem. Children could make maps or small world scenes to represent Joseph Coelho's poem, or their own local area.
- Use small world, construction and creative areas to enable children to explore the contrasts in the poem and Bristol, through drawing, making, arranging, constructing and playing. Provide prompts such as images, sounds and books, alongside resources to encourage 'city' and countryside' construction and play.
- Explore other poems in the Poems Aloud anthology.

Whatever you decide, do give some thought as to how you can introduce the children to more poetry, and incorporate it into your daily routines and planning.

National Literacy Trust

Change your story

In partnership with



Mshed



About the National Literacy Trust

Literacy changes everything. It opens the door to the life you want. It's the key to knowledge, confidence and inspiration. It's better results at school, and better jobs. If you grow up without the tools to communicate, without books to read or opportunities to write, it's harder to get where you want to go.

We're a charity helping people overcome these challenges and change their life chances through the power of words – reading, writing, speaking and listening. From first words, through school days to training, jobs and beyond.

Together, we're helping people change their stories.

literacytrust.org.uk

f /nationalliteracytrust

X @Literacy_Trust

@Literacy_Trust

✉ Sign up to our newsletter: literacytrust.org.uk/newsletter