

## Everything All at Once by Steven Camden (Macmillan)

The masterful way in which Steven Camden weaves words to capture the spirit of secondary school life is what makes this a very special collection. He captures the humour, heart and soul of school cloakrooms, corridors and classrooms with such authenticity that it transports older readers straight back into the space and no doubt serves as a mirror for younger readers. A book that's great to share with readers in the first years of secondary school and could be suitable as a transition text in Year 6.

### Overall aims of this sequence:

- To explore and understand the importance of poetry as a genre
- To explore musicality, rhythm and rhyme in poetry
- To know how to listen and respond to a wide range of poems from a single poet collection
- To understand that poems are written for different reasons
- To explore how poetry is presented on the page to enhance our understanding
- To interpret poems for performance
- To gain and maintain the interest of the listener through effective performance of poems
- To recognise how a poet uses poetry as a voice to express their own feelings and views
- To develop the skills of reader response through the use of book talk, close reading and critical reflective study of a selection of poems.
- To draft, compose and write poems based on personal interests, experiences and emotions or fantasy poems using language and form with intent for effect on the reader

**This teaching sequence is designed for Year 7 and 8 but could be used as a text to support transition to secondary school in Year 6.**

**Primary teachers will need to read the text fully themselves and use their professional judgement about whether the themes and incidents in the text are appropriate for their specific children.**

### Overview of this Teaching Sequence:

This collection is perfectly written for children in KS3, as the poems explored are a collection of observations of moments, characters and incidents across a day in a secondary school.

Many of the poems are written from a first person perspective allowing us to be right inside the moments and emotions of the characters explored during this time. The novel deals with a number of themes directed at older children including exploring self-identity, gossip and rumour spreading, dealing with feelings of attraction and relationships and preparing for careers and the future which provide fruitful links to PSHE, SRE and Careers Programmes.

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This sequence provides the opportunity to reflect critically upon and respond to the ways in which language is used to express, convey, represent, symbolise and signify pertinent points, themes and messages. Reader response and group discussion prior to personal reflection on poems explored form an integral part of a number of the sessions detailed in this sequence.

### Teaching Approaches:

- Watching a poet perform
- Using music and movement to explore rhythm and lyricism in poetry
- Reading aloud
- Looking at Language
- Re-reading
- Book talk reflections
- Learning about writing from published poets
- Free writing of poetry

### Outcomes:

- Performances of the poet's poetry
- Rhythmic movement
- Identification of poetic language and devices
- Evaluation of performances
- Poetry Journal with ideas and inspirations for writing
- Text Analysis
- Response to provocation questions
- Character study
- Own poems related to themes introduced in the collection

### Exploring poetic forms and devices:

**This narrative collection gives an opportunity to explore the following poetic devices:**

- Rhythm
- Rhyme
- Half rhyme
- Assonance
- Alliteration
- Metaphor
- Simile

As well as being able to explore how poetry works on the page through word and line breaks and contrasting lengths of poems to carry and deepen the narrative.

### Cross Curricular Links:

#### PSHE:

- The conversation poems used in Session 4 could open up a wider discussion as part of learning in PSHE around the impact of gossip and rumour spreading, both when this happens in talk like in these conversations, or via text, chat apps or on social media. You may wish to explore further how David and Lisa might feel if they knew these conversations were happening and the impact

that the conversations could have on others' perceptions of them. What can we tell about what they think from the fourth poem? How do you think they feel about the fact they know 'people are talking'? You could go further to link this to the spread of fake news – looking at the fact that neither of the two in the first conversation were there and in the third conversation, both people were there but saw nothing happening.

### **Sex and Relationships Education:**

- Some of the poems also deal with feelings of attraction between pupils which many children may be experiencing directly and could link with sex and relationships education allowing the children to discuss issues that are real and pertinent to them with the distance of viewing and discussing these in relation to characters presented in the text. This distance will allow children to look at situations more reflectively allowing them to make judgements about how to deal with feelings appropriately and respectfully.

### **Careers Advice:**

- The poem Dear Mum, BTEC explores the difference between vocational and academic routes of study. The poem could be used to introduce the advantages of a vocational route for students who want to move forward into specific careers and help dispel any thoughts that may be prevalent in the children that this is a 'lesser' experience.

### **Music:**

- The second session of the sequence focusses on the importance of rhythm and lyrics. This work could be extended into music sessions, allowing pupils the opportunity to create their own rhythms using instruments and digital software and experiment with writing and setting lyrics to music. They will be able to explore syllabic beat and look at how this fits within the rhythms they have created and adjust lyrics accordingly where syllable beats are too many or too few. They could also investigate more fully the genre of hip-hop, its musical influences and the music and artists it has gone on to influence.

### **French:**

- The study of the poem Double Agent in Session 6 will allow pupils to use and apply their knowledge and understanding of French to translate the first verse of the poem and work out the relationship between the first and second verses. Children could use this poem in French to write short verses about themselves in French and display these in the Languages Classrooms.

### **Links to other texts and resources:**

This is Steven Camden's debut collection of children's poetry, published by Macmillan.

#### Novels by Steven Camden:

- *Tape* (HarperCollins)
- *It's About Love* (HarperCollins)
- *Nobody Real* (HarperCollins)

#### Other collections that contain poems with a strong focus on rhythmic language:

- John Agard: *Goldilocks on CCTV* (Frances Lincoln)
- John Agard: *The Young Inferno* (Frances Lincoln)
- John Agard: *The Rainmaker Danced* (Hodder)
- John Agard and Grace Nichols (eds): *A Caribbean Dozen* (Walker)
- John Agard and Grace Nichols (eds): *Under the Moon & Over the Sea* (Walker)
- Karl Nova: *Rhythm and Poetry* (Caboodle Books)
- Grace Nichols: *Cosmic Disco* (Frances Lincoln)
- Benjamin Zephaniah: *Talking Turkeys* (Puffin)
- Benjamin Zephaniah: *Funky Chickens* (Puffin)
- John Lyons: *Dancing in the Rain* (Peepal Tree Press)
- Valerie Bloom: *Hot Like Fire* (Bloomsbury)

#### Weblinks:

- CLPE's Poetryline website contains a wealth of resources including videos of Steven Camden and other poets performing their poems and talking about their writing process, which will inspire children in their own performances and writing. These can be found at:

- <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poets>

and

- <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poet-interviews>
- The Poetryline website also contains resources to support subject knowledge around poetic forms and devices: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poetic-forms-and-devices>
- For your own subject knowledge, you may wish to explore the resources and research articles on HipHopEd; an organisation that brings together a community of educators and scholars who challenge traditional educational systems to value the power of youth culture and voice and authenticate Steven Camden's idea that '*lyrics and song are poetry as much as anything else*'. Specific resources from their website are referenced in the sequence and their website can be found at: <http://hiphoped.com/>

## Teaching Sessions:

### Session 1: Introducing the poet and the collection

***The experience of being read to is likely to be the real foundation of children’s knowledge of poetry, and is also going to be a major influence on how they write themselves. So it is important that it should be as rich, interesting and ‘ear-catching’ as it can be. It is important that voices other than the teacher’s should be heard interpreting a poem. In this way, a range of accents, dialects and voices can be introduced into the reading. It can be particularly valuable for children to hear the poets themselves reading their own poems. This allows authentic voices to be heard.***

- Before this session, ensure that individual poetry journals (small notebooks, which could be handmade) are available for each child to use throughout the unit to note ideas and inspirations.
- Watch Steven Camden read aloud *Prologue*: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poets/camden-steven>. Ask pupils what kind of writing they think this is and how they know this.
- Discuss the fact that this is the first poem from a collection by poet and spoken word artist Steven Camden who they saw perform in the clip. If you are working with pupils in KS3, they may be aware of his novels *Tape*, *It’s About Love* and *Nobody Real*. (HarperCollins) *Does this fit their perception of what poetry is? Why or why not? What do they think of when the word poetry is mentioned? How do they feel about poetry? Which poets or poems do they know and like? Do they like reading poetry? Performing poetry? Do any of the pupils write their own poetry?* Take note of the children’s responses and perceptions to come back to throughout the sequence. Also note down any poets and poems mentioned and ask children to bring in books or copies of their favourite poems. You can help children to source poems and collections in school, using your school or local library if you have one, if they don’t have copies of these themselves. If you have space in the classroom set up a display area to display this collection, Steven Camden’s novels and any poems, collections and photographs of poets mentioned by the pupils. You can also provide a space here for pupils to share their own writing as the sequence progresses if they wish to.
- Now give out a copy of the poem on the page. Read aloud to the class then allow pupils to re-read themselves in pairs or small groups. Give time for the children to share their initial responses to the text. *What do you like about the poem? How does the poem make you feel? What makes you feel like this? What do you think the poem is about? How do you relate to the poem personally?*
- Allow time and space for them to read and respond to the text, text marking with their thoughts, feelings, questions and ideas about the piece in mixed pairs or small groups to share ideas and interpretations. At this point, allow the pupils to reflect as a reader, without telling them to look specifically for poetic techniques or devices, although it is fine if they do this naturally.
- Come back to discuss the title of the poem - *Prologue*. *What do the pupils know about this word? Why do think this might have been chosen as the title for this poem? Look at where the poem is placed in the book – what might they expect from the rest of this collection? What do you think the themes or style of the poems might be?*
- Watch the *What inspires you as a poet?* video sharing Steven Camden talking about his ideas and inspirations for the collection: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/interviews/camden-steven>. Think

about how he describes his poems as moments and opportunities to be able to put yourself in somebody else's shoes. Now read the blurb from the back of the book:

*It's about fitting in, finding friends and falling out, loving lessons, losing it, worrying, wearing it well and worshipping from afar.*

*Do the children relate to these themes and subjects? Is it what they would expect to find in a poetry collection?*

- Now give time for the children to think about the amount of moments that might happen and characters that could be found in a secondary school that could inspire poems in the collection. Create a concept map or other visual organiser to help them explore people, places and themes that could inspire a poem in a secondary school context. Then come back to the map you've created and think about which aspects would most interest you to read.
- Give time and space for the children to think about moments and events in their lives that they might like to write about and make a note of these in their poetry journals. Some may even start drafting their own poems immediately.

## Session 2: Exploring rhythm and musicality

***Music and poetry have always gone together. The earliest poems are likely to have been sung and chanted, and many of the elements that make poems hang together – rhyme, meter, alliteration, repetition and refrain – are musical in character.***

- For this session, you will need to be in a large space where the children can move freely and you have access to music. Start the session by watching Steven Camden talk about the importance of music, lyrics and rhythm on him as a writer of poetry in the video *What poems do you remember from your childhood?*: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/interviews/camden-steven>
- Think about what he says about movement and finding emotion in music. *How might moving with rhythm be seen as poetic?*
- Allow the children to listen to the song Steven references in the clip, *Grandma's Hands* by Bill Withers: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdrChyGb574> and encourage the children to feel the rhythm and the natural pulse in the music. They may just start with nodding their head, tapping their hand on their leg or tapping their foot on the ground. Part way through, encourage them to move more, walking or incorporating movements to express the rhythm of the music and lyricism of the words. Encourage the children to use more of their bodies, hands, arms to move rhythmically to the music in any way they feel. Afterwards talk about the emotions and feelings that the music evoked within them.
- Switch to some of the hip-hop that Steven says '*hit me in the face and in the heart*' at about the age of 10 or 11. The following examples would all be suitable for children of this age; however, lots of other examples of work by these and other artists will need to be vetted before sharing

more widely with pupils for suitability of language and appropriateness of imagery in their lyrics and music videos. This should be shared and discussed with the pupils:

- Bahamadia: *WordPlay*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oy4ERqGXIW0>
  - A Tribe Called Quest: *Can I Kick It?*: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7D\\_JwgIM-y4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7D_JwgIM-y4)
  - De La Soul: *Action*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QF24oQIU5DI>
  - Moni Love: *It's a Shame*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iz4UDt4nOp0>
  - Queen Latifah and Moni Love: *Ladies First*:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=srtJtLzoeo4>
- Switch the songs back and forth, exploring different ways of moving rhythmically. Talk to the children as the music is changed about how and why they think the different music changes their feelings and movements
  - Talk to the children about the kinds of music they like and listen to regularly outside of school; including particular favourite styles, artists or songs. *Why do they like this kind of music? What feelings does it evoke or what ideas does it inspire in them? Do any of them write lyrics of their own? Do they consider these to be a form of poetry? Why or why not?*
  - Now look, as Steven suggests, at the lyrics to *Grandma's Hands* by Bill Withers. Play the song again and allow the children to read along with the lyrics:

*Grandma's hands*  
*Clapped in church on Sunday morning*  
*Grandma's hands*  
*Played a tambourine so well*  
*Grandma's hands*  
*Used to issue out a warning*  
*She'd say, "Billy don't you run so fast*  
*Might fall on a piece of glass*  
*"Might be snakes there in that grass"*  
*Grandma's hands*

*Grandma's hands*  
*Soothed a local unwed mother*  
*Grandma's hands*  
*Used to ache sometimes and swell*  
*Grandma's hands*  
*Used to lift her face and tell her,*  
*She'd say "Baby, Grandma understands*  
*That you really love that man*  
*Put yourself in Jesus hands"*  
*Grandma's hands*

*Grandma's hands  
Used to hand me piece of candy  
Grandma's hands  
Picked me up each time I fell  
Grandma's hands  
Boy, they really came in handy  
She'd say, "Matty don' you whip that boy  
What you want to spank him for?  
He didn't drop no apple core"  
But I don't have Grandma anymore  
If I get to heaven I'll look for  
Grandma's hands*

- Come back together to share initial thoughts about these lyrics; What do you like about the song? How does it make you feel? What makes you feel like this? What do you think the lyrics are about? How do you relate to the lyrics personally?
- Now, allow the children time and space to work in pairs or small groups, speaking the lyrics like they were performing them as a poem, rather than a song. They could listen to one person perform, with the rest of the group listening and responding or break the lyrics into parts and share the speaking of the lines. Allow the children to work up a performance of these lyrics, spoken as a poem rather than sung and allow time for groups to share their different interpretations with the rest of the class. What was similar in their performances? What did different groups do differently? What impact did the different performances have on you as a listener?
- Come back together to talk to pupils about their responses to the lyrics; How do the lyrics sound different when spoken to when you heard them performed by Bill Withers as a song? Did it make you react or respond differently when the lyrics were spoken, rather than sung? Do you think this is an example of poetry? Do you think everyone would see this as poetry? Why or why not? By this point, if they haven't already as they prepared to speak and practised the words, you could start to look at the lyrics in more depth, picking out the rhythm contained within the words and lines, or finding examples of rhyme and half rhyme, e.g. fast, glass, grass or assonance, e.g. hands, handy, spank, apple or noticing the repetition of the line Grandma's hands.
- Now look at the poem First Day (p.4-5). Read this aloud for the pupils to hear. Discuss their initial reactions to the poem; what did it make you think about? How did it make you feel? Also, discuss their personal connections with the poem; what can they remember about their first day at secondary school? Did they feel similar to or different from the voice in this poem? Were there certain lines or feelings they could relate to?
- Give the pupils copies of the poem, individually or in mixed pairs or small groups if this works to boost pupils' confidence and give them time and space to work out how they will perform the poem, exploring the rhythm and lyricism of the words. Allow them to read and re-read and to



move around as they perform, drawing on the work they did in moving to music, to help them feel the rhythm in the words and investigate how they will pace and pause as you read. Some children may want to draw on the work with the music more widely and could experiment with whether the lyrical rhythm of the poem could work set to music. If you have iPads available, children could use garage band or find rhythms that they could experiment with singing or rapping the words to.

- Allow those who wish to perform to the group as a whole. What did their interpretation bring to you as you watched and listened? Did it help you engage with the themes and emotions of the poem more deeply? Did it allow certain words, phrases or lines to become memorable?
- Now look at the poem on the page and think about what makes this poetic, comparing devices used with those seen in the Bill Withers lyrics and noticing other devices such as alliteration, e.g. massive metal monster; simile, e.g. I feel like a mouse stepping into the jungle; personification, e.g. its sliding glass mouth with teeth ready to bite.
- Watch the following video, showing how a high school teacher in New York uses hip hop to help his pupils find their voice in writing: <https://hiphoped.com/feel-the-flow-finding-yourself-through-hip-hop/> How do these boys feel about their experiences of writing lyrics? What are they able to do in their writing? What else does being able to write in this way bring to them? Do any of them write lyrics themselves? If so, what does it bring to them? Do they get this from other types of writing?

### Session 3: Performing poetry

***If poetry is not given a voice, if it just stays on the page as a printed object, then it is not going to come alive for most children. Giving voice and sound to poetry is an important key to unlocking the meanings and music contained in each poem. It is through performing poetry that the quality of rhyme and verse form, and the power of language can be explored and realised. Presenting poetry to an audience in this way might also lead children to recognise more clearly the humour in a poem or reflect more thoughtfully on its meaning.***

- Start this session by listening to Steven talk about his tips for performing poetry: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/interviews/camden-steven>
- Now watch him perform his poem *Goal!*: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poets/camden-steven> Explore which words he places emphasis on as he performs, how the lyrical language flows, lines that rhyme and where he pauses. Take time to reflect on the impact of the poem and his performance on them as readers; *How did it make you feel, listening to this performance? Can you sense the connection he has to what he is saying? What do you think he was thinking and feeling when he wrote the words? Do you think he conveyed this in his performance? Why does this lyrical flow work with the subject matter of this poem? How does he pace the delivery to work with the storytelling of this moment?*
- Make copies of *Goal!* and other poems from the collection: *Morning State* (p.6-7), *Science Block Toilets* (p.35-37), *Gazelle* (p.59-61), *Thanks a lot, Belinda* (p66-67), *New Guy* (p.80-81) and *Like Minds* (p.113) Pin these poems up around the classroom or another space for the children to explore at their leisure. They can read, pass over, move on and then select one they'd like to talk

about with someone else. This encourages the children to enjoy the experience of simply reading a poem, to relish the uncertainties of meanings and the nature of the knowledge and emotional responses that poems evoke in them as readers. Tell them to stand in front of the poem they most want to investigate more and allow groups to take the poem back to tables for further work.

- Let them discuss their initial responses, why they selected this poem, how it made them feel, what they were particularly drawn to, personal connections they have with the poem, what it made them think about or questions it raised. These poems are all based around common everyday secondary school events and experiences that the children will easily relate to.
- Now encourage the children to look more deeply at the poem, exploring the use of language. You can use this as an opportunity to introduce children to the names of specific forms or devices to look at what makes their chosen poem poetic. You might introduce this by way of what Michael Rosen calls 'secret strings' (*What is Poetry?* Walker 2016). He talks about the importance of discovering how the poet might have used assonance, alliteration, imagery, rhythm and sound. *Can they identify any of these in their chosen poem?*
- Next, give time for the children to work up their chosen poem for performance. Would it be best performed individually, in pairs or as a group? How will you pace the performance? They will need to read and re-read their given lines over and over to find the lyrical flow and rhythm needed for the performance. Encouraging the children to walk around rhythmically while they practise will help them to find and secure the rhythm and use the rhyme to help them remember the words. Some may also find it helpful to move their hands to help with this. How will you use your voice(s) to help share a clear picture of this moment? Will you use any movement or action? Will you emphasise the rhythm in the words? Give time for the pupils to build up their poems, text marking with performance notes and ideas, practising, editing and polishing to a finished performance. Before 13<sup>th</sup> June 2019, this could be filmed and submitted for the CLiPPA shadowing scheme competition to win the opportunity to perform this poem on stage as part of the award ceremony at the National Theatre, see: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/clippa/clippa-schools-shadowing-scheme>
- Allow time for the children to feed back on the interpretations of different groups, evaluating the effectiveness of different techniques and styles and what these brought to their understanding and interpretation of the poem. *What did each interpretation add to your understanding of the narrative? Could you see a clear picture of the moment?*
- To conclude the session, watch Steven Camden talk about why he thinks poetry is important: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/interviews/camden-steven> . Use this as an opportunity to talk together about the personal connections the children had with the poems they picked or saw others perform. *Do they feel they could connect with the poems shared? What could they relate to in the subject matter, the characters presented, the language used?*

#### Session 4: Conversation poetry

- Read the poem Michael vs His Brain (Again) (p20-21) making sure you have read the poem yourself first to understand how it works as a conversation piece.
- Allow time for the pupils to discuss and share their initial responses to this new poem; What do you like about the poem? How does the poem make you feel? What makes you feel like this? What do you think the poem is about? How do you relate to the poem personally? What is similar or different to the poems read so far?
- Now allow the pupils to look at this poem on the page and re-read to themselves. Talk about how the way the poem is placed on the page supports our understanding that this is a conversation poem. Allow the children time to focus on the poem in more depth; What can we tell about Michael from this poem? Allow the pupils to mark up the poem with their observations, thoughts, questions and ideas about what the poet has done to give us insights into Michael through his words. Now hone down your ideas to think specifically about words you might use to describe Michael and how he feels in this moment. Does this give you a clue about how you might read this poem?
- Pair up the children and get them to practise reading the poem as a conversation between Michael and his brain. How will you share a connection with the words and to the character of Michael, battling the thoughts inside his head as he struggles to fit in? Give time for them to practise their ideas and run these through before sharing some examples of the pupils' performances and commenting on their effectiveness. Did they manage to retain the humorous elements of the piece? Did they balance this with the way Michael feels at the end of the poem? Did you feel a connection with the character of Michael? How? What did the performance bring to enhance the words on the page?
- Now give out one of the following poems to the pairs so that different pairs are working on different poems:
  - D4L (Part 1) Geography: 9.36 a.m. (p. 10-11)
  - D4L (Part 2) Playground: 10.48 a.m. (p.28-29)
  - D4L (Part 3) Science Block Toilets: 1.36 p.m. (p.76-77)
  - D4L (Part 4) Library: 3.31 p.m. (p.104-105)
- Allow them time to read the poems to themselves and think about what the poem is saying and what we can tell about the characters involved in the conversations they can see on the page, marking up their poems with their thoughts and ideas.
- Come back together and discuss the similarities and differences in how the pupils interpreted the characters from Steven Camden's words. *What words are they using to describe the characters in their particular poem? What was it in the poem that made them think this about the character?*
- Now, give children time and space to work up this poem for a performance in pairs, working on how to capture the themes and emotions of the conversation and characters involved and how to portray this in their performance.
- Allow time for the children to share their performances, put each pair together with three other pairs who have the other poems in this quartet, so that they can work on how to develop these

conversations between pupils across the whole day. Give time now for these larger groups to look at all four of the poems together and work out how they could fit together as a narrative across the school day. *Are they the same people in each conversation? Are they talking about the same thing? How do the titles relate to the subject matter? How do the emotions replicate or change across the day? How will you show this as you move from one conversation to the next?*

- Give the children time to practise and rehearse in their larger groups. Encourage them to think about how they will all place themselves, how they will transition smoothly between titles, whether they will decide to say the poem of each title, or just for the first one then say just the time for the next ones. Allow them to have creative freedom to do what they think best conveys what they want to the audience. Get them to reconsider what Steven Camden said in his performance advice – *do they need to make eye contact with the audience here or is it more important that they make eye contact with their conversation partner? How will they stand so the audience can see them clearly, but they also look like they are having a conversation with each other – are they even supposed to be aware there is an audience there if they are concentrating on conveying the essence of this moment authentically? How will they use their voices, their facial expressions, their gestures to show their connection with the moment and the emotions conveyed within it?*
- Give time for the pupils to build up their poems in these larger groups, text marking with performance notes and ideas, practising, editing and polishing to a finished performance. Allow the pupils to watch the performances of other groups commenting on the differences and effectiveness of each other’s performances and to give suggestions to polish and improve. Before 13<sup>th</sup> June 2019, this could be filmed and submitted for the CLiPPA shadowing scheme competition to win the opportunity to perform this poem on stage as part of the award ceremony at the National Theatre, see: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/clippa/clippa-schools-shadowing-scheme>
- Talk about the effect of hearing the four poems together like this, before exploring how they appear in the collection, interspersed at different points throughout the book. *What effect do you think this has? Why do you think the poet chose to do this in this way?*
- To conclude the session, listen to another poet, Joseph Coelho, talk about how he goes about writing poetry:
- <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poet-interviews/how-do-you-go-about-writing-your-poetry-0>
- Give time at the end of the session for children to begin to collect ideas in their poetry journals of possible inspirations in the way that Joseph talks about in his video. These could be snippets of conversations they’ve heard or been involved in, subjects that conversations might revolve around that they might go on to write about. Some may even start drafting their own poems immediately. Encourage them to carry on collecting ideas and inspirations and maybe having a go at writing their own poems in between sessions in this way.

## Session 5: Exploring poems on the page

- The way that poems are presented on the page can deepen our understanding of and response to a particular poem. Ensure pupils have regular opportunities to explore different ways that poems can be presented and respond to the effect this has on them as readers and their wider understanding of the subject matter, themes or emotions of the poem, or the type of poem that has been created.
- Start the session by giving out a copy of the poem *Cracks* (p.96-97) and reading this aloud, while the children simply listen or follow on the page. *What immediate responses does it evoke? What is the poem about? How does it make you feel? What questions do the pupils have around the poem?*
- Now allow time for the pupils to re-read the poem for themselves. *What do you think the idea at the heart of the poem is now? What were the words and phrases that were most memorable to you and unlocked your understanding of the poem? Why do you think Steven Camden has chosen not to make this poem fit a tight rhyme pattern as in some of the other poems explored? What impact would rhyme make on our emotional engagement with this particular poem?*
- Now focus the children on the way the poem is laid out on the page. *Without reading the words, what stands out to you about the way the poet has used line breaks and how line spacing is used? What does this bring to your understanding of the poem? How does it enhance your response to this moment as a reader?*
- Think about the mood of this poem in relation to others read so far. *What are the similarities and differences between this and other poems you've looked at and performed? If this poem were to be performed, how do the children think this should be done?* Encourage them to think about performances on a larger scale. If this were to be performed on stage in a theatre, how should it work? Should it be one person? A group? Should there be any set or props? What lighting would help enhance the mood of the poem? For children who have less experience of theatrical or live poetry performances, you may need to preface this activity by watching some appropriate performance videos to enhance understanding of this terminology and the additional effects that could be created in theatre performance.
- Now give out copies of the following poems:
  - It's Complicated (p.33)
  - Gazelle (p.59-61)
  - Lunch Line (p.65)
  - Detention (p.109)
- Allow time for the pupils to read all four poems, before picking one that particularly interests them. They can then go on to annotate and respond to this poem as they did with *Cracks*. They should be encouraged to get out their immediate responses, opinions and questions about the poem first, before looking more deeply at the themes, ideas, and poetic devices the poet has used to evoke ideas and feelings in you as a reader, drawing on the knowledge they have gained throughout the sequence. Look at the way each poem has been presented on the page; *what*

*decisions has the poet made about line breaks, spacing and layout and why do you think he has chosen to do this? How does it add to our interpretation of the poem?*

- Allow time at the end of the session for the children to write their own personal reflections of their chosen poem. These can be copied and displayed around their chosen poems on a display. *Which poems were chosen most? Were there any poems that fewer people chose? Why do you think this was? What did all five of the poems studied today have in common? What more have you learnt about poetry from this session?*

### Session 6: Creating and shaping characters through poetry

- Begin the session by listening to Steven Camden read the poem *Double Agent*: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poets/camden-steven> *What were your first thoughts as you heard the poem? What did it make you think about? How did you feel? What did you most connect with in this poem?*
- Now listen to how Steven Camden talks about in regard to creating characters in his video *How do you go about writing your poems?*: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/interviews/camden-steven>
- Reflect particularly on this part:
- *‘Particularly with this collection, it’s about characters and zooming in on moments, there’s a lot of imagining being other people or putting myself in (their shoes). And then, like a little line will come or a certain image where I think about the eye line of one person and I put myself in that seat in that lesson at that time and then one line will come and then very quickly it shows itself whether it wants to rhyme, that voice, or whether it doesn’t in that particular moment.’*
- Give out copies of the poem and look more deeply at the way Steven Camden has chosen to present this poem. What do you notice about the relationship between the first verse and the second verse? If you have a number of children in the class who are also studying French, they may very quickly work out that the lines in the first verse are mirrored in the second verse in reverse order. What is the impact of the reversal of the lines when they are presented back in English? What more does this tell us about the character?
- Now allow the children to re-read themselves, discuss in pairs or small groups and annotate the poems with their ideas about the character they have been presented with. Key questions could be used to focus their discussions, such as: *What do you think that Steven Camden is telling us about this character in this poem? What does he do in the words? How does the way the poem is laid out add to our interpretation? Why do you think he chose to capture this particular character in this collection?*
- Make available copies of the following poems; you could allow children to read them all and self-select one that appeals most to them or give specific poems to specific individuals, pairs or groups and encourage the pupils to annotate and respond to this poem as they did with *Double Agent*:
  - Good Girl (p.45)



- Fraud (p.48-49)
  - Nothing Else (p.74-75)
  - Double Science (p.88-89)
  - Something Starts (p.91)
  - Across a Room (p.95)
- They should be encouraged to get out their immediate responses, opinions and questions about the poem first, before looking more deeply at the themes, ideas and poetic devices the poet has used to paint a picture of the character.
  - They could go on to write a descriptive passage about their character, justifying their opinions using evidence from the text to support points made.
  - Come back together to discuss all five poems, drawing comparisons and noting differences between the characters explored.
  - Give time at the end of the session for children to begin to collect ideas in their poetry journals of possible inspirations for characters whose shoes they may choose to step inside. They may draw on real people to inspire ideas, but ensure they are aware they should be creating a fictional character, not writing directly about someone they know, in the way Steven Camden talks about using the experience of knowing children who spoke a second language proficiently in his introduction and representing their experience. Some may even start drafting their own poems immediately. Encourage them to carry on collecting ideas and inspirations and maybe having a go at writing their own poems in between sessions in this way.

### Session 7: Capturing moments through poetry

- Read aloud the poem *Career's Advice* (p.85). Explore the pupils' initial reactions to this new poem; *What were your first thoughts as you heard the poem? What did it make you think about? How did you feel? What did you most connect with in this poem?*
- Now give pupils copies of the poem and time to compare the structure of this poem with the poem read in the previous session, *Double Agent*. *What do we learn from the contrast between the two verses about who the two characters explored in the poem are and how or what they are thinking or feeling in this moment? Why do you think the poet has chosen to present this moment in this way, what additional insights does this give us about the relationship between the characters at this moment in time.*
- Allow the children to explore other poems which present specific moments or experiences such as:
  - Vending Machine (p.25-27)
  - Fight (p.68-71)
  - Snow (p.82-83)

- HMS Big School (p.106-107)
- Encourage them to explore the ways in which the poet takes us into these moments, and makes us feel like we are experiencing these alongside the characters. How does he paint a picture of the moment? How does he build emotion, humour and tension in the moments he chooses to explore? Focus on the structure and length of poems, how verse and line breaks are used and the language used in particular poems. Children can choose one or more of the moments to explore and analyse, comparing and contrasting between poems read and justifying their opinions using evidence and devices from the text to support points made.
- Come back together to discuss all five poems, drawing comparisons and noting differences between the moments explored and the emotions explored.
- Give time at the end of the session for children to begin to collect ideas in their poetry journals of possible inspirations for moments that they may choose to write about. They may draw on real events to inspire ideas, but as with the characters, ensure they are aware they should be creating a fictional moment, not writing directly about an event that really happened. Some may even start drafting their own poems immediately. Encourage them to carry on collecting ideas and inspirations and maybe having a go at writing their own poems in between sessions in this way.

### Session 8: Poetry as a vehicle for expressing thoughts and feelings

***Discussion forms the foundations for working with books. The same is true of working with poems. Children need frequent, regular and sustained opportunities to talk together about the books and poems that they are reading as a whole class. The more experience they have of talking together like this the better they get at making explicit the meaning that a text holds for them.***

- Begin the session by listening to Steven Camden read *Dear Mum*, BTEC (p.41-43): <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poets/camden-steven>
- Give time for pupils to discuss their initial reactions to this new poem; *What immediate responses does it evoke? What is the poem about? How does it make you feel? What questions do the pupils have around the poem?*
- Now look at the deeper meaning contained within the poem. *Why might the 'I' character have chosen to convey their thoughts in this way? What does starting with the title Dear Mum suggest about how they are presenting their thoughts? What do you think the mother's thoughts might be? What in the poem suggests this?*
- Discuss the way in which the subject of the poem is presenting their opinion, how phrases and pictures created are focus on feelings and physical experiences, what does the length of the poem suggest about what the subject of the poem is trying to do here?
- Look at the contrast between the very sensory and emotional first part of the poem and the last two verses. *What is the 'I' in the poem concerned about here? What reaction do you think they are expecting from the mother? How are they trying to prepare for this?*



- It would be useful here to discuss more widely other people's reactions and perceptions of the vocational training route versus the academic one. BTEC is widely used as a derogatory term with secondary pupils to describe something that is inferior or of lesser quality (Teachers – see this definition in the Urban Dictionary – you may not wish to share this with pupils, however: <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Btec>). It would be good to unpick this here and look at why a vocational route is a better option for certain careers or pathways and is no lesser or valid than an academic route.
- Now listen to Steven read *Real World* (p.93). Again allow the pupils to discuss their first thoughts; *What immediate responses does it evoke? What is the poem about? How does it make you feel? What questions do the pupils have around the poem? How does this compare to the previous poem? What are the similarities between the two poems?*
- Give the pupils a copy of the two poems and ask them to compare the concerns and fears conveyed by the 'I' in this poem and the way they choose to present these in comparison with the 'I' in *Dear Mum BTEC*. Ask the pupils to do a comparative study of the two poems, exploring how two characters in a poem convey thoughts, opinions and fears in the two poems and the impact that is gained in the two different approaches taken. Pupils should text mark and annotate the two poems with thoughts, ideas and references to poetic devices or comments about the structure of lines or the poem as a whole, drawing on everything they have learnt throughout the study of this collection and justifying their thoughts and opinions with evidence they have found in the two texts.

### Session 9: Supporting pupils' own poetry writing

Throughout the writing process it is important for children to be given materials and space to allow them to plan and compose ideas in different ways. Some children might come straight to drafting full ideas for poems, others might need to draw or bring in an object to inspire language and ideas. Some may need to collect words and phrases, snippets of conversations, or memories as a starting point, others might like to free write and splurge ideas onto the page, coming back to make sense of it and pull out what works after writing. The writing community developed in the classroom should be sufficiently flexible to take these different needs into account in the early drafting process.

- Read aloud two of the poems in the collection that focus on writing, *Anyone* (p.19) and *As I Watch* (p.46-47). Compare and contrast the opinions between the two 'I' characters in these poems. How do they both feel about writing? What might make them feel this way? Explore with the children their personal connections with the feelings expressed here – *do they relate to one of these views more than the other? How does the view connect to their own feelings about writing?*
- Now listen to Steven Camden in his video, *What advice would you give to budding young poets?:* <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/interviews/camden-steven>

- Allow the children time to talk about what he said that resonated with them or surprised them. *Does his advice encourage them to want to write? What could they draw on from what he says to inspire them to get going?*
- Revisit the collection as a whole. What sorts of things does Steven Camden choose to write about in his poems? Draw out some of the common themes such as:
  - Self-identity
  - Lessons
  - Writing about uncomfortable moments
  - Overcoming negativity
  - Conversations
  - Writing about characters
  - Writing about specific moments
  - Expressing thoughts or opinions
- Explain to the children that in the next few sessions, they are going to be writing their own poems on topics or themes that they are interested in. *Where might their inspirations come from? Might they choose to write about some of the same things Steven Camden has explored?*
- Listen to Steven and other poets talk about their inspirations for writing poetry: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poet-interviews/what-inspires-you-poet> and how they go about writing their poetry: <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poet-interviews/how-do-you-go-about-writing-your-poetry-0> What ideas can they pick up from this? 2015 CLiPPA winner Joseph Coelho, talks about the importance of keeping a note of ideas in a notebook or on a phone, before selecting those to work up into a draft, 2017 winner Kate Wakeling talks about splurging ideas onto a page, writing really freely and seeing what comes out. *How do these compare with Steven's reflections? How do you like to write, or which way do you think you might like to try out?*
- Give time for children to work with their poetry journals, making notes of different ideas for poems or having a go at 'splurging' some ideas onto the page.
- Now give time for the children to reflect back on the ideas they've collected and think about which they feel might be most successful to take forward to a draft piece of writing in the next session.
- It is important for you as a teacher of writing to reflect on your own feelings about writing alongside the children and review ideas you have collected in your journal in this section of the sequence. Our [recent research](#) highlights the importance of teachers as writers of poetry.

### Session 10: Writing own poems, gaining a response

It is important to develop children as reflective writers by giving ample opportunity throughout the writing process to talk about themselves as writers, enable them to voice their views, listen to others and develop new knowledge and understanding.

Children's writing can be improved if they, a partner or their teacher reads it aloud at an early stage, giving it life and breath and helping the young poet see the patterns and tunes they have created. Just as an author would work with an editor, children should be given opportunities to help each other by reading their writing aloud and responding as readers. This allows them to support each other as they compose and structure their ideas. Writers can tell response partners what they are pleased with in their writing, particular devices or parts of the poem they may be struggling with and gaining a picture from the reader of how their writing impacts on them. Response partners should be encouraged to reflect on the impact of the poem on them as a reader. Children can then re-draft parts of their work, based on these conversations.

- Explore Steven Camden's writing process in his video, *How do you work on your poems?*: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/interviews/camden-steven>
- Discuss what they could learn about writing from him as a published poet; What advice does he give here that they might find helpful in expanding on some of the ideas and concepts they have in their poetry journals? What might they choose to try themselves?
- Reflect on the ideas that the children have been noting in their poetry journals throughout the unit. Which ones do they feel strongly enough about to take through to writing?
- Think about a theme or topic from your own journal that you could explore in a poem. Model writing a poem based on one of the topics discussed during one of the sessions, talking through the choices that you are making as a writer to bring the experience alive for the reader.
- Think about the form the poem will take; will you follow the rhythmic style of Steven Camden or write in your own way? Will you use any of the poetic devices you have explored in Steven's poetry, such as rhyme, repetition, alliteration, assonance? You may have children in the class who are very adept at using rhythm and rhyme in their writing; they may, for example write lyrics in their own time and may have been switched on to writing by this text, which might be very different from other poetry texts they have seen in school and presents an open invitation for self-expression. Other writers may not be so adept at this very lyrical way of writing and may need support to find their own authentic voice and rhythm and be able to rhyme authentically if they wish to write in this way. Some may be more comfortable to write in free verse and find it easier to express their thoughts and feelings in this way.
- Allow time for children to draft their own poems around the themes and subjects of their choice, then allow them to read these aloud to themselves, perhaps while walking around or moving so they can feel the rhythms of their writing before sharing with a response partner to lift the words off the page, hearing how they sound when performed.
- Give time for response partners to ask the writers questions, discuss parts they aren't sure are working, adjusting rhythms or making suggestions to improve the writing.
- Think together about how the poem could be presented on the page to enhance the meaning and the reader's understanding.

### Session 11: Editing and presenting of own poems, including through performance

***At the final stage of the writing process, it is important that children are given time to support each other with transcription proofreading, looking at spelling, punctuation and grammar and consider the quality of the writing as a whole, prior to publication.***

- Give further time for children to redraft any parts of their poems that they discussed with their response partner in the previous session, or to work on their poems further if they need time to do this.
- When you have a poem that you have read aloud to a partner, discussed and explored changes that you are happy to present to a wider audience, start to think about how that poem could be best presented. *What form will it take? How will it look on the page? How will you use line breaks, spacing on the page to enhance the meaning or emotions behind your poem? Will you hand write it? Will you publish using ICT? What script or font will you choose? Will you make any specific decisions about the way certain words look or are placed on the page?*
- Allow plenty of time and space for the children to make a final draft and then publish their work accordingly. Publish your own work as a teacher writer alongside that of the children.
- When they are happy with the way their poem looks on the page, think about how this could lift off the page and be performed to an audience. Give each child a photocopy of their finished poem and allow them to mark this up with performance ideas. *Will you perform on your own? Do you need others to support you? How will you use voice, body movements and facial expression to enhance the listener's engagement and understanding?*
- Ensure time is given to try out ideas and rehearse performances of children's own poems.

### **Session 12: Hosting a poetry festival**

Poetry is rooted in word games, wordplay, song and rhythm, and it's particularly important that it should be heard as well as read. Children need opportunities to read poetry aloud, perform, dramatise, join in and hear poets perform their own work. If poetry is not given a voice, if it just stays on the page as a printed object, then it is not going to come alive for most children.

Allow time and space for children to rehearse and polish performances before presenting to an audience. Provide opportunities for children to perform publicly at school events or as part of competitions like CLPE's CLIPPA shadowing scheme.

- Following this, hold a poetry festival for children to perform their own original compositions to parents or other classes in the school.
- For the children performing at the event, ask them to consider what they learnt from listening to the poems being read aloud and performed by other poets as well as trying out ideas in their performances of techniques they have learnt from seeing Steven Camden's. *What will they need to consider when performing their own poems?*

- Watch Steven Camden performing on stage at a spoken word event: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTAsDue9buY> Discuss what they thought about this performance compared to the ones to camera they have seen up to now. What does he do to engage the audience and bring them into this moment with him? How does the staging support the focus on words? Use this to find out about children's own feelings about performance. *Would they like to perform to an audience in this way? Why or why not?* Some children might be keen to perform, others may not want to, so could work on illustrating their poems for display at the event, making a programme for the event, filming or photographing performances to write up for the school newsletter or website or being responsible for gathering props others might need. Some children might not want to perform their own work live but might be comfortable to record a poem to camera to share at the event, publish their poem in writing to include in the programme or comper the event, introducing others who want to perform. Negotiate roles so that all children feel comfortably involved with the event.
- It would be wonderful if teachers and other adults who have worked alongside the pupil as part of the sequence also felt confident to perform some of their own poetry as models of writing at the event. With appropriate permissions you could share video performances or written examples of pupils' and teachers' poems with us by emailing these to us at: [poetry@clpe.org.uk](mailto:poetry@clpe.org.uk).

### Reflection on the collection as a whole

***After listening to poetry, children may want to write their own poems. These, too, can be recorded with music or sound-effects, and kept together with a class anthology in the listening corner.***

***Alternatively, individual collections of poems can be built up by each child and presented both in book form and performed or recorded; collections of this kind can show the range of subjects and forms explored.***

- Revisit the poems that have been explored throughout the sequence. To draw together all the work done in this unit, hold a discussion about the collection as a whole. *Did you engage with this style of writing? What are your most memorable poems? Which spoke to you the most? Why? What have you learnt about poetry that you didn't know before? Would you be encouraged to read more poetry after studying this collection? Why? Why not?*
- Now focus on the poems that pupils have written. How did you feel about writing poetry before looking at this text? How do you feel about it now? If your feelings changed, why was this? What kinds of poems were your favourite to write? What did you find it easiest to write about?
- Display the children's own poems prominently in the classroom, library or in a shared area in the school so they can be read by a wider audience, with some of their favourite poems from this collection and others that have inspired their own work.

