

## Key Stage 1-2

# THE SEA SAYS

What messages are being carried in by the tide?

### A Bay In Anglesey

The sleepy sound of a tea-time tide  
Slaps at the rocks the sun has dried,

Too lazy, almost, to sink and lift  
Round low peninsulas pink with thrift.

The water, enlarging shells and sand,  
Grows greener emerald out from land

And brown over shadowy shelves below  
The waving forests of seaweed show.

Here at my feet in the short cliff grass  
Are shells, dried bladderwrack, broken glass,

Pale blue squills and yellow rock roses.  
The next low ridge that we climb discloses

One more field for the sheep to graze  
While, scarcely seen on this hottest of days,

Far to the eastward, over there,  
Snowdon rises in pearl-grey air.

Multiple lark-song, whispering bents,  
The thymy, turfy and salty scents

And filling in, brimming in, sparkling and free  
The sweet susurrations of incoming sea.

by John Betjeman



Founded in 2006 to mark the centenary of the former Poet Laureate John Betjeman's birth, the Betjeman Poetry Prize aims to foster creativity in young people whilst discovering and encouraging the next generation of British poets.

www.betjemanpoetryprize.co.uk



**This poem is a tongue twister.**

Everybody in the class read it out loud together.

**Then each student choose a colour.**

Teacher, you could ask who chooses **pink**?  
Who chooses **green**? etc. **Pink, Green, Brown,**  
**Pale blue, Yellow, Pearl-grey.**

**In six groups (one for each colour) discuss why you chose the colour you did, and discuss the meanings of (without looking them up) of PENINSULA, BLADDERWRACK, SQUILLS, THYMY, TURFY AND SUSURRATION.**

These words can mean anything you want them to mean.

**Shut your eyes and listen to your teacher reading the poem again.**

Imagine being on the cliff, watching the tide coming in.  
On the incoming tide there is a dark green bottle and inside the bottle is a message written on a piece of folded paper.

**Now everyone take a pen and paper and ready, steady, go write for a 5 minute burst to the prompt of MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE.**

Who is the message addressed to?

What does the message say?

If you can't think of anything to write just keep writing *the sea says, the sea says, the sea says* until your pen starts writing and the message is revealed.

Stop when the 5 minutes are up.

**Then, if you have time, go round the class and read out what you have written.**

The expressive writing doesn't have to be a poem.

It is just a response to the smells, sensations and colours of this poem.

After the class, fold up your piece of paper and keep it safe.

**Look at it a week later.**

What does the message say to you now?

## Key Stage 1-2

# A MESSAGE TO THE FUTURE

### Tomorrow Has Your Name on It

Tomorrow has your name on it  
It's written up there in the sky  
As you set out on a journey  
In search of the How? And the Why?

Oh the people you'll meet  
The bright and the mad  
The sights to be seen  
The fun to be had.

Oh the dreams that you'll dream  
The chances you'll take  
The prizes you'll win  
The hands that you'll shake.

But don't let your dreams  
Get too big for their boots  
Don't hanker after the flimflam of fame  
If you hunger for mere celebrity  
You'll be drawn like a moth to the flame.

For having dreams is not enough;  
You must get down and do your stuff.  
Take the ready with the rough.  
Ride the punches, and my hunch is  
You'll succeed when life gets tough.

And it will!  
(That's also written in the sky  
In a cobwebby corner of the Milky Way  
A squillion zillion miles away).

Bullies will want to bully you  
For that's what bullies do  
And you'll feel small and miserable  
(Don't worry, I would too).

Even Big Bad wolves have nightmares,  
One of the reasons they howl at the moon.  
Being scared is Nature's medicine.  
Not nice, but it's over soon.

There'll be days you're made to feel foolish  
When your head seems made out of wood  
When you blush, mumble and shuffle  
Feel embarrassed and misunderstood.

Things will get lost or stolen  
Life doesn't turn out as you'd planned  
You get sick and then you get better –  
What's gone wrong? You can't understand.

Take your time.  
Sing your own songs and laugh out loud.  
Weep, if you need to  
But away from the crowd.

Disappointments will ebb and flow  
Like the tide upon the shore  
But an angry storm will quickly go  
And the sun will rise up once more.

Oh the dreams that you'll dream,  
May the good ones come true.  
Being young is an adventure  
How I wish I were you.

Today is the tomorrow we worried about  
Yesterday and all last night.  
And as days go, as days they do.  
It seemed to go all right.

So dream your dreams and journey  
Be tomorrow foul or fine  
So you can say at the end of it  
'Amazing! Today was mine.'

by Roger McGough

**Read the poem aloud or watch Roger McGough perform the poem himself on the CLPE's poetryline website:**

[www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poets/mcgough-roger](http://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poets/mcgough-roger)

**Who do you think the poet has written the poem for?**

Why?

What messages is he giving?

**How does the poem make you feel when you hear it?**

**Look at copies of the poem in pairs or groups.**

Are there parts of the poem which resonate with you or that you can make personal connections with already?

**Think about an important event that might be coming up for a younger person or group of people that the class know.**

**Think back to your own memories of being younger.**

What lessons have you learned from life that you would want to pass on as a message to someone younger to help them look to the future?

**Collect responses around the class on strips of paper.**

Discuss these around the class and individually, or in groups, draft ideas for these in a verse.

At first, don't worry about the verse having to follow the ABCB rhyme structure of the original poem.

**When you have a clear idea of what you'd like to say, have a go at redrafting the poem to follow an ABCB rhyme structure.**

Rhyming dictionaries may be useful at this point.

**Collect the verses together and decide how they might fit together as a whole poem.**

You might look at how to make small edits to help with cohesion.

**Perform the poem to the younger children and/or write it up and illustrate it to present to them.**

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**A longer teaching sequence of classroom activities around Roger McGough's *Poetry Pie* can be found at: [www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/resources/teaching-sequences](http://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/resources/teaching-sequences)**

## Key Stage 1-2

# MESSAGES IN SPACE

This poem is about a real space probe called Rosetta, which is currently orbiting around a comet, collecting information to send back to earth. The activity will help you write your own new poem in the voice of the comet.



An activity by Rachel Piercey for  
The Emma Press.

The Emma Press's children's  
anthology *Watcher of the Skies:  
Poems about Space and Aliens* is  
out now.

[www.theemmapress.com](http://www.theemmapress.com)



### Message for Rosetta

*Rosetta, Rosetta,  
tell us how long it  
will take you to get to  
the Kuiper-belt comet?*

Ten years, ten years,  
past asteroids, Mars,  
soaking up sun rays  
to power my task.

*Rosetta, Rosetta,  
what's in your pocket  
to give as a gift  
to the Kuiper-belt comet?*

A message, a message,  
a disc etched with words,  
so whoever finds it  
may understand Earth.

*Rosetta, Rosetta,  
now you're in orbit!  
What have you found  
on the Kuiper-belt comet?*

It's singing, it's singing,  
a high flinty hum –  
don't know what it means  
but our talk has begun...

by Rachel Piercey

from *Watcher of the  
Skies: Poems about  
Space and Aliens*  
(The Emma  
Press Children's  
Anthologies, 2016)  
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publisher

Read the poem together and discuss the different messages it contains. Then create a group performance, making it as atmospheric as possible.

The class could do some research on the Rosetta stone, for background information on this famous message from the past.

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Rosetta is a space probe currently studying a comet called 67P, originally from the Kuiper belt. Along with all its amazing machinery for collecting information, Rosetta carries a small disc etched with text in 1000 different languages, which can be read with a microscope.

The probe is called Rosetta after the famous Rosetta stone of 196BC, which was discovered in 1799 and helped language experts understand the meaning of Egyptian hieroglyphs.

The Rosetta probe has recorded a mysterious singing sound coming from comet 67P, which you can hear at [bbc.in/1pUpG1l](http://bbc.in/1pUpG1l).

Send your own message back to Rosetta by writing a poem in the voice of the Kuiper-belt comet, 67P.

**What might the comet be trying to communicate?**

Jot down some ideas.

You could think about:

**How does the comet feel about being alone in space?**

Describe the comet's emotions and its vast surroundings.

**What does the comet think about the arrival of Rosetta?**

**Can the comet understand the message on the disc of languages?**

What might this message say?

**Describe (or imagine) the sound of the comet 'singing'.**

**Is there a message the comet wants Rosetta to carry back to earth?**

Look through what you've written and choose your favourite ideas to write your poem.

**Once you have finished a draft of your poem, write it up for display.**

How will you illustrate it?

Perhaps with drawings of comets or planets?

Or could you write your poem within an outline of the shape of the original Rosetta stone?

The end of the poem says "our talk has begun". Once your class's poems have been on display for a while, another class might like to write their own poem in the voice of the Rosetta space probe, responding to the words of the comet.

You could display these side by side as a space conversation!



## Key Stage 1-2

# SSSNNNWHUFFFFLL?

What message is Nessie trying to send us?

### The Loch Ness Monster's Song

Sssnnwhuffffll?  
Hnwhuffl hhnwfl hnfl hfl?  
Gdroblboblhobngbl gbl gl g g g g glbgl.  
Drublhaflablhaflubhafgabhaflhafl fl fl –  
gm grawwww grf grawf awfgm graw gm.  
Hovoplodok – doplodovok – plovodokot-doplodo-  
kosh?  
Splgraw fok fok splgrafhatchgabrlgabrl fok splfok!  
Zgra kra gka fok!  
Grof grawff gahf?  
Gombl mbl bl –  
blm plm,  
blm plm,  
blm plm,  
blp.

by *Edwin Morgan*



Look at *The Loch Ness Monster's Song* and discuss these questions with your group.

How does the poem look?

Is it easy to read and understand its message?

Why or why not?

**What would the monster's voice sound like?**

In groups, practise reading the poem aloud. It might feel odd but don't be shy.

Be the monster: give it a voice – you can be loud or growly, friendly or scary!

When we speak different languages, it is tricky, but also important, to try to understand each other. Humans aren't fluent in Monster but saying and hearing the monster's sounds can give us clues to its message.

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**In your group, work out what the monster is saying.**

Is it lonely or hungry?

Or maybe it's singing a love song – you decide.

**Then translate its song into English and write it down.**



## Key Stage 1-2

# POSTCARD POEMS

Write a short poem from a holiday destination, real or imagined, to send to a friend, family member or stranger.



THEPOETRYSOCIETY

An activity by The Poetry  
Society for National Poetry Day.

www.poetrysociety.org.uk



### Gap Year Letter from a Five-Toed Sloth

Hi, Mum, I'm sorry that I missed the plane.  
How far is Heathrow, then, from John O'Groats?  
When next you come to meet me, take a train.

I came here to observe the two-toed sloths.  
I gave that up. The species is extinct.  
(Since sloths could not be bothered using both,

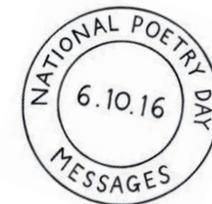
they've all evolved to one-toed sloths, I think).  
I should have told you this, but never wrote.  
I had no stamps. My pen ran out of ink.

Planes don't pick up our mail, just leaky boats.  
I've a bottle ready for this letter.  
I'll toss it in the sea. I hope it floats.

If I wait till spring, the current's better.  
I mention 'spring'. I need to make this clear:  
(don't tell Dad while he's driving. Wait till later).

I can't face coming home. I'm staying here.  
My Gap Year's for a lifetime, not a year!

by *Diana Brodie*



### Discuss

Why do people send postcards when they are on holiday?

What do people write home about?

### Wish you were here

If you could go on holiday anywhere in the universe where would it be?

Blackpool? The Moon? A rainforest? The end of a rainbow?

What's the strangest place you could send a postcard from?

Who would be the strangest person to receive a postcard from?

If it wasn't from a person, who or what else might have sent you a postcard?

### Writing home

Imagine the strangest postcard you might send or receive.

Who's writing it? Where are they writing from?

What details would they include?

Think about what they might have done on holiday.

Think about the tastes, smells and sounds they might have come across.

What do they/you want to tell the recipient?

### Think of as many ideas as possible for your postcard.

Write a sentence for each idea.

Now begin to arrange your sentences into a poem.

### Tips

Start your poem with "Dear" or "Hello".

Keep it short enough to fit on a postcard.

Remember: it doesn't have to rhyme.