

Teaching notes

This popular poem has two interesting features which makes it accessible to KS2 children: host of interesting but unfamiliar words and a distinct and playful rhythm. You can find a copy of the poem [here](#). Children will be unfamiliar with some of the words to begin with but the three descriptions of very different ships and very different cargoes will create enough images to carry listeners along.

To start:

Read the poem aloud before displaying it to your class or try making your own recording. There are also a number of readings available on YouTube, an example of which can be found [here](#).

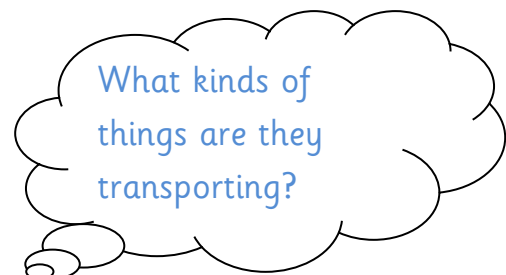
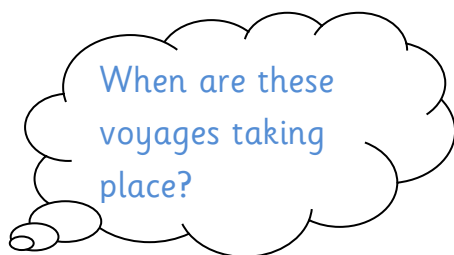
Teaching activities

Language: finding the meaning of difficult or unfamiliar words.

- Display a copy of the poem or give children a copy each.
- Ask them to identify new words and to suggest what they might mean.
- Set children a research task to find the real meanings (worksheet provided below). Alternatively, younger or less able pupils could use the accompanying interactive matching activity to match some of the words with their definitions.

Cargoes through time: looking at the ships and their cargoes.

- Use the interactive sorting activity to identify which ship is carrying what.
- Challenge the children to consider:

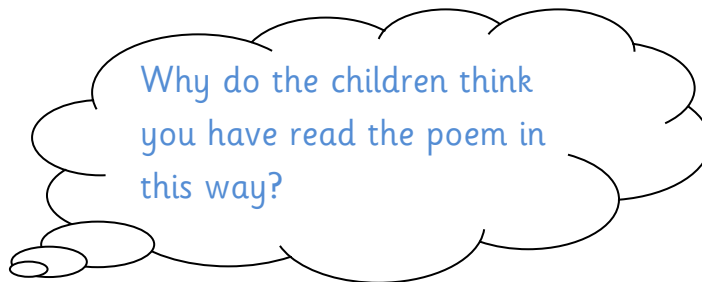


Points to draw out: Do children notice the way that the poem moves from ancient history (or myth) through Early Modern to 20th Century, from the Middle East to the Atlantic to the English Channel? In each case closer to

familiar times and places. The cargoes also change from the exotic, through the expensive to the basic and useful. The worksheet below provides a template for note-taking.

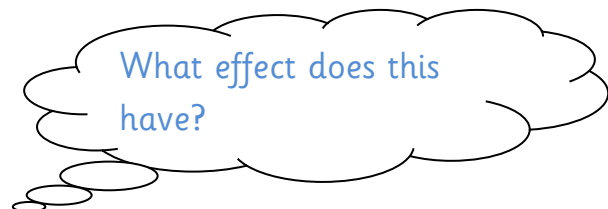
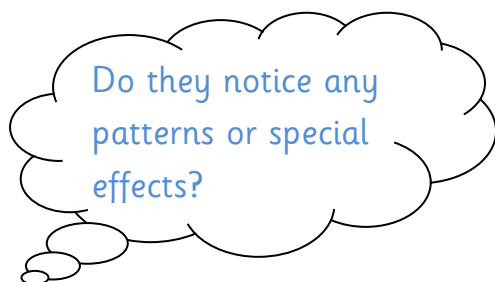
Rhythm and word sound: Explore how the rhythm of the poem changes.

- Read the poem aloud again, reading the first verse in a slow leisurely fashion, the second in a normal voice and the third verse in staccato (short and abrupt).



Points to draw out: Ask the children to look at the lines more closely and see if they can spot why the rhythm speeds up as the poem progresses. A simple word and syllable count of the first and last lines of each verse helps to emphasise the change in pace.

- Then ask children to identify all the vowels sounds.



Points to draw out: Not all the vowels of the first and second verses are long sounds and not all those in verse three are short but there is a different balance with more of the long vowel sounds at the beginning of the poem. Similarly, there are more soft consonant sounds at the beginning of the poem and more hard sounds at the end. So that, even if a line ends with short single-syllable words (sweet, white wine) it sounds very different with its 'w' sounds to one which ends with 'ch' and 't' sounds. Why do children think John Masefield employed this method?

Creative Writing: *Cargoes* can be used as a starting point for a parody or a homage to Masefield's poem. A parody using different kinds of trains can be found [here](#).

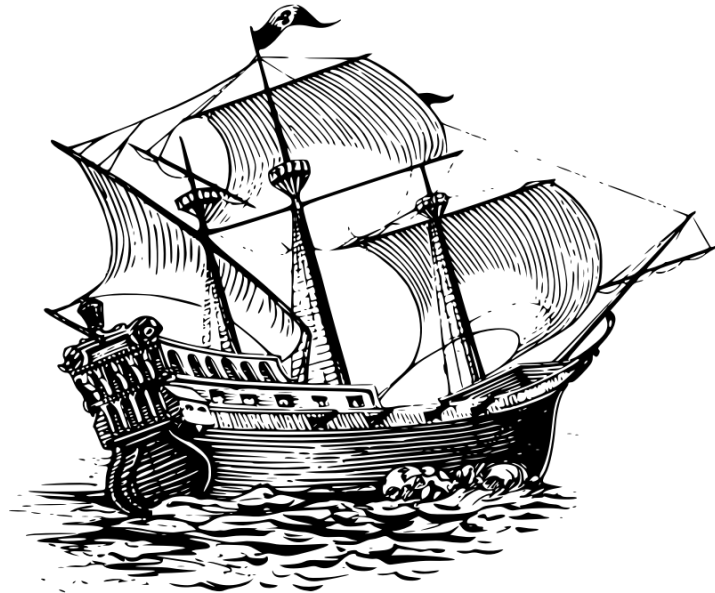
- Children could create a poem based on road transport, lorries for example. Starting lines might be:

Articulated lorry, driving slowly up from Dover...

Yellow-painted tanker, speeding up the motorway...

Battered white van on the road from Ipswich...

More able pupils might like to include references to the passage of time, perhaps including verses on bicycles, cars and super cars.



Name: Date:

These words feature in John Masefield's poem 'Cargoes'. Use the first column to suggest what you think they might mean or be and then use a dictionary and an encyclopaedia to find out whether you were right. Write the correct definition in the second column.



	What I think it means / is	What it really means / is
quinquireme		
Nineveh		
Ophir		
haven		
sandalwood		
cedarwood		
Isthmus		
Tropics		
amethysts		
topazes		
cinnamon		
gold moidores		
coaster		
salt-caked		
road-rails		
pig-lead		

John Masefield's poem comprises three verses. Consider each verse in turn and complete the table.

	When does this verse take place? How do you know?	Where is the ship sailing?	What is the ship carrying?
First verse			
Second verse			
Third verse			

What do you notice about the passage of time, the places and the cargoes?

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