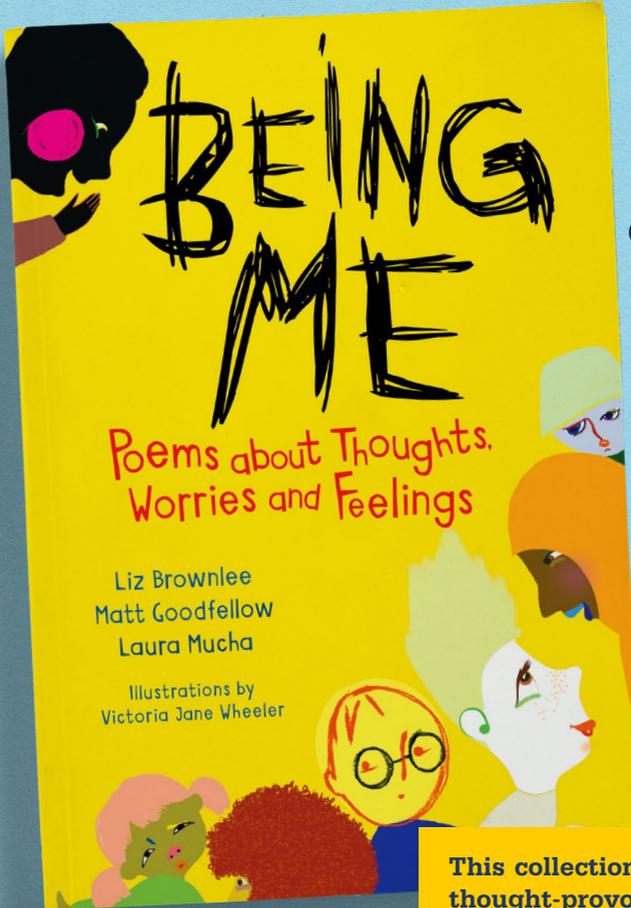




Manchester
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This collection is full of thought-provoking poems and conversation starters. This resource offers practical ideas for using these poems in classrooms and at home.

Being Me teaching resource

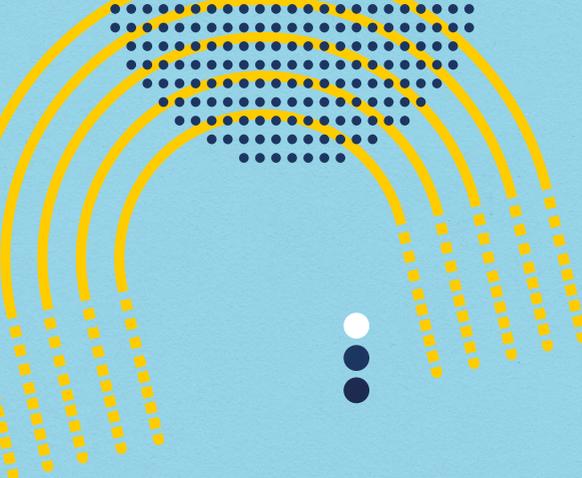
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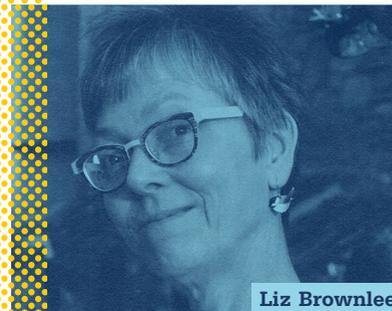
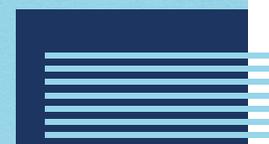


“This is such a wonderful collection of poems on such an important theme for children. Young people can enjoy the poems and illustrations in this anthology but much more than that, they are excellent for opening up a discussion about topics such as our identity, our thoughts and our worries. The suggested activities provided in this resource will assist with providing the most crucial teaching, a lesson on the importance of being ourselves and embracing who we are, something I whole-heartedly believe needs to be at the top of our priority list when educating our children. Enjoy!”

! **Katie Thistleton** (TV and radio presenter)

Katie Thistleton is a TV and Radio presenter. She offers advice, guidance and support to young people on her Radio 1 show 'Life Hacks' and is known for being a presenter on CBBC HQ, BBC Bitesize and the CBBC Book Club. Katie is passionate about raising mental health awareness and is an ambassador for the charity YoungMinds and for children's mental health charity Place2Be.

Katie's book '**Dear Katie**' offers advice to young people on everyday problems and issues.



Liz Brownlee



Matt Goodfellow



Laura Mucha



Victoria Jane Wheeler

Being Me... A Teaching Resource

Just like the children reading *Being Me*, this book contains quiet poems, noisy poems, funny poems, thoughtful poems... there are poems about nature, racism, death, bullying, divorce, meditation... There are so many topics, thoughts, worries and feelings explored in this book, that every person reading it will find something that speaks to them. Adults and children alike will be able to dip in and out of the collection, always finding something to inspire a conversation, or even a meditation.

We have selected just three poems and illustrations for this resource and suggested ideas for reading, discussing and creating responses together. Reading poetry together can be a wonderful way to open up conversations about thoughts, worries and feelings. We hope that this resource will help you to start that conversation in your classrooms, or at home.

! **Kaye Tew**
(Director, Manchester
Children's Book Festival)



Thought Machine

Sometimes my thought machine makes thoughts like

THAT WENT WELL or YOU'RE DOING GREAT or
YOU'VE GOT THIS

but sometimes it makes thoughts like

THAT WAS TERRIBLE or HOW EMBARRASSING or
WHAT A MESS

When that happens, I dance. Write. Run. Sing.

Listen to music. Talk. Swim.

I think of ONE thing I like about myself

NICE EARLOBES or GREAT DANCING or EXCELLENT
JOKES

and I set about my day.

And somehow, that pesky little thought machine
tends to think more positive things, like

THIS IS GOING WELL, YOU'RE DOING GREAT –
YOU'VE GOT THIS!

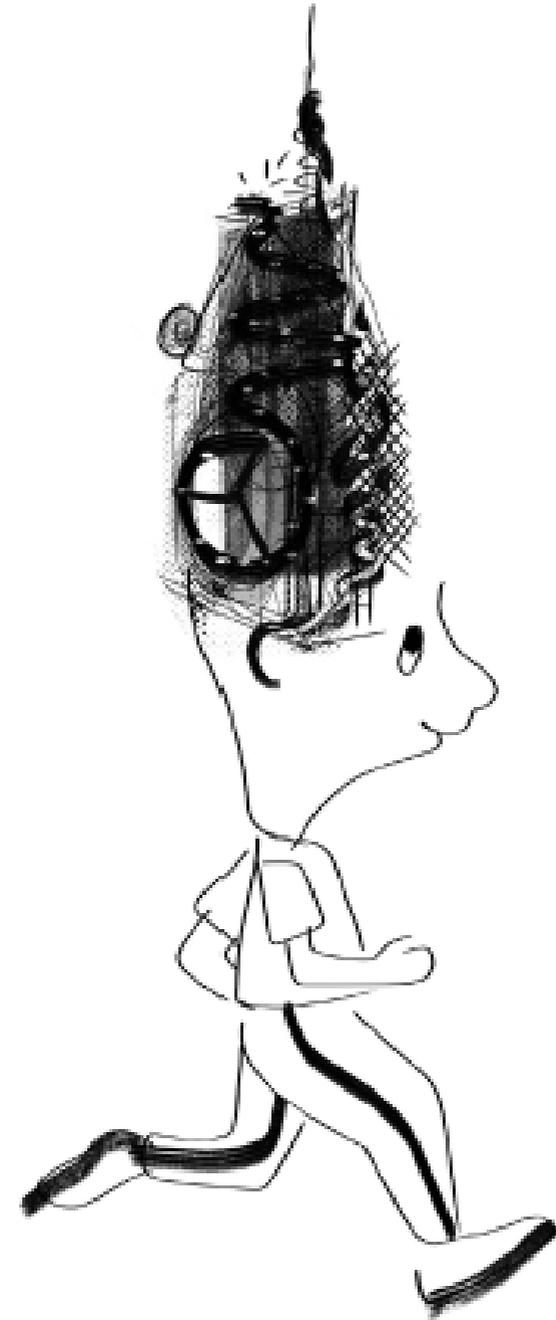
And I have.

Laura

Poem by Laura Mucha. Illustration by Victoria Jane Wheeler.

From **Being Me** published by Otter-Barry Books.

View the poem read by Mae
[youtube.com/watch?v=AuJU2JuJTAA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AuJU2JuJTAA)





Share

This poem would work well as a class read. Print the poem and cut it up into lines to give out. A teacher, or confident reader could take the part of the main narrator, with the rest split into groups, each calling out the positive and negative responses.

After reading, each group should be asked to decide where to place their lines, choosing between two large pieces of paper headed: 'POSITIVE AND KIND', 'NEGATIVE AND UNKIND'. Then, giving each group a different coloured pen, split them between the two categories and give each of the groups one minute to add as many words to their category as they can before changing to the other one. The coloured pens will show which team has come up with the most ideas.

The illustration shows the poem's character, with his 'thought machine' brain. Looking at the character's smiling face, what comments do the pupils think he is thinking about? Are pupils aware of their thoughts changing from negative to positive and how this makes them feel? What might his expression be like if he focused on some of the NEGATIVE/UNKIND comments?

Write

The words and phrases that everyone has put on the large sheets, can now be a bank for children to use in their own writing. Create a worksheet, using the 'Thought Machine' poem and leaving blanks for pupils to insert their own lines. They might write their own lines, or, they could get ideas from the word/phrase banks. The line 'When that happens, I... will be a chance for children to write the things that make them happy. When they work on the response to the line 'I think of ONE thing I like about myself' they could work in pairs to help each other come up with positive comments about themselves and each other.

Draw

The illustrator of this poem created a happy boy with his Thought-Machine brain. Children could create a self-portrait, with their own Thought Machine brain and pictures or words of all the things going into their machine that makes them happy to illustrate their poem.

Or they might think about a metaphor that swings back and forth, like the tide, or a yo-yo, or a cloud covering the sun and moving away, and try to draw this.

The Thinking Tree

I've climbed right up to the top of this tree
just swaying branches, leaves and me

to spend a tiny bit of time
thinking thoughts inside my mind

like: what are we having for tea tonight?
I wish I could fly at the speed of light

why's there a 'k' at the start of 'knee'?
will I have a moustache when I'm 83?

why did Mum fall out with Dad –
and will he always look so sad?

if God is real, why so much pain?
has anyone prayed for flavoured rain?

when does sky turn into space?
what's the longest ever strawberry lace?

I'm hot I'm cold I'm turning green
I'm a choo-choo train with Marmite steam

a thousand thoughts all spinning round
so high above the distant ground

but the clearest thought up in this tree:
I think I'm stuck – and I need a wee

Matt

Poem by Matt Goodfellow. Illustration by Victoria Jane Wheeler.

From **Being Me** published by Otter-Barry Books.

View the poem read by Toby
[youtube.com/watch?v=Htn3TicNvUI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Htn3TicNvUI)





Connecting with nature is proved to have a positive impact on mental health. The 'Being Me' anthology contains lots of poems about nature, which could be the basis of a 'Nature' project.

Poems like 'Up' and 'Forest Song', 'The Nightingale', 'My Head is Full of Hurry' are all about finding peace in nature, there are many more.

Share

'The Thinking Tree' is a good poem to start with. Cut the ten rhyming couplets out and invite the pupils, in groups, to put them together into a poem. This will encourage close reading and discussion about the 'right' order. Other than the couplets at the start and end, of course, the six in the middle can really go in any order, so, after all tables have completed their jigsaw, the teacher can read out the poem, as each group checks to see if they were 'right'.

There could then be some discussion about why being up in a tree might be a good place to think and where else might work. Do pupils have their own 'quiet' places? Creating a shared bank of ideas on the board might work as a starting point for their own poems.

Write

The opening two couplets and the end two couplets could be a framework for a new poem.

Ask pupils, individually, or in pairs or groups, to take the other six couplets from the body of the poem and put them into categories, letting them decide how and why to group them. (Silly, thoughtful, sad?)

Then ask pupils to each write their own rhyming couplet(s). (Sorting the lines first should guarantee a good range of topics but there is no right or wrong, as long as couplets rhyme and scan.)

Then, using the first and last couplets from Matt's poem, or writing new ones to create their own 'Thinking Places', pupils (working individually, in pairs, or groups, or as a class), can then put their couplets together to make their own poem(s).

Draw

In the illustration for Matt's poem, a child relaxes in the fork of a tree. Pupils might illustrate their own 'Thinking place'.

The illustrator might, instead, have illustrated some of the thoughts the child in the tree was thinking. Pupils might choose to draw a chain of thoughts, connected in some way, like a string of fairy lights.

The poem could also be made into a comic strip, ruling nine boxes on the page and depicting the first two couplets in the first box, with the other eight used to illustrate each of the couplets.



Find Me

What makes me *me*
is on my mind

a place to fit
is hard to find

am I unique?
one of a kind?

I'm not the
same as them.

They know they are
just what they think

identity is
quite distinct

my puzzle piece
does not have links

I'm not the
same as them.

They don't know
I feel this way

I think of it
sometimes all day

I wonder if
it's safe to say

I'm not the
same as them.

Liz



Poem by Liz Brownlee. Illustration by Victoria Jane Wheeler.

From **Being Me** published by Otter-Barry Books.

View the poem read by Arwen, Martha and Toby
[youtube.com/watch?v=woKOYl_lFmo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=woKOYl_lFmo)



***Being Me* contains lots of poems about being different, feeling different and being yourself: 'Everyone' is a poem that captures those feelings that we all have sometimes, that other people have better lives than us; 'Kindness' and 'The Quiet Child' celebrate the quiet things and people; 'Differently Wired' shows how very different children can still be friends; 'I Believe in Me' and 'Promise' are full of hope; and poems like 'The Way' and 'Find Me' celebrate uniqueness.**

Share

'Find Me' articulates a feeling that many children and adults experience; that of not fitting in, of being different. Sharing the illustration from this poem, while reading it aloud, allows the children to focus on the character. This is a quiet poem and it would be good to read it slowly, a couple of times and ask the children why they think this character might feel that they don't fit in. The reason isn't specified in the poem, but taking the focus from the personal, to that of the character in the poem, may allow children to project their own feelings onto the character.

You might also share 'The Quiet Child', which is more specific and ends with the child acknowledging that what makes them different is what makes them strong. These two poems work well together.

Write

'What makes me *me*...' is a good question to put to the class. What makes them *them*?

Ask each child to write the word ME in the centre of a blank sheet of paper and then to create a spider diagram: are they Quiet? Funny? Noisy? Chatty? Are they different things with different people? What do they like doing? What do they like to watch on television, or to read? Who is in their family? Who are their friends? Neighbours? What food do they like to eat?... the list can go on...

Every child will, eventually, have a spider diagram that is a word picture of who they are. And every child's picture will be different. There isn't a single person in the world who is exactly like them, and that is why they are all special.

Pupils might use this to write a poem with the opening line 'What makes me *me* is...'. Some line starter suggestions: 'I love...', 'I enjoy...' 'I am good at...' 'I am...' 'My family...' 'I think...'

Draw

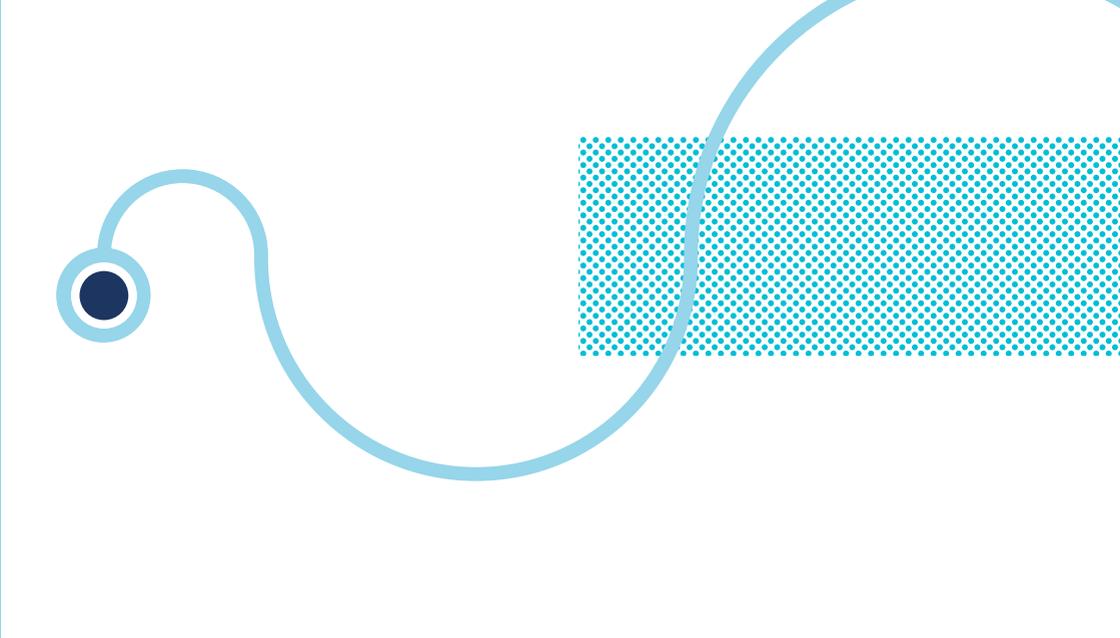
If you have access to computers, pupils could create a Word Cloud. Or they might create a poster, using the words from their spider diagram. If pupils have created poems, these could be mounted on the posters to create a class display or written as a shape poem. There are a number of shape poems in the anthology to use as examples of this.

The illustration to this poem shows the same child, in different positions. Pupils might be asked to think about different sides of themselves: 'I really like being with my family' but 'I also like being alone' for example. They could draw those different aspects of themselves in a way that connects them, holding hands, or face-to-face.



Some poems, like the ones we have featured in this resource, lend themselves to class discussion, others more to one-to-one conversations or quiet reflection. In the cases of poems like this, adults can simply read the poem together with a child, leaving space for them to talk, possibly asking questions like those detailed by Dr Karen Goodall (Chartered Psychologist and Programme Director of the MSc Mental Health in Children and Young People at Edinburgh University), who has written the endnote for *Being Me*.

Reading the illustrations is as important as reading the words. Children are often extremely visually literate and, asking them what they think the illustration is saying, can also be a way into finding out what they are thinking.



A Writing Challenge

We invite all schools who use this resource to create their own poetry about Thoughts, Worries and Feelings. Feel free to respond to the poems here, or to other poems in the anthology.

Create your own exhibitions or performances in school and share your photographs and videos with us via Twitter, tagging in @MCBFestival and @McrPoetryLibrary @OtterBarryBooks #BeingMe

We invite each school to submit a sample of work produced in your school – a maximum of eight pieces per school. This

doesn't have to be the best work produced, just to give us a flavour of what you have been doing in your school.

Liz, Matt, Laura and Vicky hope to join us again at a community celebration of this work in the summer of 2021 at Manchester Poetry Library. You are all invited.

Obviously, this will be subject to current restrictions, so we are not able to confirm a date or details but please email k.tew@mmu.ac.uk and we will send further details as soon as we have them.





This resource has been created by the Manchester Children's Book Festival. Together with Manchester Poetry Library, we were delighted to host the official launch of 'Being Me' (May 2021) with Liz Brownlee, Matt Goodfellow, Laura Mucha and Victoria Jane Wheeler, who were in conversation with Katie Thistleton (author of *Dear Katie*).

If you use this resource, please tell us how, and share your own ideas. You can tag us on Twitter @MCBFestival @McrPoetryLibrary or email k.tew@mmu.ac.uk.

Thanks to Otter-Barry Books for permission to use poems and illustrations from *Being Me*. Thanks to our young readers and to Pete Brownlee, for editing the video clips.

The book can be purchased from: otterbarrybooks.com/books/being-me

We hope to see you to celebrate your pupils poetry in the summer. Email k.tew@mmu.ac.uk for more details.



Find out more

www.mcbf.org.uk
@MCBFestival

mmu.ac.uk/poetrylibrary/
@McrPoetryLibrary

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Katie Thistleton on BBC Sounds
A series of 15 minute podcasts for students about study-life balance, anxiety, sleep etc
bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05zn35j/episodes/downloads

