



EXPLORING 'CATCHING A YAWN / A WAVE', BY HILARY ELDER

Resource written by Rachel Piercey

Getting to know the poem

Ask the children to sit with their eyes closed and read both poems 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 poems or hand out individual copies and read them again.

Did they yawn when they heard 'Catching a Yawn'? For many people, yawning is contagious!

Ask the class, does 'Catching a Yawn' take longer to read than it does to yawn? Hilary has really slowed down and focused closely on a small, everyday action – which is what they'll be doing later, when they start to write. It's something that poets often like to do: to look closely at small, seemingly insignificant things.

What do they notice when the poems are placed side-by-side? Do the lines of the two poems seem connected? Pick out together some words, phrases and ideas which are mirrored between the two poems.

Interesting verbs

Poets love interesting language – they collect words like treasure!

These poems are full of vivid verbs that help us picture the actions of the yawn and the wave. Go through the poem together and pick out some of the ones you find most striking.

Patterns of three

Poets often like to use the number three. There's something very satisfying about using three of something in a poem to create a small pattern.

Hilary has used some patterns of three in 'Catching a Yawn'. Look at the poem with the children and see if they can find some, for example: three types of sports balls ("ping pong", "cricket ball", "football"), three repeated words ("in, in, in") and three versions of a word ("wide, wider, widest").

The 'rule of three' is used everywhere – look out for it in other poems and stories, as well as adverts, articles and speeches!



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Personification

'Catching a Wave' uses several instances of personification. Go through the poem with the children and pick out instances where the wave is described with human characteristics, for example: "catching the bottom of the sky", "it holds on, on tippy-toes", "the wave lets go", "murmuring to itself", "smiling gently", "who it was". What kind of personality does the wave seem to have?

Performing the poem

These poems are very suitable for dramatic performance! Divide the class into ten groups and give them each a stanza of the poems. Discuss as a class, how will you perform this pair of poems? One poem after the other, or one line from 'Catching a Yawn' followed by one line from 'Catching a Wave'?

Once you've decided this, let the groups work together to rehearse a performance of their stanza. They should think about the following choices:

- Will their group read all together or one by one?
- Will they use actions?
- How fast or slow will they read the lines?
- How will they use volume and expression?

Individual writing

Having got to know the poem, invite the children to write their own poems, inspired by 'Catching a Yawn'. Ask the children to think of something they do quickly and easily, on instinct, for example: blink, smile, frown, laugh, sing, shout, jump, cartwheel, dance, shoot a goal, run, or stretch.

Once they've decided on their action, write a poem describing each stage of it, in slow detail – from the very beginning to the very end. Encourage them to use vivid and interesting verbs in their poem, like Hilary does, to help the reader understand this physical experience, and some patterns of three. Their poem doesn't need to be as long as 'Catching a Yawn'.

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.



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after 'Catching a Yawn' by Hilary Elder

by

