



Write a poem about punctuation

Inspired by the poem 'New Beginnings' by Emma Phillips.

Resource written by Rachel Piercey.

Getting started

Start by displaying a full stop on the board or screen, without any comment or context. Ask your class what they think it could be. A speck of glitter? A minim note for a fairy orchestra? The Earth seen from Jupiter?

Encourage them to get more and more imaginative with their ideas. Be inspired by the "Yes, and" principle of improvised comedy: "Yes, and it could also be...."

Getting to know the poem

Explain that you are going to read a poem about a full stop, where the writer uses her imagination just like they have been doing. Display the poem 'New Beginnings' by Emma Phillips (see below) and read it aloud. Which lines stuck in their heads? Does it make them think about full stops in a new way?

Divide the class into four groups and give them each a verse to perform. They can choose whether to divide up the lines or read them all together. Just ask them to read slowly and clearly and to bring out the magic of the imagery.

Which was their favourite image and why? There are no wrong answers!

Alliteration and internal rhyme

Emma's poem doesn't rhyme, but she uses alliteration and internal rhyme to make it sound good. Go through the poem spotting instances of these techniques, for example: dotty / spot, stops / spots, entrances / eggs, droppings / dwarf / dragons, made / wavy / shape, seas / sentence / stepping stones, ellipses / galaxies / pixie, mythic / maps, pixie / pathways.

Continued overleaf

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Class writing

Write a list of punctuation marks on the board, for example: comma, dash, question mark, exclamation mark, speech marks, brackets.

Choose one together and discuss what it does in a sentence. Emma's poem opens by looking at full stops in a new way. They're not an ending, they're a new beginning! How could you look at the function of your punctuation mark in a new way? For example, a comma might be a launchpad into the next part of the sentence, rather than a pause. Brackets might release a thought rather than enclosing it. Exclamation marks might be seriously important. Tiny speech marks might be loud trumpets announcing the arrival of conversation. A dash could be a handshake between clauses. Write down your ideas.

Now think about what your punctuation mark *looks* like, encouraging your class to be as wildly creative as they were before. Write down these ideas, too.

When you have enough ideas, order them into a poem. You might like to begin with the line "[Your class name] once told me that..."

Which image will you choose to start with? Which image will make an impactful ending? Can you include some alliteration and internal rhyme?

Individual writing

Invite your pupils to write their own punctuation poem, inspired by Emma's 'New Beginnings'. Encourage them to be creative and to redraft, scribble out and change things – poets almost never get their poems 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 X @tygertygermag with a picture or email us on tygertygermagazine@gmail.com for some personalised feedback.



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Inspired by the poem 'New Beginnings' by Emma Phillips

by





New Beginnings

A girl once told me that full stops
are new beginnings.

Some said she was dotty when she claimed
full stops were spots from story-book leopards,
entrances to fairy wells
or the unhatched eggs of miniscule birds.

She called full stops her thought tunnels,
the shape an elf mouth makes in wonder,
said they were not endings
but the droppings of dwarf dragons.

She loved the patterns they made,
their wavy lines across the page
the shape of uncharted seas,
not a sentence end
but stepping stones for her imagination.

And ellipses? They are galaxies,
or lines on mythic maps, she said,
a tear in the universe; tiny pixie pathways.

Emma Phillips

