

# Poetry 2012: The Written World



## Resources for Teachers

Country: Nigeria

Poet: Niyi Osundare

Poem: Raindrum

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# About this Resource

Activities in this resource are aimed at pupils in lower secondary school (S1–S3).

*Curriculum for Excellence Correspondences (Levels 3–4)*

*Literacy and English experiences and outcomes*

Reading the poem

*To show my understanding, I can comment, with evidence, on the content and form of short and extended texts, and respond to literal, inferential and evaluative questions and other types of close reading tasks. **ENG 3-17a***

*To show my understanding, I can give detailed, evaluative comments, with evidence, on the content and form of short and extended texts, and respond to different kinds of questions and other types of close reading tasks. **ENG 4-17a***

Creative Activity

*I can recreate a convincing impression of a personal experience for my reader, sharing my feelings and reactions to the changing circumstances with some attempt at reflection. **ENG 3-30a***

*I can create a convincing impression of my personal experience and reflect on my response to the changing circumstances to engage my reader. **ENG 4-30a***

# Raindrum

The roofs sizzle at the waking touch,  
talkative like kettledrums  
tightened by the iron fingers of drought

Streets break into liquid dance  
gathering legs in the orchestra of the road  
Streets break into liquid dance  
gliding eloquently down the apron of the sky

A stray drop saunters down the thatch  
of my remembrance  
waking memories long dormant  
under the dry leaves of time:

of caked riverbeds  
and browned pastures  
of baking noons  
and grilling nights  
of earless cornfields  
and tired tubers

Then  
Lightning strikes its match of rain  
Barefoot, we tread the throbbing earth.

Renewed

Niyi Osundare

from *The Eye of the Earth* (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational, 1986), also in  
*Selected Poems* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1992)  
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Note: 'Raindrum' is one of several 'rainsongs' included in *The Eye of the Earth*.  
Osundare, in his Preface to the collection, writes that the 'rainsongs' are "a  
celebration of the giver and sustainer of life. As agent of the difference  
between plenty and famine, life and death, the rain occupied a godlike place  
in the consciousness of Ikere's agrarian people."

## The Poet & His Work

Born in 1947 in Ikere-Ekiti, Niyi Osundare is a poet, dramatist, literary critic and activist. He has studied at the University of Ibadan, the University of Leeds and York University, Canada, and taught at the University of Ibadan. He became professor of English at the University of New Orleans in 1997. After the city was devastated by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, he was invited to teach at Franklin Pierce College in New Hampshire. His publications include *Pages from the Book of the Sun: New and Selected Poems* (2002) and *Thread in the Loom: Essays on African Literature and Culture* (2002). Recent poetry collections include *Days* (2008) and *City Without People: The Katrina Poems* (2011).

“When I perform in Nigeria, I have a number of musicians backing me up with different kinds of drums. Each drum has its own kind of symbolic message. The drums are very important as tools of expression and interpretation. Poetry flows, it is rhythm. And the rhythm is in every word, every syllable. My language, Yoruba, is music. In Yoruba, you don’t say ‘I am going to read poetry’, you say ‘I am going to sing, to chant poetry’. This is what I try to express in my English lines too.”

Niyi Osundare, interview with Martijn Meijer, 2002 (see Poetry International weblink below)

# Reading the poem

## Words

- What is “the waking touch” in l.1?
- Why is “drought” described as having “iron fingers”?
- What is the “liquid dance” in stanza 2?
- What is “the orchestra of the road”?
- How does the verb “saunters” in stanza 3 contrast with the verbs in stanzas 1, 2 and 5?
- There are three pairs of lines in stanza 4. What are they, and what do they describe?
- The word “we” occurs only once in the poem. Where does it come? Why do you think it is used here, and not elsewhere?
- Why are people going “barefoot” in the rain? (There may be both practical and emotional reasons for this.)
- There is only one full stop in the poem. Where does it come? Why do you think it is used here, and not elsewhere?
- Why do you think the word “renewed” is given a stanza to itself at the end of the poem?

## Storyboards & soundtracks

- Make a storyboard for the poem – one or two images visualising each stanza.
- Then outline a soundtrack – a note about the sounds that could accompany each image of your storyboard.

# Reading the poem

(continued)

## Recitation

- Working in groups, read the poem aloud.
- Read the stanzas in different ways – speaking in unison, using paired and solo voices, speaking loudly and quietly, slowly and quickly, mixing male and female voices, etc.
- Add percussive accompaniments – clapping, foot-tapping, and percussion instruments if they are available.
- Repeat certain words or phrases you want to highlight.
- How does the *sound* of the poem relate to its *meaning*?

## Discussion

- Why does it rain?
- What are your own experiences of rain?
- How do you feel when it rains?

## Research Activity

Find out about Nigeria, and in particular the region of Ikere:

- When is the rainy season?
- What sort of crops are farmed there?
- What sort of music is typical of the country and / or the region?

# Creative Activity

Write a rain poem.

## Note-taking

- As a class, or in groups, make a list of words to do with rain – nouns, verbs and adjectives, like drizzle, pours, puddly.
- Individually, choose an out-of-doors place to set your poem – in the town or the country, in a park or a wood – perhaps near where you live, or somewhere you've visited.

## Writing

Write a poem with 4 verses, and 3–4 lines for each verse – or more if you're feeling inspired!

### v.1 – *Before the rain*

- Describe a landscape or townscape. Include details such as place-names, colours, sounds, and the main features – such as trees, fields and hills, or buildings, streets and traffic. Describe clouds approaching.

### v. 2 – *The rain falls*

- Describe the rain as it falls – think about how it sounds, people's reactions, how it affects what can be seen, how it gathers or flows on the ground.

### v.3 – *Memory*

- The falling rain reminds you of something – what it is? Try to make a connection with something in v.2 – so perhaps a puddle or an umbrella here reminds you of a puddle or an umbrella elsewhere.

### v.4 – *After the rain*

- Describe the landscape or townscape again, repeating the *structure* of v.1, but changing some of the words to show how the rain has changed it. Describe the clouds lifting.

## Further Reading & Weblinks

The poem 'Raindrum', representing Nigeria, is part of The Written World – a collaboration between the Scottish Poetry Library and BBC radio to broadcast a poem from every single nation competing in London 2012.

[www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poems/raindrum](http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poems/raindrum)

'Raindrum' on the SPL website

[www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/about/projects-partners/written-world](http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/about/projects-partners/written-world)

Other poems selected for The Written World

[www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/collection/article\\_item/int\\_article/358](http://www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/collection/article_item/int_article/358)

An interview with Niyi Osundare (2002)

[www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13949550](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13949550)

Nigeria country profile

[www.guardian.co.uk/world/nigeria](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/nigeria)

Recent news articles about Nigeria

[ww2.radionigeria.gov.ng/home2.php#](http://ww2.radionigeria.gov.ng/home2.php#)

Radio Nigeria

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*This is one of twelve resources, written by Ken Cockburn for the Scottish Poetry Library's project The Written World, May 2012.*

[www.kencockburn.co.uk](http://www.kencockburn.co.uk)

[www.spl.org.uk](http://www.spl.org.uk)