

KS2 *Laughter is an Egg* by John Agard

Activity 3: Read and interpret

Read Agard's introductory poem to his poetry collection 'Laughter is an Egg' and answer the comprehension questions to get you thinking. Be ready to discuss your answers.

Once Upon a Time

Once upon a time there lived
a small joke
in the middle of nowhere.

This small joke
was dying to share
itself with someone

but nobody came to hear
this small joke.

So this small joke told
itself to the birds

and the birds told this small joke to the trees
and the trees told this small joke to the rivers
and the rivers told this small joke to the mountains
and the mountains told this small joke to the stars

till the whole world
started to swell with laughter



and nobody believed
it all began
with a small joke

that lived in the middle of nowhere.

Everybody kept saying

it was me
it was me.

1a. Where does the small joke **live**?

1b. Why do you think this is **significant**?

2. How was the small joke **heard** eventually?



3. What **poetic tools** does Agard use? Chose from the options below and give examples from the poem.

Poetic Tools	Example in the text
repetition	

rhyme	alliteration	personification
metaphor	repetition	onomatopoeia
similie	hyperbole	imagery

4. What **imagery** does Agard create in the poem? Use evidence from the text in your answer.



Activity 4: Themes and Context

Look at the images below. Where have you seen eggs used as a symbol? Write sentences in the box about what **eggs** are used to **symbolise** in different religions, cultures, celebrations and stories.



Read the information below about the cosmic egg creation stories and consider how this relates to the poem.

The Cosmic Egg

The World Egg, also known as the cosmic egg, holds a powerful and **primal** life force within its **elliptical** form. It is a symbol of creation admired in mythologies across the globe.

From the Celts to the Hindus, the Egyptians to the Greeks, and from the Phoenicians to the Polynesians, and beyond, countless cultures have been captivated by the idea that the universe itself emerged from the hatching of this **potent** egg. This universal symbol is a testament to the persistent human fascination with the mystery of creation and the power of life itself.

The cosmic egg is one of the most prominent icons in world mythology. In almost all cases, it emerges out of darkness, floating on the waters of chaos. Within this egg there is usually a divine being (godly being). This creator then goes on to form the universe.

The tricky question is, however, what came first, the god or the egg?

In some myths, this egg has a maker, often a woman, who brings the creator god into existence. In the Pelasgian (prehistoric Greek) myth of creation, Eurynome lays the world egg on the waters of chaos and orders a cosmic snake 'Ophion' to encircle it until it hatched the world itself.

In Kalevala, the Finnish creation myth, the world is created from the fragments of an egg laid by a duck on the knee of Ilmatar, the prehistoric sea goddess. The bird laid six golden eggs and one iron one. When Ilmatar moved her leg, the eggs fell into the sea and broke, the pieces becoming land, sky, stars, and sun.

One Chinese creation myth describes a huge **primordial** egg containing the primal being Pangu. The egg broke and Pangu then separated chaos into the many opposites of the yin and the yang, into creation itself.



Ancient Egyptians saw the cosmic egg as the soul of the **primeval** waters out of which creation rose. In one story the sun god Ra emerged from the primeval mound – a version of the cosmic egg – resting in the original sea.

The Polynesian Tahitians have a myth in which the god Ta'aroa began existence in an egg and eventually broke out to make part of the egg the sky. Ta'aroa, himself, became the earth.

In Hindu (Ancient Indian) scripture, there is a story of maternal waters of the pre-creation, that through a series of prolonged rituals, the waters became so hot they gave birth to a golden egg. Eventually, the creator, Prajapati, emerged from the egg and creation of the world took place.

In an African Dogon myth, in the beginning, a world egg divided into two sacs each containing sets of twins fathered by the creator god, Amma. Some say that Amma was the cosmic egg himself.

Also in Ancient African Bantu Mythology, the earth was said to have come from an egg. The upper half of the shell became heaven, including the god who ruled over it, while the lower half formed into the earth and its **primordial** mother. From both halves developed the sun, stars, trees and animals.

Finally, in Japanese mythology, creation began with the world as a chaotic, formless mass. Then an indefinable sound filled space, setting the particles in motion which formed into an egg. The lighter particles rose upward forming heaven, while the heavier particles united into a heavy, dense mass and became the earth.

The cosmic egg is a metaphor of many possibilities.





Pangu's Egg
CHINESE MYTHOLOGY



The Egg of Ra
EGYPTIAN MYTHOLOGY



PA'A OF TA'AROA
POLYNESIAN MYTH



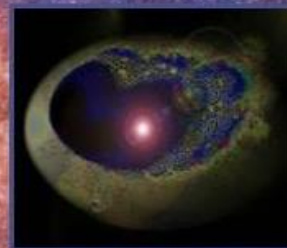
The Orphic Egg
GREEK ORPHISM



The Golden Egg
HINDU MYTHOLOGY



The Aduno Tal
DOGON MYTHOLOGY



The Egg of Chaos
JAPANESE MYTHOLOGY



The Earth/Sky Egg
BANTU MYTHOLOGY

Activity 5: Challenge – Making links

Can you find other poems in the book that connect to this theme or context?
How does Agard use poetic tools? Record your ideas in the table below.

Context: **The Cosmic Egg – creation, ancient mythology, many possibilities.**

Themes to consider: **nature, new life, happiness, how connected the whole world is (Interconnectedness), symbolism – eggs, comedy...**

Poem 1: Once upon a time	
Poetic Tools & Examples	Theme/s
Poem 2: _____	
Poetic Tools & Examples	Theme/s

