

Questions About Slowworms

Put enquiring minds to the test, with these fun classroom activities

'Questions About Slowworms' is a poem for fun. The images that the words evoke are a great inspiration for drama, art and role play. The poem also urges the children to look past the obvious – the label of the slowworm's name or his inscrutable face. It invites them into the slowworm's mind by bringing the slowworm into their experiences. Children know how they feel when they come last or make mistakes. Now they will wonder if slowworms feel that way too...

Getting started

This poem demands to be spoken! Brian Moses enjoys performing his poems, so make sure the children hear the words before seeing them.

Give more than one oral performance. Let your variety of tone, intonation and emphasis demonstrate how words can be brought to life. What sounds and rhythm do the children hear? Does listening put them in a particular mood?

Once the children see the words, let them try oral readings. Encourage them to think of these as performances. Keep the poem expressive, perhaps by division: different groups of different sizes, speaking the poem's questions from different areas of the room, will be very effective.

Activities

- As you read the poem aloud, pause every four lines so that the children can sketch their most vivid picture from the part just read. Afterwards, ask partners to compare drawings. Piece together what the children now know about the poem. Recite again, the children holding up their pictures when appropriate.
- Adopt a pose with a clear mood message (for example, hands on hips when cross). Let partners experiment with body language and identifying each other's moods. Recite the poem, pausing as the children adopt a pose each time. Repeat with facial expressions showing the slowworm's thoughts.
- Create a wall 'slowwormery' by getting each child to paint a slowworm with an expressive face and an adjective describing their feelings. Use partner and group discussion, thesauruses and brainstorming for adventurous vocabulary.
- Suggest partners take turns in role play: one the poem reader, the other the slowworm. After each question, the slowworm answers with his facial expression and improvised words.
- Give the children copies of **Photocopiable 2**. Invite them to write a sentence about how the



slowworm might be feeling in each situation. They can then draw his face to match. Develop this by returning to the poem and drawing similar pictures for the other scenes. Thought balloons and faces can be made separately and then swapped around – so children can experiment with different thoughts and reactions.

- Show the children a sample of patterned carpet. Ask, *Does the poem also have a visual pattern?* (Repeated question marks.) Identify vocabulary patterns (repeated *Does he...?* and *Is a slowworm...?*) Do the children think patterns are important?
- Visit www.scholastic.co.uk/interactive and display the poem on your interactive whiteboard. Highlight the words *fast*, *late*, *mistakes*, *girl*, *face*, *heartache*. Can the children find rhyming partners in the poem? Is there a rhyme pattern?
- The poet, Brian Moses, is available for school visits (email redsea@freezone.co.uk for more information). This is a great opportunity for children to ask him all their burning questions! Even if you can't meet the poet in person, children can still think about and write down three questions they would like to ask him. Then, in twos, children can role play being interviewer and interviewee. Let the class overhear some of the interviews.
- Group the class into fours and get them to plan their own performances of the poem. Will they divide up the poem? How will they keep a rhythm? After rehearsals, let every group perform for an audience, another group or the whole class.

