



## EXPLORING 'A DREAMY AFTERNOON ON THE COMMON' BY RHIANNON OLIVER

Key topics: Clouds · Imagination · Rhyme · Individual writing

*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. What do they think it is about? Ask them which images they particularly liked and why.

Display the poem (see below) or hand out individual copies and read it again. Rhiannon never says the word "clouds", but the subject becomes clear as we read the poem. What clues does she give?

Does Rhiannon give exactly the same amount of attention to each imaginative image, or does she linger for longer on some of them, creating variety?

Who do they think the 'you' might be at the end of the poem? Why do they think Rhiannon chose this image to end on? There are no wrong answers!

### Rhyme and part-rhyme

The poem doesn't have a set pattern, but it does make extensive use of rhyme and part-rhyme. Go through it together, picking out words that rhyme or nearly rhyme. Look at the middle as well as at the ends of the lines.

### Becoming cloud-gazers

Explain to your pupils that they are going to gather material for their own cloud poems, inspired by 'A Dreamy Afternoon on the Common'. Over three days or so, devote a few minutes each morning or afternoon to quiet cloud-gazing and daydreaming, either going outside together or looking out of the windows (making sure not to look towards the sun!).

They may see distinctive fluffy clouds, like in the poem, or dense cloud cover, or barely any clouds at all. Whatever the weather, ask your pupils to jot down what the shapes, colours and textures make them think of.

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## Cross-curricular clouds

If you would like to bring in some science, these websites may be useful. They look at how clouds form and different types of clouds:

<https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/cloud/352973>

<https://climatekids.nasa.gov/cloud-formation/>

<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/learn-about/weather/types-of-weather/clouds/cloud-names-classifications>

You could also ask pupils to paint or draw a cloud or cloudscape. They could swap pictures with a partner – what shapes do they see in each other's clouds?

## Getting ready to write

Pupils will now have a bank of words and images from their cloud-gazing. Ask them to underline their favourites to use in their poem. Could they add some more descriptive words? Is there a good place to include some repetition, as Rhiannon does when she says: "A woman dancing free, arms reaching, reaching"?

## Individual writing

Invite the children to write their own poems, inspired by 'A Dreamy Afternoon on the Common'. Remind them of how Rhiannon creates variety when describing her cloud shapes, and how she uses rhyme freely, rather than sticking to a strict pattern.

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 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 'A Dreamy Afternoon on the Common' by Rhiannon Oliver*

by .....





## A Dreamy Afternoon on the Common

by Rhiannon Oliver

They shift above:

The face of a man with a beard as long  
As his wait for love,  
A woman dancing free, arms reaching, reaching,  
A lost dolphin leaping,  
A giant frog, complete with bunny's tail,  
Half a whale,  
Another face – wide eyes staring, wild hair flaring,  
A planet losing its rings, a stairway to nowhere,  
A deckchair?

A mushroom stretches to becomes a tree, then fades into nothing  
As branches break free.

The sun lights a white fire in an oversized frying pan  
And the man, still waiting, loses his beard  
As it drifts from view, and he is cut  
In two by the airplanes  
Streaking the sky.

Birds fly past a blurry new head, gently spreading  
Into the blue.  
You,  
Is that you?

