

## Bilingual poetry

These ideas can be used for

- Cross-curricular topic work involving children's different languages
- Language classes in the community
- MFL classes

See also resources on powerpoint ([link](#)), full versions of poems ([link](#)) and scheme of work ([link](#))

Children studied the traditional Bengali poem 'Kajla Didi' (in three versions – Bengali script, Bengali transliterated into English script, and English translation) about a girl whose sister has gone missing, and wrote questions to take home to parents and grandparents. They brought back answers and additional poems in other languages. After comparing 'Kajla Didi' to the English poem 'What Happened to Lulu?' by Charles Causley, which also involves a missing sister, the children wrote poems of their own on the theme of loss.

*It's about the whole child really for me...just by having contact with their community schools I feel I can understand a bit more about their learning in a broader context – they've got skills we don't always use in class and doing the poetry work has given us the chance to use some of those skills...it was lovely to see the confidence of the children who were able to take on the task and engage with it, using their mother tongue, it just felt very positive to see them (class teacher's comments).*

### Resources

- Traditional Bengali poem 'Kajla Didi' about a girl whose sister has gone missing (in three versions – Bengali script, Bengali transliterated into English script, and English translation)
- English poem 'What Happened to Lulu?' by Charles Causley, which also involves a missing sister

### Lesson structure

- Discuss the poem 'Kajla Didi'
- Write questions to take home to parents and grandparents (in home language - transliterated if not sure of script)
- Bring back answers and additional poems in other languages
- Compare 'Kajla Didi' to 'What Happened to Lulu?' – use Venn diagram for similarities/differences
- Write own poems on theme of loss

### Aspects of learning

- Sharing languages and cultural knowledge with each other
- Multicultural literacy: importance of poems/songs in different cultures
- Natural environment: plants, birds, insects in other countries (Kajla Didi poem)
- Communities in other countries: village life, living close to nature
- Creative writing: inspiration for moving poems about own experiences of loss

### Home-school links

- Interaction with parents/grandparents about a much-loved poem from home
- Almost every child brought back comments on Kajla Didi, plus a poem/song/short play that they could perform
- Dialogue with parents/grandparents about natural environment in home country and cultural traditions