The Poetry Tree

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The Poetry Tree

Years ago I decided I wanted to have poetry as an important part of my language arts curriculum. Over the years, my students and I have begun our day by sharing a poem which we have carefully chosen. My classroom collection of poetry books has grown, and we now have over 100 books from which to choose a special poem. As the boys listen to poems both fun and serious by such authors as Shel Silverstein and Robert Frost, they have also become accustomed to memorizing a poem to be recited in class each week. Why poetry? The benefits are almost too numerous to count! When we listen to poetry, we begin to comprehend a message being sent in a new form. We learn to appreciate the value of words, and we, too, desire to strengthen our own vocabulary. We listen, we interpret, and our minds take flight ~ all done with poetry.

Learning to write and decorate a poem for our "Poetry Tree" brings much pleasure to students of any age. Our "tree" is simply a large branch set in a pot and anchored with white stones. Each month of the school year is devoted to a poem appropriate to the special happenings of that particular month. We might follow a schedule that includes:

   September ~ a leaf decorated with the beginning line, "I like the feel of fall..."

   October ~ a Halloween ghost cinquain

   November ~ a Pilgrim decorated with the words, "I am thankful ..."

   Each month as we work on our special theme, the students have an opportunity to experiment with choosing the best nouns, verbs, and adjectives, and to make good
word choices that express their own voices. Our poetry is shared in class and then placed on our “Poetry Tree” for visitors to read and to enjoy.

I have found over the years that when given a free-reading time, many of the children gravitate to our poetry books. They don’t feel intimated by poetry. It can be a puzzle for them to begin to understand and to derive pleasure from.

When Kay Carrio joined our first-grade faculty three years ago, I sensed I had found another poetry lover. Outside of her classroom on a large bulletin board which sits right above our drinking fountain, you will find a wide and wonderful variety of poems. Her little guys have written everything from cinquains to limericks! When the students in our Lower School drink at this fountain, they always comment on the latest entertaining poetry. Kay has a true appreciation for all kinds of poetry, and she has used a variety of methods to help the boys enjoy this genre while encouraging them to become poets themselves.

Kay and I have worked together on compiling a list of poetry books for children, “how-to teach poetry” books for teachers, and our favorite websites for more information on poetry, poem forms, and poets. Build your collection of poetry books where you are ~ new books, old books, in-between books. Enjoy the adventure, and most of all, have fun!
Poetry promotes ...

* Confidence in both reading and creative writing
* Absorption of language and meaning
* Sharing of individual thoughts, dreams, beliefs, and feelings
* Developing a strong vocabulary and reinforcing grammar skills
* Understanding parts of speech including nouns, verbs, and adjectives
* Responding emotionally to words and ideas
* Laughing at ridiculous lines and situations
* Curiosity about words and their meanings
* Inspiration for art activities
* Strengthening of memorization skills
* Introduction to new words and ideas
Tree of the Month

Each month a writing exercise is used to complete some type of poetry expression. The results of this work are displayed on a large tree branch located in the classroom. The following projects have been chosen for the months of the school year:

**September:** a leaf, using the opening line, “I like the feel of fall ...”

**October:** a ghost, using a cinquain for Halloween

**November:** a pilgrim, using the opening line, “I am grateful for ...”

**December:** a holiday stocking, using the opening line, “Winter is ...”

**January:** a snowman, using the opening line, “A snowman stands so very still ...”

**February:** a heart, using the opening line, “Love is ...”

**March:** a three leaf clover, using the opening line, “If a leprechaun gave me three wishes ...”

**April:** a large spring egg, using the opening line, “Spring sings with ...”

**May:** a kite, using a diamante, a diamond-shaped poem which builds a dynamic contrast between two opposite ideas or objects.

NOTES:
September

I like the feel of fall.
Soft brown squash...
Hard blackish trees...
Gumpy orange pumpkins!

Nate Rosen, 4/15/08
October

ghost
quiet, scary
floating, gliding, hiding
never stops moving around

Halloween

name: Blake R. 11/10/08
November

I am thankful for:
the beauty of all nature.
love because everyone needs it.
family because they all love me.
food for a healthy body.
God for looking down on me.
police for keeping us safe.
friends because they are nice to me.
kids because they brighten up my day.
animals for our land.
the whole world for us.

Name: Andy C-2  11-4-08

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!
I am thankful for

Name:

HAPPY THANKSGIVING
December

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Christmas
snowy, cold

playing, running

talking

playing in

the _______ snow

December 25

Santa

Name: Alex C. - 12-2-08
January

A snowman stands so very still
He spies a fox on the hill.
The fox
Skips, crawls, springs and
lands!

Name: Kyle S. 10-15-09
February

Helping poor people who don't have money.
Caring for people who are sick.
Giving compliments to your classmates.
Making friends who become close.

Name: [Blank]
Date: 2-11-09
If a leprechaun
 granted me three wishes,
 This is what they would be:

 A game,
 A pup,
 And a leprechaun.
 These are my wishes three!

Name: Simon U. 14  3-6-09
April

Spring sings with...
Baby cuba going out of their den,
Cute bunnies hopping down the road,
Fluffy bluebirds singing a song,
Tiny chicks hatching out of their eggs!

Name: Whit, J. 13 4-7-09
May

talkative, loose

driving, working, helping

grandpa, grownup, youngster, dad

planning, learning, sampling

athletic, energetic

child
Professional Resources


Children’s Poetry Books


Silverstein, Shel. *A Light in the Attic.*
Silverstein, Shel. *Don't Bump the Glump!*
Silverstein, Shel. *Where the Sidewalk Ends.*
Poetry Links

Fizzy Funny Fuzzy- Fun Poetry for Kids
http://www.fizzyfunnyfuzzy.com/

Giggle Poetry
http://www.gigglepoetry.com/

Limerick Factory
http://www.learner.org/teachslab/math/patterns/limerick/limerick_acttxt.html

Mrs. Caro’s Poetry Downloads – 5 Stars
Templates for teaching and writing poetry
http://mrscarosclass.com/poetry.htm

Mother Goose Caboose
http://www.mothergoosecaboose.com/indexfr.html

Poetry Teacher.com
How to teach poetry, Poetry theater, and Poetry Activities
http://www.poetryteachers.com/

Poetry Zone – 5 Stars
http://www.poetryzone.ndirect.co.uk/index2.htm

Reading a-z.com
http://www.readinga-z.com/poetry/

Reading Lady.com
http://www.readinglady.com/

Rhyme Zone
Type in a word to find its rhymes, synonyms, definitions, and more:
http://www.rhymezone.com/

Teacher’s Clubhouse – 5 Stars
A site for downloading elementary teaching resources
http://www.teachersclubhouse.com/

These poetry links are fantastic! We have included some sheets to give you just a taste of what’s waiting for you to enjoy and explore.
Poets

Karla Kuskin
http://teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/poetry/karla_home.htm

Jean Marzolla
http://teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/poetry/jean_home.htm

Jack Prelutsky
http://teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/poetry/jack_home.htm

Shel Silverstein – 5 Stars
http://www.shelsilverstein.com/indexSite.html

More Fun Poetry Ideas

Poetry Bug

Poetry Folder

Poetry Literacy Bag
http://www.teachersclubhouse.com/

Poetry Posters
http://www.teachersclubhouse.com/

Poetry Corner

Poetry Window

*NOTES
Limerick Poems

A limerick is a silly, sometimes nonsense poem, made of 5 lines. Lines 1, 2 and 5 rhyme and have the same number of syllables (usually 8 or 9), while lines 3 and 4 rhyme and have the same number of syllables (usually 5 or 6).

SAMPLE POEM:

There once was a girl named Sandy
She ate and ate all my candy
Quite soon she fell ill
And ill she is still
While I’m feeling fine and dandy!
Limericks

A limerick is a whimsical poem with only five lines. This type of poem depends on rhythm and rhyme. Lines one, two, and five rhyme with each other. Lines three and four rhyme with each other. (AABBA) The first, second, and fifth lines all have this rhythm pattern: da DUM da da DUM da da DUM (notice there are 3 DUMS or beats). Say, “There once was a fellow named Tim” out loud. Now say, “da DUM da da DUM da da DUM” out loud. Notice that both have the same rhythm. The third and fourth lines have a different rhythm pattern: da DUM da da DUM (notice there are 2 DUMS or beats). Say, “He fell off the dock” out loud. Now say “da DUM da da DUM” out loud. Notice that both have the same rhythm. (A special thanks to www.gigglepoetry.com)

EXAMPLE:

A Clumsy Young Fellow Named Tim

1. There once was a fellow named Tim (A) (3 DUMs)
2. whose dad never taught him to swim. (A) (3 DUMs)
3. He fell off a dock (B) (2 DUMs)
4. and sunk like a rock. (B) (2 DUMs)
5. And that was the end of him. (A) (3 DUMs)

1. A good way to get started to pick a boy’s or girl’s name with one syllable.
   (like Bill, Sue, Tim or Jill)
   There once was a fellow (or young girl) named _______

2. Now make a list of words that rhyme with the last word in the first line:
   ___________________________ ___________________________
   ___________________________ ___________________________

3. Now write the second line using one of the rhyming words:
   Who ___________________________

4. Now think of an interesting story. What could happen to your person?
   He (or She) ___________________________

5. Now you need to go back to the list of “A” rhyming words to find one that can end the poem.

www.mrscarosclass.com
Couplets

Couplets are two lined poems with a simple rhyming pattern. Each line should be almost the same length and their endings rhyme with one another. Humor is often used in couplets.

EXAMPLE:
Roses are red, violets are blue,
Your feet stink, but I still love you!

Most people love baked beans and ham,
But mine are in the garbage can.

Larger poems can be made up of many couplets.

EXAMPLE:
I went to a party at the park,
When all of a sudden the lights went dark

Soon, my friends began to cry
Until I gave them some apple pie.

Create a couplet of your own. Then illustrate it in the box below.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

www.mrscarosclass.com
Now Write your limerick in the space provided and check your rhyme (AABBA) and rhythm (DUMs).

Title

(How many DUMs? Should be three.)

(How many DUMs? Should be three.)

(How many DUMs? Should be two.)

(How many DUMs? Should be two.)

(How many DUMs? Should be three.)

Now illustrate your limerick in the box below.
Jumpstart! Poetry by Pie Corbett
(David Fulton Publishers) 200pp £11.99

Jumpstart! Poetry is about involving children as creative writers through writing poems. The book contains a bank of ideas that can be drawn upon when teaching poetry but also at other times to provide a source for creative writing that children relish. There are more than 100 quick warm-ups to fire the brain into a creative mood and to 'jumpstart' reading, writing and performing poetry in any key stage 1 or 2 classroom.

Black's Rhyming and Spelling Dictionary by Pie Corbett and Ruth Thomson
(A & C Black)

A fantastic school resource. Every primary classroom should have half a dozen. (See the review in Latest Poetry Books) As well as a well laid out rhyming dictionary it contains hints on writing poems and lots of examples.

If you see any books you would like to buy - please buy them through us. The Poetry Zone carries no advertising and its only source of income is through its association with amazon. For American and other non-UK visitors you can still order from amazon.co.uk as your credit card will simply be debited in the appropriate currency. This is a chance to buy first-rate books that are not available in your own country - and amazon usually gives good discounts which will often offset the price of postage. To order a book simply click on it and you will be taken directly to the relevant amazon page.

If you have any books you'd like to recommend (or to review) please let us know.
**THE TEACHING ZONE**

Recommended Books

**Recommended Books**
Some of the best teaching books around

**Children's Poetry Bookshelf**
Information on the Poetry Book Society

See also - [Latest Poetry Books](http://www.poetryzone.indirect.co.uk/index2.htm)
Poetry book reviews with classroom guide.

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**BUY Able Writers in Your School** by Brian Moses and Roger Stevens

*Developing the Potential of Gifted Children in Primary Schools: A Practical Guide for Teachers.*

(Brilliant Publications) 138pp £13.50

Able Writers in Your School will help you to develop the potential of your gifted pupils - and all the other pupils in your school as well. It passes on ideas, practical advice and lesson plans that the authors have found work well with brighter students. Over 70 inspirational examples of children's work show how the ideas work in practice and can raise the standard of children's work.
Discussing poetry …

- Who can tell me in one sentence what this poem is all about?
- Is there something you particularly liked about this poem? Is there anything you disliked?
- Does this poem remind you of anything?
- Using your senses, what did you hear? see? taste?
- Does anything puzzle you about this poem?
- How does this poem make you feel?
- What did the poet do with words to hold your attention?
- Would you want to ask the poet anything about this poem?
- Would you like to read/listen to more poems by this poet? Why or why not?

Poetry Writing format …

- Mini-lesson
- Discussion
- Modeling
- Rough draft
- Editing
- Copy over poem and add decorations
- Cut out
- Punch hole in top
- Insert a piece of yarn, 11-12 inches long

Poem

By Langston Hughes

I loved my friend.

He went away from me.

There’s nothing more to say.

The poem ends,

Soft as it began –

I loved my friend.

Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening

By Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know,
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fills up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound’s the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

+ Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening

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To ask if there is some mistake.
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Poetry Writing format …

- Hang item on the Poetry Tree for all to enjoy!

- **September**
  - Leaf pattern

- **October**
  - Ghost pattern

- **November**
  - Pilgrim

- **December**
  - Socking pattern

- **January**
  - Snowman
Poem of the Week

- Hook your boys by starting with humorous poems that rhyme
- Have fun with choral readings — the variations are limitless
- Use the poem to practice skills:
  - Find the nouns, verbs, and adjectives
  - Look for a synonym/antonym
  - Recite the poem from memory

More Poetry Ideas ...

- Poetry Corner
- Poetry Folders
- Poetry Bag
- Poetry Window
- Traveling Poetry Bag
- Poetry Templates
Poetry Corner

Poetry Folder
Build a poetry folder …

- Save memorized poems from throughout the year
- Number each poem as it is put into the folder for easy reference
- Share favorite poems as an extra classroom activity

Poetry Bug
Teacher hides the “Poetry Bug” in a boy’s desk each morning.

- The boy that catches the “Poetry Bug” shares a favorite poem.
- The boy that catches the “Poetry Bug” selects poems from the Poetry Corner to read during D.E.A.R. time.

Poetry Window
Boys collect “seeds” for future writing!

Traveling Poetry Bag
School-Home Connection
- Includes: Letter to Parents, 2-3 poetry books, set of choice task cards, rhyming words matching game, and journal

Poetry Templates
My Five Senses Poem
By: ______________

I hear __________________
I see __________________
I smell __________________
Alligator Pie

Alligator, pie, alligator pie.
If I don’t get some I think I’m gonna die.
Give away the green grass, give away the sky.
But don’t give away my alligator pie.

Alligator stew, alligator stew.
If I don’t get some I don’t know what I’ll do.
Give away my furry hat, give away my shoe.
But don’t give away my alligator stew.

Poetry Websites

- Poetry Websites
- Teacher’s Clubhouse
- Poetry Posters
- Poetry Templates
- Poetry Teacher’s.com
- Poetry Learning
- Poetry Zone
- Poetry Lesson
- Poetry and resources