
Joseph Coelho
Goodnight, Starry Night
Illustrated by Allison Colpoys
14 poems to self-soothe before bedtime, inspired by famous artworks
Thames &Hudson

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Advance Information

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Goodnight, Starry Night

14 poems to self-soothe before bedtime, inspired by famous artworks

Joseph Coelho, Contributions by Mary Rose Brady and Illustrated by Allison Colpoys

A collection of 14 art-inspired lullabies, written by Waterstones Children's Laureate Joseph Coelho, teaches young children – and their guardians – how to be mindful and self-soothe at bedtime.

Marketing points

- **Written by award-winning performance poet** and Waterstones Children's Laureate Joseph Coelho.
- **Designed to support children's mental health** with advice from leading art psychotherapist Mary Rose Brady.
- **Featuring 14 reproductions of artworks** from around the world.
- **Supported by advice for parents and teachers**, as well as a resource pack for use in schools and libraries.

Description

Art's ability to provide solace is well-established but how often do we tap into this power to help little ones find comfort as they drift off into the unknown world of sleep? Featuring the charming illustrations of award-winning illustrator Allison Colpoys, this book will provide solace to anyone – young or old – who dreams of a good night's sleep.

Written with the oversight of renowned art therapist Mary Rose Brady – whose insights into the relationship between poems and lullabies will give any parent confidence in establishing a healthy bedtime routine - this collection of poems has been carefully curated and written by Joseph Coelho to encourage mindfulness and relaxation.

The rhythmical lyrics of lullabies and children's poems are very similar to the sing-song rhythms parents intuitively use to soothe their children. The qualities of this language, known as 'motherese' or 'parentese' to researchers, are used by Coelho to remarkable effect.

The poems take inspiration from a variety of historical, modern, and contemporary artworks by a diverse range of artists including Ruth Asawa, Nick Cave, Ibrahim-Mahama, Vivian Maier, Faith Ringgold, Vincent van Gogh, and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, among others.

Who is the book for?

Core: Children 3+ years and their parents/guardians who may experience anxiety or who are looking for a calming book for bedtime; grandparents and friends of young children keen to inspire a love of art from an early age.
Secondary: School teachers and librarians, as well as art therapists, looking for a resource to use in the classroom or library.

Joseph Coelho is an award-winning children's author, performance poet and playwright based in London. He is the Waterstones Children's Laureate for 2022–24.

Mary Rose Brady is an art therapist with over 30 years' experience treating children and young people's mental health. She has a degree in Fine Art from the Glasgow School of Art and an MA in Art Psychotherapy from Goldsmiths University.

Allison Colpoys is an award-winning illustrator based in Melbourne.

Specification

- 40 pp
- illustrated in colour throughout
- 24.8 × 19.6 cm (9⅞ × 7¾ in.)
- Quarterbound

Age group: 3+

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Thames & Hudson Ltd
181A High Holborn
London WC1V 7QX
+44 (0)20 7845 5000
www.thamesandhudson.com

Thames & Hudson Inc.
500 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10110
+1 212 354 3763
www.thamesandhudsonusa.com

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Joseph Coelho

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14 poems to self-soothe before bedtime
inspired by famous artworks

With Mary Rose Brady, art therapist
Illustrated by Allison Colpoys

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Art Therapy at Bedtime

Becoming your child's sleep facilitator

For children of all ages bedtime is crucial. This is the time when they navigate the anxiety of separation from their familiar environment and venture alone into the unknown. It's one of the most important transitions in a child's day. As a parent or carer, you can make that transition much easier. You may be surprised to hear that you already possess an innate toolkit of resources – your face, your voice and your physical presence. This book will help you get the most out of these magical tools.

The artworks that accompany Joseph Coelho's poems have been selected to create a virtual world, helping parents to sensitively guide their child through the gateway to sleep. Poetry and art combine harmoniously to establish a transitional space between inner and outer worlds. This in-between space is where, together, parent and child cultivate the state of reverie, essential to relaxing the cognitive and rational functions of the brain. As you encourage your child to engage with rhythm, tone, colour and image, you are igniting their sense of wonder and creating the peaceful state required for sleep.

On a practical level, sleep preparation should follow the same routine every night and start at least half an hour before bedtime. Lights dimmed, stimulating activities halted, computers turned off and a soothing lavender diffuser all transmit calming sensory signals. You should also be mindful of your own inner state, tone of voice and body language. Once you have regulated the signals you are giving out, you are uniquely positioned to be the perfect sleep facilitator for your child.

Enjoying this book together at bedtime involves joint attention. 'Joint attention' describes the three-point gaze of when a child looks from book, to parent's face and back to book. This relational process marks the start of symbolisation, the practice of imbuing words with appropriate meaning and emotion. Your face is an encyclopaedia of information and given the choice, neurotypical infants prefer to gaze at the human face rather than at any other object. Using slightly exaggerated facial expression and tone of voice helps to mark emotions and feelings accurately as your child looks from the book to your face and back again. This intense act of paying attention decelerates the heart rate and imparts a sense of calm.

Adopting hushed tones when inviting your child to engage with Gwen John's image of the sleeping cat encourages sensitive interaction and anticipation. 'Listen, can you hear the cat breathing? What sound is it making? Can you show me how you breathe like a sleeping cat?' Breathing deeply and slowly in through the nose and into the tummy, with a long exhalation back out through the nose calms the vagus nerve, fostering the sense of safety essential for deep relaxation and self-regulation. Your child's brain is now being nurtured by a sensory diet produced through your relationship. Joint attention, pauses during which your child can initiate conversation, and deep breathing are superfoods for the developing brain.

Similarly, invite your child to wonder about Lynette Yiadom Boakye's image of children on the beach, tired at the end of an exhilarating day in the fresh sea air. 'What have the children been doing today?' 'Let's breathe in the air. What can you smell? Can you hear the sea? What sound is it making?' Use deep tummy breathing to imitate the ebb and flow of the tide in… and out… in… and out. As you join in, you are co-regulating and preparing your child for a magical sleep.

– Mary Rose Brady, Art Therapist

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The Starry Night
Vincent van Gogh, 1889

River Sky

(A triolet inspired by Vincent Van Gogh's *The Starry Night*)

I gaze upon the starry night
it twists into a river-sky
my every breath, a swirling light
I gaze upon the starry night.
My eyelids heavy, my dreams burn bright,
above the town – I fly so high.
I gaze upon the starry night
it twists into a river-sky.

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This Box

(Inspired by Ibrahim Mahama's *Non-orientable Nkansa II*)

This box held a melody,
this box held a key
this box kept a secret,
this box is just for me.

This box locked up the wind
and this box held tight a star,
this box kept safe the sound
of a homeward trundling car.



Ibrahim Mahama
Non-Orientable Nkansa II. 1901–2030, 2016



This box was made by grandfather
passed down to grandson.
This box held a treasure –
the taste of the sweetest bun.

This box has no bottom
and this box cannot be shut
this box was hidden under the floor
of an old and magic hut.

This box cannot be given,
and this box cannot be kept
this box holds every happy tear
that you have ever wept.

This box has no locks
and will never fall apart.
This box holds all my love
and it lives inside your heart.



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Two Sisters

(Inspired by Lynette Yiadom-Boakye's *Condor and The Mole*)

"I am a condor"
said the girl in blue
"I'm sweeping over this beach –
I'm looking out for you."

"I am a mole"
said the girl in white and red
when your flight is done
my soft fur will comfort your head.

The sisters race the tide smiling,
leaping the rock pool's hidden gems
the horizon, wrapped all around
binds land and sky to them.



Condor and The Mole
Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, 2011

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The Science of Sleep

Why lullabies are so soothing

The language we use to describe sleep reflects the mysterious, magical and yet slightly anxiety-provoking nature of the process. “Falling asleep”, “out like a light”, “off to the land of nod” and “gone to the world” are just some of the ways we capture the stark transition from being awake to sleeping. Yet neuroscience tells us that sleep plays a vital role in optimising a child’s emotional, cognitive and physical development, and that far from being “out for the count” children are active participants in this process. Sleep is the time when children are busy laying down the memories that store and organise the information they have absorbed during the day, helping them to make sense of the world around them.

Scientific research, involving thousands of hours of parent and child observation, clearly shows that what soothes a child is a sense of safety. The responses of children observed being separated from and reunited with their parents demonstrate that security is very much dependent on the quality of this relationship. Each child’s window of tolerance for bearing separation from their caregiver varies. In times of heightened anxiety, illness, stress or sleep, the attachment system is triggered, causing children to seek close proximity to their parent. It is no wonder that the biggest separation of the day – falling asleep – can arouse such a deep sense of anxiety in children. Security can be re-established by an attentive parent who openly receives their child’s anxiety, acknowledges it and returns it in a neutralised form. This communicates to the child that anxiety can be soothed and that the world is a safe place. Once safety has been re-established, children can once again tolerate separation and continue to explore the world.

To feel safe and regulated, a child’s central nervous system is dependent on predictability and proximity to parents. Before a child has developed the capacity to self-regulate, they are dependent on being attuned with their parent’s mature system. *Woman with Baby* by Vivian Maier sensitively captures the process of co-regulation. The woman is lending her mature central nervous system to her baby to provide containment and security. Can you feel the weight of the baby slumped against the supportive body of the mother, their hearts beating in harmony? Repeated experiences of this quality lay down the foundations for trust; trust that the world is a safe place and that we are worthy of love.

Ninety-seven percent of our communication is non-verbal, or ostensive. Children initially make sense of the world through their senses and through non-verbal cues. Ostensive communication is produced through thousands of micro expressions and gestures (some of which are barely perceptible to the human eye) that transmit vital information about our emotions, safety and danger. This sophisticated language does not rely solely on words, which are simply the carriers of the message. It is also the facial expressions, gestures and tones of voice that carry meaning and emotional value.

Colwyn Travarthen's incredible body of research further illuminates the power of non-verbal communication, proving that it is by no coincidence that children find lullabies soothing. Hours of observational films of mothers and new borns capture the rhythmical musical language that parents instinctively use to communicate with their children, called ‘motherese’ or ‘parentese’. This wonderous co-created dialect is predominantly child initiated and maps perfectly onto the simple notes traditionally used for nursery rhymes!

Informed by these concepts this beautiful book has been carefully designed to facilitate the attuned, musical interaction between parent and child. Using rhythm, tone, pulse and facial expressions you will utilise the innate language of ‘parentese’ to co-create a magical bedtime world, engaging all of the senses and facilitating sweet dreams.

– Mary Rose Brady, Art Therapist

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