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# Indulging in Poetry No 2: The Great Realisation by Tomos Roberts



## Lesson Sequence Overview

Poetry draws on the heart and imagination and fortunately we have an abundance of poems to introduce to students. This can be for the sheer joy of sharing, to focus on teaching appreciation of meaning and language through reading, or to express feelings and identity through writing or performing orally.

In Indulging in Poetry No 2 we look at [The Great Realisation](#) by Tomos Roberts. Written during the Covid pandemic, the poem became a global phenomenon when it went viral and soon after was published as a picture book. The following learning sequence has been designed to focus on how the poet has compared life pre pandemic with the hopes, dreams and realisations inspired during the pandemic. Students make connections and inferences when interacting with the poem as well as considering its impact in multiple modes.

Students are supported through carefully designed tasks before, during and after reading the text. Through the strategies and interactions learning has been designed to link reading and writing through use of the teaching and learning cycle (Derewianka & Jones, 2016 and Rossbridge & Rushton, 2015).

## Poem context

Tomos Roberts lives in London and is a spoken word poet, performer and filmmaker. Five weeks after launching his YouTube platform in March 2020, he uploaded a performance of [The Great Realisation](#). The video has since been viewed tens of millions of times. The poem, in the form of a bedtime story for his younger siblings, is a message of hope for a kinder, more sustainable world post pandemic. Following the success, the poem was quickly turned into a [picture book](#) illustrated by [Nomoco](#) (Harper Collins, 2020).

Before using the poem read the following articles for further background information on the poem and Tomos Roberts.

- [The story behind 'The Great Realisation,' a post-pandemic bedtime tale that has captured the hearts of millions](#) (Washington Post, May 14, 2020)
- [Talking With Probably Tomfoolery's Tomos Roberts about His Simple Poems for Complicated Times](#) (Medium, October 15, 2020)

Tomos Roberts, also known as [Tomfoolery](#), has a website with additional poems and information.

**Note:** The aim of this lesson sequence is for students to consider what they and people in general may have learnt during the pandemic and hopes for the future. It is important to be aware of the experiences and needs of your students as the impact and hopes for the future are explored around Covid 19 and the pandemic.

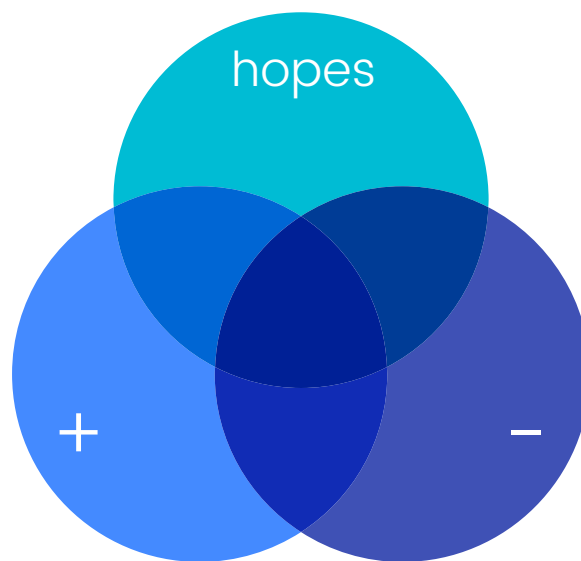
## Overview of teaching strategies

Before Reading	During Reading	After Reading	Writing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Image sort prediction</li><li>• Word Splash</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reading without interruption</li><li>• Reread with think alouds</li><li>• Reread whole text</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Making connections</li><li>• Drawing inferences</li><li>• Poetry across modes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Modelling / text deconstruction</li><li>• Joint construction</li><li>• Independent construction</li></ul>

# Before reading

## Image sort prediction

Pre-reading activities can help learners to be more prepared for what they are about to read. It can help them anticipate the topic of the reading. Ask students if they are familiar with the word pandemic. Clarify if required, by ensuring students understand that Covid has impacted people and countries throughout the world. Provide students with three hoops or a large Venn diagram and ask them to sort a range of images as representing positives and negatives about the world and hopes they have post the pandemic. The Venn diagram will allow students to place some images so that they overlap (see below).







Ask students to then draw 3-4 personal hopes they have for life beyond the pandemic or post lockdowns. Students share their images of hope in sharing circles. Use these images when students later move in to writing.

## Word splash

Tell students that they will be engaging with a poem written during the pandemic in 2020, called [The Great Realisation](#). A word splash (Dorsey Hammond, 2011) can be used to stimulate thinking around the topic of the poem, to connect to previous understandings and personal connections and to discuss key vocabulary.

In small groups provide students with 10-12 dominant words from the poem on a sheet with the words 'splashed' around the title (see below). When planning, creating a [Wordle](#) can be a useful way to identify dominant words visually. The size of each word is proportional to the number of times it appears in the text.

Explain that the words on the word splash are represented in the text and contribute to key ideas in the poem. Read each word and ensure all are familiar to the students.

dream  
 grew  
 waste  
 people  
 story  
**The Great Realisation**  
 skies  
 started  
 day  
 virus  
 filled  
 dusted  
 world

In groups, students discuss how the words are related to the title and each other. Students can construct statements using the words which can then be shared, compared and revisited after reading the poem to confirm their predictions.

After sharing display the Wordle and ask students if they can make any further connections.



## During listening/viewing/reading

### Reading without interruption

Note that reading of this poem involves several steps and moves through a variety of modes as the evolution of the poem is explored.

Play the reading of [The Great Realisation](#) by Tomos Roberts without showing the video. Encourage student to listen when played initially and then replay a second time.

During the second listening ask students if they can make any connections to the poem. Discuss the following using [Think, Pair, Share](#) (Harvard Visible Thinking):

- What is the poem about?
- Who is involved?
- Is the poem being read or spoken?

Tell students that Tomos Roberts is a spoken word poet, performer and filmmaker who lost most of his work and had to move home with his parents during the initial lockdown in London in 2020. Initially the poem began as a way for him to entertain and teach his young brother and sister during the lockdown in London.

Play the video again, this time with students viewing the images. Discuss if reactions have changed. Revisit the questions above and discuss how the poem is told in the form of a bedtime story to his younger siblings.

## Reread with think alouds

Read the written text only and then reread with think alouds such as:

- I notice the beginning of the poem is an interaction between the poet and a young child requesting to hear a bedtime story again.
- The poem then moves into past tense as the world prior to the pandemic is described.
- I think the line, 'It was a world of waste and wonder, of poverty and plenty' has been used to show how amazing the world is but how we are harming it and also how unequal the world has become.
- I think hindsight means 'seeing' or truly understanding an event only after it has already happened and 2020 is how normal eyesight is described. I think it could be a play on words with connections to the year 2020.
- I wonder who is referred to with the use of the words 'they' and 'we'.
- The descriptions of the world seem very negative until the lines that begin with 'But then in 2020 ...' and 'But while ...'
- The actions of the people in the second half seem more positive and hopeful.
- I notice the child asks a question towards the end of the poem and I think the poet is trying to show how people can learn and change.
- I notice the title, 'The Great Realisation' is used towards the end and it is capitalised. This makes me think it could be a way to name an important period in history as a major change occurs in the world with people realising the impact of their actions, changes and hopes. I wonder if this will happen.

## Reread/view whole text

Replay [The Great Realisation](#) again without teacher interruption. Students may wish to add their own responses. The text should be read/viewed several additional times throughout the sequence.





# After reading

## Making connections

Return to the hopes identified in the before reading activities and identify any commonalities between students and Tomos Roberts. Ask students to identify features or qualities that make the text an example of poetry. If students have completed [Indulging in Poetry No 1: Setting the scene](#), they can refer to the before reading activities in which they would have developed their understanding of what constitutes poetry. Display a large copy of the entire text, or smaller copies for small groups or individuals depending on need, and ask students to annotate or label the text with post its using the sentence stem, I can connect to ... Some students may want to reflect on connections they may have made in 2020 which may differ in 2021–2022.

## Drawing inferences

The poem contains many examples that imply feelings, actions and impacts on the world by groups and individuals both before the pandemic and changes during. List lines from the first section of the poem that require an inference. Ask students in small groups to match images used in before reading activities to the chosen lines from the poem. Using [Marzano's questions for inferencing \(2010\)](#), students then discuss and/or record:

- What is my inference?
- What information did I use to make this inference?

Return as a whole class to share responses and follow up with the questions:

- How good was my thinking?
- Do I need to change my thinking?

Return to the whole poem and identify where inference is required in the more hopeful examples later in the poem. Discuss why the reader is required to make more inferences in the first section of the poem. Discussion might focus on the more concrete immediate actions that created hope and change as opposed to the legacy of long term human actions viewed in hindsight.

## Poetry across modes

Revisit how Tomos Robert's life and his mode of work has changed due to restrictions and lockdowns. Show his [Tomfoolery website](#) and tell students that when [The Great Realisation](#) was placed on YouTube it went viral and has now been viewed more than tens of millions of times. Discuss why the poem connected with so many people around the world. Tell students that the poem was so popular that it was published as a [picture book](#) and illustrated by [Nomoco](#). Share a reading of the picture book. This can be read by the teacher, however, a reading of the picture book by Tomos Roberts can be found on YouTube [The Great Realization Storytime Read Aloud](#).

Display a table listing the various modes of the poem and ask students to identify whether listening, reading and/or viewing was required by the audience. Ask students individually to give a star rating for each based on their personal response. Form small groups for students to share their responses before regrouping to discuss the overall class preference whilst encouraging justifications.



Mode	Listening	Reading	Viewing	Evaluation (star rating)
Oral recital				
Video				
Written poem				
Picture book				
Live performance				

## Writing

### Modelling / text deconstruction

Remind students that Tomos Roberts wrote [The Great Realisation](#) as a way to reflect on the world but also to show hope for the future beyond the pandemic.

Display the line from early in the poem, 'It was a world of waste and wonder, of poverty and plenty.' Point out the use of alliteration and the contrast in meanings in the vocabulary. Discuss why the poet made these choices and link to how the overall poem is structured in two contrasting sections. Tell students that we will adapt this line when writing our own poems. Display the section of the poem 'But while we were all hidden,' to 'but there was good news in the making.' Identify the verbs performed by humans in this section of the text. Discuss the types of verbs as either action or sensing and the combination used.

Action verbs: started clapping, calling up, started dancing, were singing, were baking

Sensing/thinking verbs: dusted off, remembered, look forward to, had grown

It is important to consider their meaning and function in the context of the text. Discussion might involve guiding students to think about how actions and how we think can provide hope and make the world a better place.

### Joint construction

Ensure the text deconstruction is displayed. Tell students that together they will jointly write a poem about their hopes for the future beyond lockdowns and the pandemic.



The difference will be that their poem will be written in future tense as it won't be about the world before the pandemic or life during the pandemic but rather hopes for beyond the pandemic or lockdown.

Before writing, students can again share their images which were their hopes for the future developed before reading. Ask students whether their images will involve action or sensing/thinking and record these on a list of verbs.

Refer again to the line, 'It was a world of waste and wonder, of poverty and plenty' and adapt the tense by changing 'was' to 'will be'. Ask students to contribute ideas for adjusting the word choices with a focus on alliteration and hopes for the future. These could be recorded in pairs on mini whiteboards and shared as possible contributions to the joint construction.



Continue writing by constructing lines for the poem which convey hopes for the future. Encourage students to discuss the choice of a combination of action or sensing/thinking verbs and the use of future tense.

After writing reread and make adjustments. Discuss with students whether they think their poem would get a greater response if it was recited, written to be read, a video recording, a picture book or performance poetry.

## Independent construction

Revise the text deconstruction and joint construction and ask students to now write their own poem using the following criteria.

In my poem I can:

- use my own ideas about hopes for the future
- use alliteration to select vocabulary about hopes
- use action verbs to show positive actions for the future
- use sensing/thinking verbs to show positive thoughts for the future.

After writing students can select a mode for how they would like to share their poem. This could be done independently or form the basis of additional teaching and learning cycles. Ensure students do get the opportunity to share their poems.



## Other related poems and resources

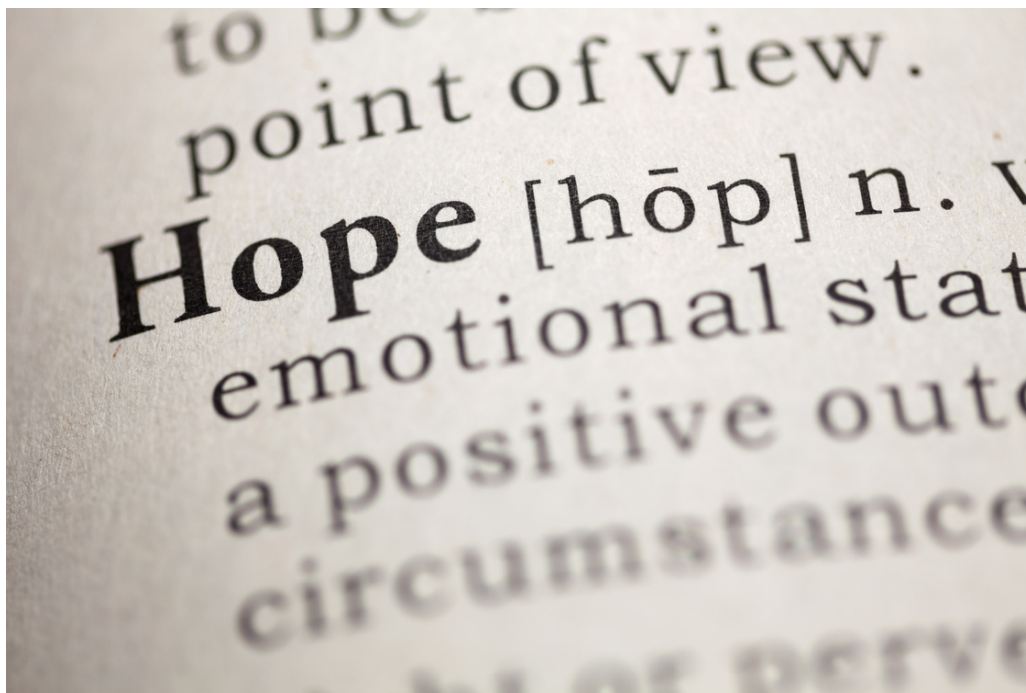
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