



## EXPLORING 'BLUEBERRIES', BY JÉRÔME LUC MARTIN

*Resource written by Rachel Piercey*

### Getting to know the poem

Ask your pupils to sit with their eyes closed and read the poem out loud to them. After you have finished, ask them what they thought and which parts stuck in their minds. There are no wrong answers! Display the poem or hand out individual copies and read it again.

What do they think of the poet's use of "you"? Who do they think the speaker is talking to?

What do they think of the poem's message? Do they agree that it's important to "start small"?

### Blue whales and blueberries

What do the children know about blue whales? Did they know that they are the largest animal on the planet? Their tongues can weigh as much as an elephant and their hearts can weigh as much as a car! They are also one of the loudest animals on the planet and scientists believe that they can hear each other from up to 1,000 miles away.

What do they think of the line, "Blue whales begin as blueberries"? It's obviously not scientifically true that blue whales begin life as blueberries! But poets like to use surprising language and imagery to make us think deeply about the nature of things.

Ask your class, what do they feel when they picture a blueberry bobbing around in the ocean – does it seem magical, defenceless, strange, silly, brave, funny? How might the blueberry feel? Why do they think Jérôme has chosen this image?

### Form

This poem is a triolet. "Triolet" is an old French word meaning "clover leaf" – discuss with the children what they think the connection might be between a three-leaved clover and the poem?

(The name refers to the fact that the first line appears three times in the poem.)



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## Form continued...

A triolet follows these rules: the first line is repeated in line 4 and line 7. The second line is repeated in the final line. And all the rhymes follow the first end word (here it is “all”) except for line 6, which rhymes with line 2 (“berries”).

Discuss with the children why they think poets like to write following the rules of a particular form. Have they ever written a formal poem? They’ve likely written an acrostic before, or a rhyming poem – what was it like?

Do they think that if you choose to use these forms, you must always follow the rules? Plenty of poets like to bend them – that can be part of the fun! Jérôme, here, has slightly changed the first line when he repeats it. He has also used a slant rhyme in line 6, rhyming “berries” with “flurries”.

A poet's viewpoint: "I love slant rhyme because it is not as obvious as a full rhyme, it's more of an echo. It also gives me more freedom and flexibility in choosing rhyming words." – Rachel

## Individual writing

Having got to know the poem, invite the children to write their own poems, inspired by ‘Blueberries’. Take the pressure of writing a triolet off the table (unless they are keen for the challenge) and explain that rhyming is optional. But do encourage them to use repetition of whole lines. They could use Jérôme’s first line to get started.

What other things can they think of which start small and end up bigger? They don’t have to stick with imagery from the natural world – they could think about school, home and hobbies as well.

Encourage them to redraft, scribble out and change things – poets almost never get their poem right first time and their notebooks tend to be very messy! When they’re ready to write it up neatly, you may like to use the print-out template below. What will they choose as their title?

Explain to them that if you have written a poem inspired by someone else, it’s important to acknowledge them – and the easiest way to do this is with a short line underneath the title (see below).

We would love to see what your pupils come up with! Tag us on Twitter @tygertygermag with a picture, or email us on tygertygermagazine@gmail.com for some personalised feedback.



