

POETRY IN MOTION

A MENTOR MOM © CLASS

by Julie Finlayson

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Read, Read, Read

- ♦ Read poems in the dark with flashlights for a change of pace.
- ♦ Write to family and friends and ask them to share their favorite poems with you, then read them around the dinner table as the letters (or emails!) come pouring in. Collect these in a book and let your children illustrate it.
- ♦ Choose a new poem for each day and post it as the "poem of the day." Establish a tradition of having family members take turns reading it aloud at a certain time each day (breakfast, bedtime, etc.). Choose poems to follow the seasons of the year, post several poems from the same poet, or just choose randomly.
- ♦ Do choral readings of poetry or read a poem "reader's theatre" style, taking turns for different lines or stanzas. Choral readings are especially effective in poems where there is a repeating refrain. Children enjoy the anticipation of chiming in when the refrain comes up.
- ♦ Combine prose and poetry. After reading a picture book or novel, find a poem that reflects the book's subject or theme.

Write, Write, Write

- ♦ Have a writing prompt box or jar with ideas for poetry. You can even have different jars for choosing topic and poem type. For example, the child might draw a slip of paper with the topic summertime, while a slip of paper from a different jar might assign the poetry type as a limerick. You could also put poetry types on a wheel (like a job chart).
- ♦ After reading prose, have children write a poem reflecting the theme of the book as a whole or describing a small section within the story. They could also give one of the characters a voice through their poem.
- ♦ Ask questions and have children answer them in poem form. For example, "How does a brook sound?" or "What song does a cricket sing?" These types of questions encourage children's imaginations and stimulate some unique answers.
- ♦ Some very silly, funny poems can be written by giving children a few seemingly unrelated words and telling them to write a poem about it. Monkeys, librarians, and root beer... donuts, balloons, and airplanes... worms, bubble gum, and a policeman... the possibilities are endless.
- ♦ Writing prompts don't have to be imaginary. Children can write about family experiences, vacation memories, or even times that they misbehaved. Or have them write about someone they know, a favorite hobby, or a bad dream.
- ♦ Encourage kids who really enjoy writing poetry to carry notepads with them to write down ideas. It could be an experience, an observation made about a stranger, or even a funny word or set of rhyming words.



would like to learn as a family. You can add graphics to the pages to make

- ♦ Provide a list of puns, and have the child write a poem where the pun is the last line. Have them make a list of ideas for what could lead up to that pun. Then they can construct the poem using their best ideas.

Memorize

- ♦ Using a notebook with page protector inserts, type up and print off copies of poems that you

them more interesting. Work on one poem at a time until you have it memorized.

- ♦ Use hand motions or actual sign language motions to help jog your memory of the key words in a poem. This is helpful for all ages of children (and adults), and is also fun!
- ♦ Choose poems that are approachable by the whole family if memorizing together. Long poems are challenging but can be done. Only you can guess what your family can handle. Short poems that teach a moral are excellent ways to instill character training ideas.

Check Your Calendar

- ♦ Find a list online, or in a book, of poet birthdays. Choose classic and modern poets, adult and children's poets, whatever tickles your fancy. Learn about the poet on his or her birthday and read a few of their poems.
- ♦ Choose poems that correlate to holidays and seasons. Pick a family favorite poem for each holiday and establish a tradition of reading/reciting it each time that holiday rolls around.
- ♦ Make birthday cards for family and friends and include original poetry inside as a token gift. The poetry can be about anything, and can be serious or funny. A poem about the birthday person would be especially appreciated.
- ♦ And don't forget... **April is National Poetry Month!**



Map It

- ♦ Include poetry in your geography studies. Place a world map on the wall and, with a pin, mark the countries as you study a few poems from that culture. This can also be done with a USA map, marking the home states of different American poets.

Collect & Embellish

- ♦ Buy an inexpensive sketch book (I got ours at Wal-Mart) or use a notebook with sheet protectors for each child. Have children use their best handwriting to copy the poems into the book. They can then illustrate and embellish in any way that suits them: drawings, clip art, rubber stamps, etc. This book can become a treasured keepsake. Have them include their own original works as well. You can use this idea to help with copywork and dictation exercises.
- ♦ As you study various subjects try to insert poetry where you can. If you are studying the weather in science, collect poems along the way that deal with rain, wind, clouds, snow, etc. There are many poems written about historic battles and famous personalities.

? Solve the Mystery

- ♦Write or print out a poem with or without illustrations. Cut the paper into puzzle pieces and put in an envelope or baggie. Have a child put the puzzle together, then read the poem aloud.
- ♦Type up a poem that your child is not familiar with. Cut the poem into strips, with one line per strip. Mix them up and have the child try to assemble the poem. This is a good way to work on rhyme and meter skills.
- ♦Choose several poems with different subjects or themes and print each out on its own sheet of paper. For each poem collect a picture, toy, or other object that represents the poems. Have children try to match the objects to the poems.
- ♦Choose an interesting photograph or print and post it where your children can easily see it. Have them hunt for a poem they feel fits the mood of the poem or describes the scene, or have them write their own. To piggyback this idea with another subject, choose artwork from a famous artist as the inspiration picture.

🎭 Be Silly

- ♦Remember Mad Libs? Using any appropriate poem (limericks can be really fun), choose certain words to take out. Without them knowing what the poem is about, ask kids to help you fill in the blanks by giving you new words to replace the words you took out. Once you have filled in the blanks with their suggestions, read the “new” version. This can be so hilarious!

👥 Join Forces ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

- ♦If you have studied poetry in a group or co-op setting, have an election to vote for the most favorite poems. Allow the children to campaign for their personal favorites.
- ♦Have a poetry recitation contest. Within a group have each child pick a poem to memorize and recite before the group. Offer inexpensive prizes for the winners (or for all participants). Who wins? The person who makes you want to run home and learn the poem yourself. Watch for eye contact, clarity, expression, and tone.
- ♦Exchange poetry with a poetry pen pal.
- ♦Try making Partner Poems. Have one child write a line, then pass it to the other, who writes the next line. Back and forth, back and forth until it's done. Choose the meter and rhyme pattern in advance. It's a great way to help kids recognize these poetry features.



🎨 Get Creative

- ♦When recording poetry in a notebook, be creative about how to write it down. If it's a poem about a tornado, write the words in the shape of a tornado. If it's a poem about bees, write the poem in a trailing way, tracing the path a bee might make. A poem about bath time might lend itself well to being written in a disappearing spiral, similar to the way water drains when the bathtub is emptied.
- ♦Lots of poems will lend themselves well to dioramas. Miniature displays in shoe boxes are an excellent way for kids to portray their interpretations of a poem. Do this as a group and hold a special event where kids recite or read their poems and have their dioramas on display.
- ♦Act it out! Puppet shows and short poetry plays are a fun way to get moving with poetry. Don't forget to video the final product to preserve for posterity (or post on your blog for friends and family to see!). Children can also recite the poem while using props that relate to their poem.
- ♦Have a kid into technology? Legos? Playmobil? Army men? All of the

above? Make a stop-motion movie. Several tutorials and tips pages can be found on the Internet, and YouTube has an abundance of stop-motion movies to inspire you (just screen them first!). Either place the words in the movie with subtitles or have the child do a voice over. Add some fun music.

- ♦Slideshows are an easy way to portray a poem. With photos and pictures gathered online, taken by your child, or with their own illustrations create a computer slideshow. Voiceovers or subtitles can depict the words of the poem. Music can be added. If you have a budding music composer, have them compose original music for the slideshow.

Resources for Teaching Poetry (*indicates books found in my local library)

📖 Pass the Poetry Please by Lee Bennett Hopkins*

Includes sections devoted to acquainting children with various poets, explaining various poem types, inspiring children to write poetry. Also has a section of ideas for studying poetry.

📖 The Poetry Break by Caroline Feller Bauer*

Lots of ideas on how to introduce poetry with poetry selections best suited for each type of idea. Also includes a small section of themed poetry.

📖 Pizza, Pigs, and Poetry: How to Write a Poem by Jack Prelutsky*

A great resource from a great children's poet. Stories relating how he came up with certain poems, the poems themselves, and poetry writing tips.



Poetry Anthologies

📖 Favorite Poems Old and New by Helen Farris

This is my absolute favorite anthology! Such a variety of poems and poets, with the poems arranged by theme. An old book from the '50s so you might have to hunt online for a copy.

📖 The Kingfisher Book of Children's Poetry by Michael Rosen

Poems arranged by poem type. Includes subject index.

📖 The Moon is Shining Bright as Day by Ogden Nash*

A good selection of poems.

📖 A Child's First Book of Poems illustrated by Cyndy Szekeres*

Delightfully illustrated picture book of poems. A good introduction to read-aloud poems, especially for young children.

📖 The Oxford Book of Children's Verse in America chosen and edited by Donald Hall*

A good anthology with poems of varying lengths. Poems arranged by poet, from the 1600s to the mid-1900s.

📖 The Big Golden Book of Poetry: 85 Childhood Favorites edited by Jane Werner; illustrated by Gertrude Elliot.*

A good source for read-aloud poetry. Lots of quaint illustrations, mostly in black and white, but with some color pages.

📖 The Book of Pigericks by Arnold Lobel*

“Original limericks about a varied and portly population of pigs... Deliciously detailed and vibrantly colored.” A fun read aloud source.

📖 The Bill Martin Jr. Big Book of Poetry edited by Bill Martin Jr.*

Very colorful book with more contemporary illustrations. Poems arranged by theme. Another good read aloud source.

📖 Here's a Little Poem: A Very First Book of Poetry collected by Jane Yolen and Andrew Fusek Peters; illustrated by Polly Dunbar.*

Colorful, contemporary illustrations in this collection. Good for young



children.

📖 [Knock at a Star: A Child's Introduction to Poetry](#) by X.J. Kennedy and Dorothy M. Kennedy*

A nice anthology arranged by poem type.

📖 [Animal Antics in Limerick Land](#) selected by Leland B. Jacobs*

A fun little book with monochromatic illustrations.

📖 [Read-Aloud Rhymes for the Very Young](#) selected by Jack Prelutsky; illustrated by Marc Brown.*

If your kids like the character Arthur, created by Marc Brown, they will enjoy this book as it is very Arthur-like in its illustrations. Randomly arranged poems.

📖 [The Golden Books Family Treasury of Poetry](#) selected by Louis Untermeyer*

A nice sized anthology arranged by theme. Mostly black and white illustrations. Includes many classic poems.

📖 [The Random House Book of Poetry: A Treasury of 572 Poems for Today's Child](#) selected by Jack Prelutsky

Anthology arranged by theme. Mostly black and white illustrations.

📖 [A Light in the Attic](#) and [Where the Sidewalk Ends](#) written and illustrated by Shel Silverstein

Funny illustrations and poems make these books a great addition to your home library.

📖 [Hailstones and Halibut Bones](#) by Mary O'Neill

A delightful, playful, imaginative, creative little book of poems answering the questions "What is gold?", "What is black?", etc. A must read.

A Few Good Poetry Websites

📖 <http://www.storyit.com/Classics/JustPoems/classicpoems.htm>

This is a collection of classical poems for children to read online with selections to print. Most of the poems for print are lightly illustrated and can be used for individual student copies.

📖 <http://www.gigglepoetry.com>

Sections on learning to write poems, activities for poetry fun, poetry play scripts, and word games.

📖 <http://www.poetryarchive.org/childrensarchive/home.do>

Searchable poetry archive. You can also browse by theme, poetic form, or poet. Features a regularly running section called "Ask the Poet".

📖 <http://www.poetry4kids.com>

A great poetry page from poet Kenn Nesbitt. Funny poems, poetry lessons, poetry podcasts, poetry games, poetry links, rhyming dictionary, and info on poetry writing contests.

📖 <http://www.kristinegeorge.com>

A lovely website from Kristine O'Connell George ("writer, poet, tadpole rancher..."). Teacher's guides, author comments, audio clips and more for some of her titles listed. Poetry resources for teachers, librarians, homeschool families and writers of all ages.

📖 <http://www.kathimitchell.com/poemtypes.html>

Don't let the "homemade" looking nature of this site fool you. She's got a lot of information about poem types, with examples included.

Some Great Quotes on Poetry

📖 *"Almost everyone is as full of words waiting to sing as a forest is full of birds before sunrise."*

--Harry Behn

📖 *"A poem is merely—'A dance of breath that has learned to fly!'"*

--Barbara Juster Esbensen

📖 *"Like a piece of ice on a hot stove the poem must ride on its own melting."*

--Robert Frost

📖 *"Poetry is a literature of brush strokes."*

--Nikki Grimes

📖 *"Poetry helps us travel beyond ourselves."*

--X.J. Kennedy

📖 *"Poetry can be as natural and effective a form of self-expression as singing and shouting."*

--Karla Kuskin

📖 *"Poetry is a blind date with enchantment."*

--J. Patrick Lewis

📖 *"Poetry is beautiful shorthand."*

--William Cole

📖 *"Poetry is speaking painting."*

--Plutarch

📖 *"A good poem is delicious—as delicious as a chocolate-chip cookie!"*

--Jack Prelutsky



Please email me with ideas and questions or to receive a link for the visuals used in the class.

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