

The Boneyard Rap

Wes Magee

Objectives

- To play with sounds and actions in a poem
- To explore ways of performing a poem
- To find different ways to convey the atmosphere of the poem

Introduction

These ideas are informed by an inclusive style of teaching and are multi-sensory in their offering. This is a loud, lively, energetic poem, just great for dancing to. It is a poem that needs performing. The pupils may engage with the poem in many different ways. Consider how they listen and respond to the language and rhythm. It would be excellent to return to the poem regularly over a period of at least three weeks, to allow pupils a chance to engage with the poem and to give them the time and space to make their response.

Resources needed

Necessary:

- Poetry Archive recording of '[The Boneyard Rap](#)' by Wes Magee (Scan QR code)



Optional:

- Percussion instruments
- Selection of sticks and stones

Teaching sequence of activities

Starter

This is a great lesson for Hallowe'en when images of skeletons are everywhere. You might even bring in a cardboard skeleton! Talk about the body, the skeleton and the bones, locating different body parts mentioned in the poem.

Development

Play the recording of the poem to the class. Choose a sign to signal the start of the poem. Identify the sounds in the poem eg "knuckle bones click" and "hand bones clap" and play with the sounds of the body, classroom items or percussion instruments to set up 'the boneyard band' to accompany the rap. Listen to the poet reading his poem again.

Then read out the poem as much like a rap as possible, allowing the rhythm of the words to come through. Encourage pupils to 'rap' along with you, making the right sounds at the right time! Use movement and dance to explore the potential action of the poem, and don't forget the ghostly "wooooo!"

Plenary

Explore how the poet uses rhyming words and creates rhythms to sing, speak and play.

Extension activities

Use pens and pencils or sticks and stones to make skeleton shape images. Play 'Skeleton says...'

Further reading and listening

For more poems that explore sound and rhythm listen to '[Cat-Rap](#)' by Grace Nichols, '[The Sssnake Hotel](#)' by Brian Moses and '[Crick, Crack, Crocodile](#)' by Joan Poulson. All of these poems are available at www.poetryarchive.org