

WEBSITE RESOURCE W10.4

Playing with poetry

The next time you are with a class, plan to have some fun with sharing and writing poetry. You might want to work with a small group or with the whole class. You might want to make an anthology of the children's work, or record it and play it in assembly. . . . anything is possible – just have an enjoyable time. When you've found some poems you like, note them in Website resource W 10.1 for future reference and after the activity, share your experiences with the group so that you can add to your repertoire of poetry and activities.

You might choose an activity from anywhere in the chapter, but here are some more ideas:

Creating new stories

Younger children may recall times when they've been separated from the adults who are caring for them. Michael Rosen's poem 'Lost' in the collection *A Great Big Cuddle* could be a starting point for drawing and telling stories about being lost. A lot of adults will remember such times as well, so they can tell their stories too!

For middle primary, 'From Carnival to Cabbage and Rain' by Julie Holder describes the carnival and what happens after it is over. A good opportunity for writing in role as a spectator during and after a public event.

With older classes, Margaret Atwood's 'Song of the Worms' offers a scary starting point for writing about what happens when the worms do attack.

Transforming poems

With younger children, make a storyboard for a 'trailer' for a narrative poem or rewrite a nursery rhyme from the point of view of one of the characters; for example 'I only came to say hello,' by Miss Muffet's spider. Children might be invited to make their own presentations or animations of poetry.

Older classes might like the mysterious traditional narrative poem like 'The Story of Canobie Dick' by Libby Houston could be the basis for an extended sequence of work making a 'true crime' documentary, with suitable scary background music, about just what happened when Dick tried to sell his horses to the old man on the mountainside.

Soundscapes and landscapes

Almost any poem lends itself to being accompanied by sound effects: with middle and upper primary, try 'The Listeners' by Walter de la Mare, or 'Welsh Incident' by Robert Graves. Using instruments, other implements or just the voice, ask groups to record soundscapes to capture the mood of the poem. Soundscapes make a good group discussion activity that helps in understanding the poem as the group decide which sounds to use when, in what intensity and for how long.

Younger children might draw as well as make the sounds for the creatures in Benjamin Zephaniah's *Nature Trail* – a lovely, lively book for very young children.

Replying to poems

A letter of apology to the penguin who is complaining about the fridge in 'Penguin Complaints' by Jo Shapcott (using the quirky layout of the poem), outlining how improvements will be made.

Sending a message back to the Loch Ness Monster after reading the Loch Ness Monster's song by Edwin Morgan (<https://poetryarchive.org/poem/loch-ness-monsters-song/>). (Lots of fun to be had with this one!)

Poems and collections

- Graves, Robert 'Welsh Incident' (<https://www.poetrybyheart.org.uk/poems/welsh-incident>).
- Houston, Libby (1990) 'The Story of Canobie Dick: A tale from the Borders' in *The Oxford Book of Story Poems* collected by Michael Harrison and Christopher Stuart-Clark. Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780192760876.
- McGough, Roger (ed.) (illustrated Sheila Moxley) (2001) *100 Best Poems for Children Chosen by Children*. London: Penguin Books. ISBN 9780141310589. (The following are all included: Margaret Atwood 'Song of the Worms', Julie Holder 'From Carnival to Cabbage and Rain', Walter de la Mare 'The Listeners')
- Jo Shapcott 'Penguin Complaints'.
- Rosen, Michael (illustrated by Chris Riddell) (2017) *A Great Big Cuddle: Poems for the very young*. Walker Books. ISBN 9781406373462.
- Zephaniah, Benjamin (illustrated Nila Aye) (2022) *Nature Trail*. Hachette Children's Books. ISBN 9781408361269.