



National Poetry Month

Robert Frost defined poetry as “serious play.” Enjoy some serious play with your students during National Poetry Month!

Did You Know?

Poetry is derived from the Greek word *poiein*—to make. The ancient Greeks used this word for any artist—writer, musician, painter—who created artwork that did not previously exist.

Scholars believe that the literature of all cultures began with poetry. Poets were respected as keepers of traditions.

In Britain, a Poet Laureate is named by the monarchy and writes verses for court and state occasions. In the United States, the Poet Laureate serves as a poetry consultant to the Library of Congress and is required to give one public poetry reading and lecture. The Poet Laureate is appointed by the Librarian of Congress.

Literature Selections

A House is a House for Me by Mary Ann Hoberman: Viking, 1982. (Poetry, 44 pg.) This rhyming picture book describes a variety of dwelling places for people, animals, etc., and provides an entertaining study of metaphor: “a rose is a house for a smell, a throat is a house for a hum.”

And the Green Grass Grew All Around: Folk Poetry for Everyone by Alvin Schwartz: HarperCollins, 1999. (Poetry anthology, 208 pg.) A delightful collection of over 250 poems, limericks, jump-rope rhymes, riddles, and more.

Honey I Love by Eloise Greenfield: HarperFestival, 1995. (Poetry, 42 pg.) Short poems about the things and people that children love, including cousins, mothers, laughing, and water sprinklers.

The Random House Book of Poetry for Children selected by Jack Prelutsky: Random House, 2000. (Poetry anthology, 256 pg.) The 572 selected poems are short, but long on laughter, imagery, and rhyme. They are grouped around 14 categories that include food, nonsense, home, children, and seasons.



Class Favorites

“Gather flowers” to celebrate National Poetry Month! Inform students that the word anthology originally meant flower gathering (anthos-flower, logia-collecting), but now refers to a collection of literary pieces or works of art or music. As students read poetry, instruct them to choose 5-10 favorite poems to create a personal anthology, which can be themed, if desired. Instruct students to copy the poems and authors’ names in their best handwriting. Provide résumé or other special paper for students to use. Students can illustrate the action of the poem or how the poem makes them feel. Have students insert the poems in a binder or folder and decorate the cover. Each child can write an introduction explaining why he chose each poem. Create a class anthology by having each child choose one poem from his anthology to add to a class book. Every day, read a poem from the class book or encourage children to recite or read to the class.



Poetry Contest

Put your poetry on the line by having students judge it! Encourage students to feel comfortable writing poetry by allowing them to “judge” adults’ poetry before they begin writing their own. Ask other teachers to write poems for the contest. Read the poems to your class (or if possible, have each writer read her own poem) and let the students vote on a favorite. Students can create a banner, certificate, or other form of award for the winner.

All About Me

Let students begin poetry writing with a topic they know better than anyone else—themselves! Write the format for the poem on the board and have students write the poems on white paper. Let each student attach his final copy to an 11" x 17" piece of colorful construction paper. Take an instant photograph of each child to add to the work. Create a bulletin board display titled *We Are Poets and We Know It!*

First Name

Is (3 adjectives that describe you)

Loves (3 people or things)

Is good at (3 things)

Wonders (3 things)

Likes to eat (3 things)

Enjoys (3 things)

Laughs at (3 things)

Last Name



Beth
Is a fast runner, a quick thinker, a roller skater
Loves foot races, smiling faces, new places
Is good at cartwheels, swan dives, cannonballs
Wonders about computers, compasses, what's for dinner
Likes to eat pizza, pizza, pizza
Enjoys bike riding, puzzles, looking at things upside-down
Laughs at silly jokes, Mom's cartwheels, Dad's dinners
Layton

Class Poem

All together now . . . write poetry! Ease students into more poetry writing by making it a collective effort. Choose a topic that your class might be particularly interested in, such as kites, soccer, rainbows, etc. Ask each student to think of one line of poetry about that topic. Attach several sheets of paper together to form one long sheet. Give it to the first student and have him write his line, then fold the paper down and pass it to the next student. That student should write her line without seeing what the previous child wrote. When everyone has written a line, open the paper and read the collective poem to the class.

School Cafeteria

"Rumble, rumble" says my tummy, ready to eat something yummy!

Tuesdays mom packs my lunch so I don't have to eat mystery meat.

Don't show Chewed peas, please!

The ice cream line is always slow . . .

Sitting at the table, eating fast so I can play outside.

sectioned trays keep the peace between apple crisp and barbecue sauce.

louder and louder and LOUDER until "SILENT LUNCH!"

Periodical Poetry

Students can write poetry by choosing from words right in front of their eyes! Distribute magazines to groups of students and have them cut out 10-15 individual words. Remind children to include verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and articles, but do not tell them how the words will be used. Have students exchange words with a classmate and create poems with words they did not cut out. Give each child a sheet of poster board and let her glue the words to the paper to create a free verse poem. Free verse is a type of poem which conforms to no set rules; it has no fixed pattern of meter or rhyme. Display the completed poems on a bulletin board or wall.

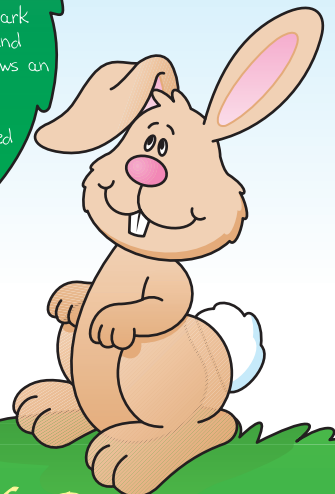
Discover **COLORS**
 Catch **miracles**
 the **secret** place
 on a **young** **COOLE**

Replace the Commonplace!

Jump-start students' writing by exposing them to new words! Develop a list of "tired," overused words such as nice, fun, etc. Let students use dictionaries and thesauruses to find exciting synonyms for each word. Have students write poems using at least five new words. Display the new-word poems on a "poet-tree." (Use the tree from Easter Tree, page 22.) Have students copy their poems on leaf-shaped, green construction paper. Bend paper clips into S-shapes and use to attach the completed poems to the branches.

"Do you want to know a secret?" whispered Tommy.
 "Yes," Billy yelled.
 "Shh! Promise not to tell anybody?" questioned Tommy.
 "Yes," Billy exclaimed.
 "I like Judy," Tommy declared.
 "You like Judy?" Billy shouted.
 "Oh, no," Tommy thought.

With glee my puppy runs liberated in the grass. His bark is cheerful and true. He follows an unfamiliar smell, a delicious red flower!



Fill-in-the-Blanks Poem

Star light, star bright. Ouch, a mosquito bite! Show students there's more than one way to complete a poem. Children can begin learning about rhyming patterns by working with parts of a poem. Give each student a copy of a poem whose rhyming pattern is AABB, such as Dr. Seuss's *Too Many Daves* or *The Wolf* by Georgia Roberts Durston. (The Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Random House, 1983.) Delete every even-numbered line and have students fill in the missing lines. Let students exchange poems to see how their writing diverged from the original piece and how their poems differed from their classmates'.

Original (blue) text quoted from the story *Too Many Daves* in the book *The Sneetches and Other Stories* by Dr. Seuss (Random Library, 1987).

Did I ever tell you that Mrs. McCave
 well, she did. And that wasn't a smart thing to do.
 come into the house, dave! She doesn't get ONE.
 This makes things quite difficult at the McCaves!

Did I ever tell you that Mrs. McCave
 had a long beard and needed a shave.
 Well, she did. And that wasn't a smart thing to do.
 She cut herself shaving and cried "Boo hoo hoo
 come into the house, Dave! She doesn't get ONE.
 hint from her husband how to make shaving fun.
 This makes things quite difficult at the McCaves'
 and probably will until they're in their graves.

Similes and Metaphors

Similes are as easy as pie and can be learned as quick as a wink! Inform students that a simile is a figure of speech that compares two unlike things. The comparison is often introduced by the words like or as. Ask students to think of fresh comparisons for easy as pie or quick as a wink or other well-worn similes such as cool as a cucumber, warm as toast, etc.

Like similes, metaphors compare two unlike things but do not include the words like and as. While the simile states that something is similar to another, the metaphor states that something is something else. For example, "love is a red rose." Call out words such as book, picnic, recess, etc., and ask students to think of metaphors for those words. Let the class judge the quality or power of the metaphors. Ask children how much additional information or feeling the metaphors give to each word.

When students understand similes and metaphors, let them choose a topic for a poem and follow the pattern below to complete the poem.

(Chosen topic) is (a color)	(metaphor)
It sounds like . . .	(simile)
It tastes as . . .	(simile)
It smells like . . .	(simile)
(Chosen topic) is . . .	(metaphor)

A cartwheel is green and
blue and green again.
It sounds like whoosh.
It tastes as fresh as
a honeysuckle.
It smells like grass.
A cartwheel is freedom.
by Marty Rose



Onomatopoeia

Teach students to make word music! Introduce students to the sounds of language or onomatopoeia—words that sound like what they mean, such as bang and zip. Have students generate onomatopoeic lists for words such as rain, bells, wind, etc. Have them write poems using the word lists.

Rain
Plop in the puddle
I splash with my boots
Water drips from my hat

by Erin O'Shea

National Poetry Month

Haiku

Experience the balanced structure of the haiku! Haiku are unrhymed poems of three lines containing five, seven, and five syllables, respectively. They are usually light and delicate in feeling and explore nature or the season of the year.

First, practice determining syllables by reading haiku and clapping out the syllables with students as you speak the words. Then, have students circle the syllables on copied haikus. Have students choose a topic, follow the pattern to create a haiku, and then illustrate it.

Haiku

by Amy Ravella

Mice are here and there.

Mice are almost everywhere.

This small mouse is lost.



Doodle Poem

Let students turn their doodles into works of visual and poetic art. Instruct each student to make a simple doodle on the bottom half of a paper. Then, ask them to think about what the doodle looks like and write a poem about it.

Doodle poem

There once was a snail,
That was always so slow,
When the hare asked to race him,
He answered him no!

by Haxley walker



Cinquain

Give me five! Students can write cinquain poems to honor their favorite spring activities. Cinquains are unrhymed, five-line poems that can be as varied as a poet's imagination. Instruct students to choose one-word topics and to follow the pattern below. Not all cinquains follow the pattern exactly, but all must have five lines.

Line 1 (2 syllables)—states the title

Line 2 (4 syllables)—describes the title

Line 3 (6 syllables)—expresses an action

Line 4 (8 syllables)—expresses a feeling

Line 5 (2 syllables)—another word for the title

Easter

Yellow, purple

Finding eggs everywhere

Celebrating a happy day

Joyous

by May Vellana



Nonsense Poems

A nonsense poem allows for some real serious play! Instruct students to choose two-word titles for their poems and compose several lines of poetry. Then, rewrite the poem by switching the beginning consonants of two words in each line. Let students read their poems aloud to the class. Have each child illustrate his poem on a separate paper.

The Sellow Yun

The sellow yun brings lays of right,
And makes your day brappy and hight.
The sellow yun brings hunshine to your seart.

by Jason Gamble

Japanese Lantern

Write wonderful words with alliteration! Have students practice using alliteration when writing Japanese Lantern poems. Alliteration is the repetition of a stressed initial sound—usually a consonant. The Japanese Lantern poem should create a feeling and picture in the reader's mind. Have students choose a subject and follow the format, using words that begin with the same sound whenever possible.

Line 1 has one syllable
Line 2 has two syllables
Line 3 has three syllables
Line 4 has four syllables
Line 5 is the same as line one

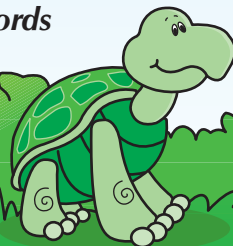


Mobile Poetry

Create poetry in motion with these mobiles! Instruct each child to choose a title and follow the format below to create the poem. Give each child 10 colorful index cards and instruct him to write one word on each card. Draw a diagram on the board that illustrates how the cards should be attached. Have students follow the diagram, punching holes in the cards and tying them together with yarn.



Title—2 words
2 words
4 words
2 words



Favorite Poem T-Shirts

Students can display their love of poetry by wearing poetry t-shirts! Have each child bring in a plain white t-shirt. Let each student choose a favorite poem and write the title or some favorite lines from the poem on the t-shirt, using fabric paint or markers. Allow students to decorate the shirts with sequins, buttons, or ribbon. Children can write Natural-Born Poet or We Celebrated National Poetry Month, along with the date, on the backs of the shirts and wear them during the Poetry Reading (page 92).

