

Born of Water

A reading and writing activity for KS 3
National Poetry Day 2013 by Mandy Coe

Based on poems by Rachel Rooney and Carl Sandburg



Water takes many forms and each form moves in a unique way: ice-caps melt, glaciers creep, taps drip, lochs ripple. Rachel Rooney's poem ([here](#) or on page 3) is full of movement. Using words such as *whirl*, *reeling* and *thump*, she encourages the reader to feel the full force of a girl, 'born of tornado'.

(i) Reading:

- Read the poem aloud.
- In groups, share which words helped you imagine movement.
- The poem uses rhyme and half rhyme at the end of some lines – can you see/hear where they are?
- Why do you think the girl in the poem might feel off-kilter standing still?
- Why do you think she needed to spin?
- How important is the title in helping us understand this poem?
- What would this girl be like as a friend?



(ii) Writing:

Poets all create poems in different ways. Some start writing straight away, others make notes, some need to look at pictures or films to get ideas; most will speak their lines aloud to experiment with how they sound. You might do all of these, but be sure to play about with the words first. No one expects you to write a neat and perfect poem without drawing, discussing and thinking! There are some films-clips below to give you ideas.

- 1) It is worth beginning the writing activity (as a group or class) by drawing up a list of different forms of water, such as:

the ocean
a river
a duckpond
hail
an iceburg
fog

Can you think of any more?

- 2) Choose one form of water from the list, and picture how it moves. For example: *steam rises, rain falls; tides push, pull and drag; snowflakes dance*. How might you describe the movement of fog, a stream, a whirlpool? The words don't have to be predictable... poems can and should surprise us!
- 3) Next, chose your character to *be born of the form of water you chose*. He or she can be a person of any age - or an animal of any species. If you need an example to discuss; why might a bird born of a waterfall tumble from its nest to bounce and roll before hatching? How might a bird born of a waterfall fly, sing? What would a bird born of waterfall be like? Here are a few more examples to discuss:

Man born of rain
Boy born of fog
Snake born of steam
Horse born of ice



- 4) You can start your poem anywhere in the story/description of your character. In Rachel's poem it starts with the birth. Yours could start with a meeting, or a tale you once heard...

The poem is on the next page.

Tornado

by Rachel Rooney

I knew a girl; a Tornado
born on a storm.
Arrived in a whirl with a thump
on the hospital floor.

Picked herself up, found her feet
but still she was reeling.
The world was a blur, off-kilter
and all she kept feeling

was dizzy and queasy and dazed.
To stop herself churning
she did what she needed to do
and carried on turning.

Like a coin, a top, a wheel,
the floss on a stick
or the drum of a washing machine
as it reaches its peak,

she spun faster. Her arms outstretched
like blades of a chopper.
She rose from this world into space.
Nothing on earth could stop her.

From *The Language of Cat*
Frances Lincoln Children's Books

(iii) Resources and Follow Up:

To expand the concept of weather and characterisation, 'Fog', by Carl Sandburg is a classic poem exploring how the weather can take on the persona of an animal. Its simplicity is deceptive. In just six lines the reader is left with a clear image of a cat, its silence, delicacy and temporary presence.

Fog

The fog comes
on little cat feet.

It sits looking
over harbour and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.

Written by Carl Sandburg in 1910

Photographs

Take a look at [this selection](#) of National Geographic photographs, in the accompanying text you will find a wide range of words that describe how the water moves.

Film clips

For a visual study of how animals can interact with water, click [here](#) to see the BBC film-clip from on Gannets diving (2.3 mins)

Games

Click [here](#) for a fun online waterfall jigsaw puzzle.

Live coral reef web-cam online

Click [here](#) to see fish swimming, live, in the Cayman Islands (remember the time difference, 6 hours behind UK, or you will only see fish sleeping!).

UN Year of Water

To explore the UN Year of Water project click [here](#)



by Mandy Coe for
National Poetry Day



Full internet addresses for links

Full address for National Geographic water photographs

http://education.nationalgeographic.co.uk/education/encyclopedia/waterfall/?ar_a=1

Full address to the BBC film-clip from Springwatch on Gannets diving (2.3 mins)

http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/life/Northern_Gannet#p007yyly

Full address for the online waterfall jigsaw puzzle

<http://kids.nationalgeographic.co.uk/kids/games/puzzlesquizzes/waterfalls-puzzler/>

To explore the UN Year of Water project visit:

<http://www.unwater.org/water-cooperation-2013/youth-and-kids/en/>

To see fish swimming, live, in the Cayman Islands visit:

<http://www.oceanfrontiers.com/webcam.html>



by Mandy Coe for
National Poetry Day