

Key Stage 4: A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall

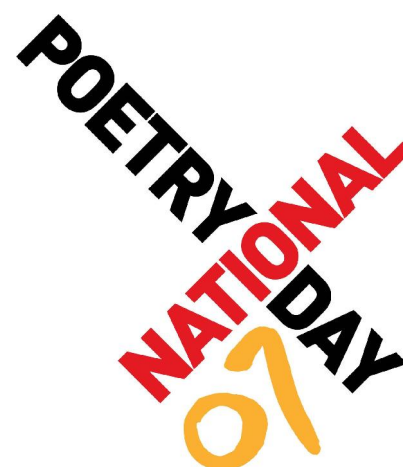
I consider myself a poet first and a musician second.

I live like a poet and I'll die like a poet.

Bob Dylan

Aim

To encourage the pupils to create a prophetic poem or lyrics warning of an apocalyptic future, using Bob Dylan's A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall as inspiration, and as a template .



Stimulus poem: A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall

Many of Bob Dylan's lyrics combine the real world with a dream world: a world which exists only in the imagination of the writer. In A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall Dylan does this to great effect. He uses a traditional ballad question-and-answer form to write lyrics warning of what will become of the planet, and the human race, if we don't take positive action. The poem is full of symbolism. The accumulation of images is powerful, yet easy for pupils to emulate.

Stage 4 Curriculum areas covered:

- Writing to imagine, explore and entertain
- Reading to visualize and empathise
- Experimenting with visual and sound effects of language, including imagery, rhythm, rhyme, metaphor and alliteration
- Experimenting with symbolism
- Collecting and assembling ideas in planning format
- Using a narrative device to engage the reader
- Drafting, rewriting and paying attention to presentation

Best poem or lyric competition

To celebrate National Poetry Day 2007 and the release of a new boxed set of Bob Dylan songs, we are delighted to announce an on-line schools competition for best poem/lyrics, sponsored by Sony BMG.

There are two categories: 11- 13 years old and 14 -16 years old

For full details visit: www.dylan07.com

A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall

Bob Dylan

Oh, where have you been, my blue-eyed son?
Oh, where have you been, my darling young one?
I've stumbled on the side of twelve misty mountains,
I've walked and I've crawled on six crooked highways,
I've stepped in the middle of seven sad forests,
I've been out in front of a dozen dead oceans,
I've been ten thousand miles in the mouth of a graveyard,
And it's a hard, and it's a hard, it's a hard, and it's a hard,
And it's a hard rain's a-gonna fall.

Oh, what did you see, my blue-eyed son?
Oh, what did you see, my darling young one?
I saw a newborn baby with wild wolves all around it
I saw a highway of diamonds with nobody on it,
I saw a black branch with blood that kept drippin',
I saw a room full of men with their hammers a-bleedin',
I saw a white ladder all covered with water,
I saw ten thousand talkers whose tongues were all broken,
I saw guns and sharp swords in the hands of young children,
And it's a hard, and it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard,
And it's a hard rain's a-gonna fall.

And what did you hear, my blue-eyed son?
And what did you hear, my darling young one?
I heard the sound of a thunder, it roared out a warnin',
Heard the roar of a wave that could drown the whole world,
Heard one hundred drummers whose hands were a-blazin',
Heard ten thousand whisperin' and nobody listenin',
Heard one person starve, I heard many people laughin',
Heard the song of a poet who died in the gutter,
Heard the sound of a clown who cried in the alley,
And it's a hard, and it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard,
And it's a hard rain's a-gonna fall.

Oh, who did you meet, my blue-eyed son?
Who did you meet, my darling young one?
I met a young child beside a dead pony,
I met a white man who walked a black dog,
I met a young woman whose body was burning,
I met a young girl, she gave me a rainbow,
I met one man who was wounded in love,
I met another man who was wounded with hatred,
And it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard,
It's a hard rain's a-gonna fall.



Oh, what'll you do now, my blue-eyed son?
Oh, what'll you do now, my darling young one?
I'm a-goin' back out 'fore the rain starts a-fallin',
I'll walk to the depths of the deepest black forest,
Where the people are many and their hands are all empty,
Where the pellets of poison are flooding their waters,
Where the home in the valley meets the damp dirty prison,
Where the executioner's face is always well hidden,
Where hunger is ugly, where souls are forgotten,
Where black is the color, where none is the number,
And I'll tell it and think it and speak it and breathe it,
And reflect it from the mountain so all souls can see it,
Then I'll stand on the ocean until I start sinkin',
But I'll know my song well before I start singin',
And it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard,
It's a hard rain's a-gonna fall.

Teacher's notes – suggested method

Introduce the poem to the class. If possible, play a recording of it. A short download is available at the following address:

<http://www.bobdylan.com/moderntimes/albums/freewheelin.html>

Discuss the pupils' impressions briefly. Does it work as a poem? Why? How do they think Dylan felt about the world and the human race at the time? What does he want us to think about?

1. Now ask them to listen to the poem with their eyes closed. How does it work? Once they understand that images make the poem strong, they will be able to reproduce strong images themselves. Ask them to pick out one or two lines that seem strongest to them. Why do those lines work so well? Ask them to guess what specific lines symbolise.
2. Can they identify a pattern in the poem? Where do they think Dylan found this?
3. Just as Dylan borrowed from a traditional form to create his song, explain that they can borrow from him to create a 'warning' poem.
4. Ask them to think about all the things that are wrong with the world; all the things they would like to change. Their list might include POLLUTION, FAMINE, DESTRUCTION, TOO MANY CARS, CLIMATE CHANGE, TOO MUCH RUBBISH, CHILD ABUSE, RAPE, WAR, GREED, NATURAL DISASTERS, ACCIDENTS, BULLIES, NASTINESS, POVERTY, DISEASE
5. Now they must try to create their own images of a discordant world. They must let wild images come into their heads and note them down quickly, without thinking too much. For this reason it might be best to introduce a time limit. For example, give them fifteen minutes to write three new lines in each stanza. That's a total of fifteen new images! There is a Template Sheet for younger or less able pupils to follow.
6. They should avoid rhyme. This poem is about images. It works through the rhythm of the lines, and the repetition of the first and last lines of each stanza.
7. Once they have lines with images they want to keep, they can polish individual lines by trying to make the image clearer and stronger, and by introducing more alliteration.
8. Encourage them to say lines out loud to build up a rhythm. They might want to do this in pairs. They could change the sequence of lines, or take half of one line and juxtapose it with half of another.

9. Some of their own poems could be read out. This can be done in two voices, the first asking the question, the second replying. The whole class might want to say the refrain each time. Or try a read-through with six or seven different pupils each contributing an image line for each stanza. Reading out loud is very important for rhythm.
10. The pupils might want to make a final copy of their own poem, or might want to sing and record it! The more adventurous might want to adapt the first and last lines of each stanza to create a poem totally their own.

A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall

Template for pupils

Oh, where have you been, my blue-eyed son?
Oh, where have you been, my darling young one?
I've
I've
I've
And it's a hard, and it's a hard, it's a hard, and it's a hard,
And it's a hard rain's a-gonna fall.

Oh, what did you see, my blue-eyed son?
Oh, what did you see, my darling young one?
I saw
I saw
I saw
I saw
And it's a hard, and it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard,
And it's a hard rain's a-gonna fall.

And what did you hear, my blue-eyed son?
And what did you hear, my darling young one?
I heard the sound of a
Heard the roar of a
Heard
And it's a hard, and it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard,
And it's a hard rain's a-gonna fall.

Oh, who did you meet, my blue-eyed son?
Who did you meet, my darling young one?
I met a
I met a
I met one man who was
I met another man who was
And it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard,
It's a hard rain's a-gonna fall.

Oh, what'll you do now, my blue-eyed son?
Oh, what'll you do now, my darling young one?
I'm a-goin' back out 'fore the rain starts a-fallin',
I'll walk to
Where the people are
Where the
Where
And I'll tell it and think it and speak it and breathe it,
And reflect it from the mountain so all souls can see it,
Then I'll stand on the ocean until I start sinkin',

But I'll know my song well before I start singin',
And it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard,
It's a hard rain's a-gonna fall.

