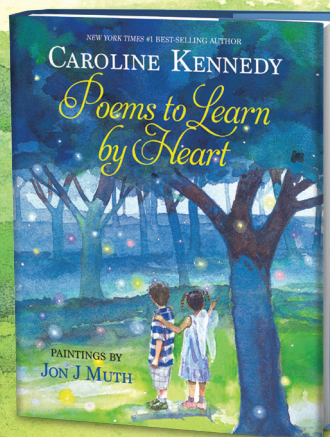


TEACHER'S GUIDE
for
*Poems to Learn
by Heart*

There's a poem to celebrate
every moment in life.



People often ask me why they should learn a poem by heart. In today's world, where it is so easy to look things up, we discount the value of memorization. For example, kids don't see the point of learning the multiplication tables when they have a calculator. But it makes us feel more confident to know that we have the knowledge to solve a problem, rather than having to depend on a device to do the work for us. It's the same with words. Poets distill life's lessons into the fewest possible words. But those tiny packages of words contain worlds of images and experiences and feeling. If our circumstances change and things seem to be falling apart, we can recall a poem that reassures us. If we find ourselves in unfamiliar or frightening surroundings, a poem can remind us that others have journeyed far and returned safely home. If we learn poems by heart, we will always have their wisdom to draw on, and we gain understanding that no one can take away.



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Common Core Alignment

This guide is aligned with the College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards for Literature, Writing, Language, Speaking and Listening. The broad CCR standards are the foundation for the grade-level-specific Common Core State Standards.



Introduction

Students who hear poems read aloud every day and who participate in reading and reciting poetry orally will naturally engage in a great deal of verbal interaction, higher-level thinking, and critical analysis, and will come to memorize favorite poems that they have asked to hear again and again. In *Poems to Learn by Heart*, students have access to poetry in all its varieties, from classics to contemporary gems, by well-known poets and new voices.

How to Begin

It is always best to begin by choosing poems that you enjoy. It is hard to “sell” a poem that does not speak to you personally. Next, practice reading the poem aloud to yourself a few times to get comfortable with the words, lines, pauses, and rhythms. Poet Eve Merriam advocates reading out loud, even when you are by yourself, avoiding the tendency to read in a singsong voice and instead paying attention to the line breaks for pauses and read-aloud cues.



When sharing the poem with students, read a poem at least twice, although they may often ask to hear it even more. Poet and teacher Georgia Heard says that we should make sure there is a lot of silence around a first reading [1999]. Try silently counting to five if you are initially uncomfortable with the quiet. Give students a few moments to absorb the words and meaning of the poem. Next, invite students to join in reading the poem aloud, experimenting with different vocal arrangements as you all gain confidence. In this guide you will find suggested activities for many poems from this collection. As students engage in regular sharing of poems, they often request “repeat performances,” particularly during transition times in the school day. Keep the poems handy, and repeat, repeat, repeat. That is the most natural way to promote poem memorization.

Poems and Activities

This anthology gathers over a hundred poems, both classic and contemporary, in nine thematic categories. These categories are both student-friendly and useful for teaching. To facilitate that process, three poems have been targeted in each section for closer study—one for the primary grades (K–3), one for the intermediate grades (4–6), and one for the secondary grades (7–12). However, these grade-level designations are guidelines only and are not intended to suggest reading or Lexile levels. Indeed, poetry-loving seven-year-olds will pore over the longer poems, challenging themselves to learn a “hard” poem, and older students will certainly enjoy the wise and pithy words of the more concise poems.

Here I Am *and other poems about the self*

Primary (K–3)

From *The World is Round*, by Gertrude Stein (p. 18)

Share this simple poem out loud by dividing students into two groups. First, invite everyone to say the first line with you in unison, slowly and with great emphasis (“Here I am”). Then have Group 1 say lines 2 and 3, and have Group 2 say lines 4 and 5. Practice and perform, and then switch groups so the class gains experience saying the whole poem. You can then use the poem as a technique for lining students up during transitional times (e.g., leaving for lunch or recess). The teacher will begin by saying loudly, “Here I am,” and the kids will respond with the rest of the lines of the poem (once it’s familiar and committed to memory) as they take their places in line. All students must be lined up before all the words of the last line are spoken (“where I am”).

(Common Core Standards RL.K.5; RL.1.4; RL.2.4)

Intermediate (4–6)

“Don’t Worry if Your Job is Small,” by Anonymous (p. 26)

First, “echo-read” this poem with the students, inviting them to repeat each line after you read it or say it aloud. Then, divide the class into two groups, with the first group saying the first two lines and the second group saying the last two lines. Then, reverse the groups so that everyone can have a turn saying the last line. This fun short poem can also be sung, to the tune of “99 Bottles of Pop on the Wall.” You can even record their reading (or singing) and use it as a ringtone on your phone.

(Common Core Standards RL.4.2; RL.4.5; RL.5.2; RL.5.4; RL.5.6; RL.6.4; RL.6.9; RL.6.10)

Secondary (7–12)

“If,” by Rudyard Kipling (p. 31)

Begin by inviting all students to say the word “If,” which begins most of the couplets of this classic poem. Then, challenge students to pair with partners to perform each couplet. Invite partners to create a drawing, symbol, or icon representing their couplets (e.g., a head, a question mark, a line of people waiting, etc.). Place these images in a line on the wall. Then invite students to stand by their pictures as they say their lines. Repeat, inviting the whole class to join in. Finally, consider discussing the final line of the poem. Do these poetic “guidelines” apply to young *women* as well? Why or why not?

(Common Core Standards RL.7.4; RL.7.5; RL.7.7; RL.7.10; RL.8.4; RL.8.10; RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.2;



I Dreamed I Had to Pick a Mother Out

and other poems about family

Primary (K–3)

“The Parent,” by Ogden Nash (p. 45)

Although this very short poem is humorous, it may take some discussion and explanation for young children to understand. First, “echo-read” the poem with the students, inviting them to repeat each line after you read it or say it aloud. Then position the students in two lines, back-to-back. Challenge one line of students to say the first line of the poem, and the other line of students to say the second. As they near the end of the final line, the second group of students can turn around, wagging their fingers at the other line of students, suggesting a scolding parent. After performing the poem several times, invite students to switch places and lines, and perform the poem again. You can record the performance, to share at an open house or parent meeting.

(Common Core Standards RL.K.5; RL.1.4; RL.2.4; RL.3.5)

Intermediate (4–6)

“Herbert Glerbertt,” by Mary Ann Hoberman (p. 40)

Make a list of the key words from the poem on the board (*brother, mother, another, bother, father*) and talk about how the poet uses their similarities to comic effect in the poem (two syllables, ending in “ther”). Then invite four volunteers, pairs, or groups to “adopt” one stanza, practice it, and then perform it for the group. Start slowly, then challenge students to say it faster and faster for greater comic effect.

(Common Core Standards RL.4.2; RL.4.5; RL.5.2; RL.5.4; RL.5.5; RL.5.6; RL.5.7; RL.6.4; RL.6.7; RL.6.9; RL.6.10)



Secondary (7–12)

“Ballad of Birmingham,” by Dudley Randall (p. 48)

Invite three volunteers to share this poem aloud. One reader for the mother’s stanzas (stanzas 2 and 4), one reader for the little girl’s stanzas (stanzas 1 and 3), and one for the narrator’s stanzas (stanzas 5, 6, and 7). Consider collaborating with a history teacher during a study of the civil rights and pair this powerful poem with Carole Boston Weatherford’s poetry tribute, *Birmingham, 1963* or with nonfiction resources such as *We’ve Got a Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children’s March* by Cynthia Levinson.

(Common Core Standards RL.7.4; RL.7.5; RL.7.7; RL.7.10; RL.8.4; RL.8.5; RL.8.6; RL.8.10; RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.2; RL.9-10.4; RL.9-10.5; RL.9-10.10; RL.11-12.1; RL.11-12.2; RL.11-12.4; RL.11-12.5; RL.11-12.6; RL.11-12.10)

I'm Expecting You!

and other poems about friendship and love

Primary (K–3)

“The Dream Keeper,” by Langston Hughes (p. 63)

Read the poem aloud slowly, pausing briefly after each couplet. Then challenge students to pair with a partner to perform each couplet. Invite partners to create a drawing, symbol or icon representing their couplet (e.g., dream cloud, heart, blue cloud, fingers, etc.). Place these images in a line on the wall. Then invite students to stand by their pictures as they say their lines. Repeat, inviting the whole class to join in.

(Common Core Standards RL.K.5; RL.1.4; RL.2.4; RL.3.5)

Intermediate (4–6)

“Liberty,” by Janet S. Wong (p. 69)

Begin by inviting students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance with you. Talk about the words and meaning of the Pledge with the students, especially the more challenging vocabulary. Then discuss with students how poets often use the rhythm or pattern of familiar songs, chants, and rhymes to create new poems. Read “Liberty” aloud to the students first, and then invite them to stand and chant it along with you. Invite them to copy the poem in their best handwriting or write their own poems in the cadence of the Pledge, as Wong has done, and decorate it with related images.

(Common Core Standards RL.4.2; RL.4.5; RL.5.2; RL.5.4; RL.5.5; RL.5.6; RL.5.7; RL.6.4; RL.6.5; RL.6.7; RL.6.9; RL.6.10)



Secondary (7–12)

“He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven,” by William Butler Yeats (p. 62)

This classic poem begs for a visual interpretation before students read it aloud. Students can create a slideshow or video with images evoked in the poem—of gold, silver, blue, night, light, feet, and dreams, adding a reading or performance of the poem as a voice-over to accompany the images. Consider collaborating with an art teacher to gather or create appropriate images in multiple media.

(Common Core Standards RL.7.4; RL.7.5; RL.7.7; RL.7.10; RL.8.4; RL.8.10; RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.2; RL.9-10.4; RL.9-10.5; RL.9-10.6; RL.9-10.10; RL.11-12.1; RL.11-12.2; RL.11-12.4; RL.11-12.5; RL.11-12.6; RL.11-12.10)

I Met a Little Elf-Man, Once

and other poems about fairies, ogres, and witches

Primary (K–3)

“The Little Elf,” by John Kendrick Bangs (p. 72)

Start by reading the whole poem aloud to the students, inviting them to “echo-read” the last two lines spoken by the elf (repeating each line after you). If you have a tiny elf finger puppet (or can make a simple one), use it to add liveliness while sharing the poem aloud. This poem can even be adapted to be sung. Try singing the words of this poem to the tune of “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” or “The Yellow Rose of Texas.”

(Common Core Standards RL.K.5; RL.1.4; RL.2.4; RL.3.5)



Intermediate (4–6)

“Some One,” by Walter de la Mare (p. 77)

Share this simple poem out loud by dividing students into two groups reading/reciting the couplets in an alternating fashion. Group 1 says lines 1 and 2, and Group 2 says lines 3 and 4, and so on. Practice and perform for a week, and then switch groups so the class gains experience saying the whole poem. This evocative poem also begs for sound effects. Work with students to research sounds available on the Internet and referenced in the poem (including knocking, tapping, an owl screeching, a cricket whistling, and rainfall). Record or download them to play while reading or reciting the poem aloud.

(Common Core Standards RL.4.2; RL.5.2; RL.5.4; RL.5.5.; RL.5.7; RL.6.4; RL.6.5; RL.6.7; RL.6.10)

Secondary (7–12)

“The Splendour Falls on Castle Walls,” by Alfred, Lord Tennyson (p. 83)

Challenge three volunteers to tackle this classic poem, one student per stanza, while the class as a whole joins in on the final couplet of every stanza (beginning with “Blow, bugle, blow” and ending with “dying, dying, dying”). Collaborate with a music teacher or choir director to research and learn the choral arrangement for this poem written in the 1920s by composer Frederick Delius. Or students can create a digital trailer, researching images suggested by the poem (e.g., castle walls, snowy summits, light on lakes), and recording their own voice-over reading of the poem (which is in the public domain).

(Common Core Standards RL.7.4; RL.7.5; RL.7.7; RL.7.10; RL.8.4; RL.8.10; RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.2; RL.9-10.4; RL.9-10.5; RL.9-10.6; RL.9-10.10; RL.11-12.1; RL.11-12.2; RL.11-12.4; RL.11-12.5; RL.11-12.10)

Where Can a Man Buy a Cap for His Knee?

and other nonsensical poems

Primary (K–3)

“Way Down South,” by Anonymous (p. 87)

With young children, the teacher can take the lead and read or recite the first three lines and then invite the students to chime in on the final line, “Pick on somebody your own size.” An older student can more readily memorize the entire four-line poem, with the whole group joining in on the last line. This simple poem can also be adapted to be sung to the tune of “The Farmer in the Dell,” with a bit of poetic license.

(Common Core Standards RL.K.5; RL.1.4; RL.2.4)



Intermediate (4–6)

“Herbert Glerbett,” by Jack Prelutsky (p. 91)

Four brave volunteers can tackle this hilarious poem with student memorizing each stanza. Invite the whole class to chime in saying the name Herbert Glerbett as it pops up several times. The poem also suggests simple movements and gestures (being round, swallowing, napping, etc.) that students can incorporate for a more dramatic performance.

(Common Core Standards RL.4.2; RL.4.5; RL.5.2; RL.5.4; RL.5.5; RL.5.6; RL.5.7; RL.6.4; RL.6.5; RL.6.7; RL.6.10)

Secondary (7–12)

“The Tale of Custard the Dragon,” by Ogden Nash (p. 95-97)

Middle school or high school students may find it particularly motivating to memorize this classic story poem in preparation for performing it for a younger audience, so arrange a visit to (or from) children in the younger grades, or a day care center, or students’ siblings. Write the words, “realio, trulio” in a large font on a piece of poster board and lift it to cue the audience to join in saying the phrase whenever it occurs in the poem, to make the experience more participatory. Practice the phrase with the audience before launching into the poem.

(Common Core Standards RL.7.4; RL.7.5; RL.7.7; RL.7.10; RL.8.4; RL.8.6; RL.8.10; RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.2; RL.9-10.4; RL.9-10.5; RL.9-10.10; RL.11-12.1; RL.11-12.4; RL.11-12.5; RL.11-12.6; RL.11-12.7; RL.11-12.9; RL.11-12.10)

It Is the Duty of the Student *and other poems about school*

Primary (K–3)

“Lucky Trade,” by Matthew M. Fredericks (p. 105)

Depending on the level of confidence and experience of the students, there are several ways to tackle this poem. Four students could each take one stanza, or eight students might each take a couplet (there are two couplets in each stanza).

For greater emphasis, the teacher (or leader) can say the words attributed to the Mother (“I wonder why / you want to take my place?”), with students performing the rest of the poem. You can also incorporate simple props like a lunch bag (for the “Mother”) and a briefcase (for the “child”). This rhyming poem can also be sung to the tune of “O Tannenbaum” and performed (spoken or sung) for open house or parent meetings.

(Common Core Standards RL.K.5; RL.1.4; RL.2.4; RL.3.5)



Intermediate (4–6)

“Sick,” by Shel Silverstein (p. 102)

This much-loved poem lends itself beautifully to line-around reading and recitation with students taking individual lines and performing as a group, one line after the other. Simple gestures (pointing to the affected body part mentioned in each line of the poem) can add to the fun. Or record the performance and play it for the entire school via the morning announcements, if possible. “Sick” is another singable poem, which can be done to the tune of “Bingo,” with a bit of creative adjustment for the final four lines.

(Common Core Standards RL.4.2; RL.4.5; RL.5.2; RL.5.4; RL.5.6; RL.6.4; RL.6.7; RL.6.9; RL.6.10)

Secondary (7–12)

“The Lesson,” by Billy Collins (p. 108)

This poem begs for an oversize top to accompany a reading or performance. In addition, a student may want to pose as “History,” on the couch snoring, and then, with “blustering anger,” in some unique costume suggesting his or her identity. Videotape this performance to share in history classes or with the history-teaching faculty, too.

(Common Core Standards RL.7.4; RL.7.5; RL.7.7; RL.7.10; RL.8.4; RL.8.6; RL.8.10; RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.2; RL.9-10.4; RL.9-10.5; RL.9-10.10; RL.11-12.1; RL.11-12.2; RL.11-12.4; RL.11-12.5; RL.11-12.6; RL.11-12.7; RL.11-12.9; RL.11-12.10)

We Dance Round in a Ring and Suppose

and other poems about sports and games

Primary (K–3)

“The Secret Sits,” by Robert Frost (p. 116)

For our very youngest children, adding physical movement to poetry-sharing helps them internalize words and meaning. This short Frost rhyme is perfect for this approach, suggesting that students stand in a circle, hold hands, and “dance round in a ring.” Students can take turns moving to the center to sit as the “secret” each time the poem is performed.

(Common Core Standards RL.K.5; RL.1.4; RL.2.4)

Intermediate (4–6)

“Casey at the Bat,” by Ernest Lawrence Thayer (p. 124–125)

This famous poem has been adapted in many ways. Students can find picture-book versions, audio recordings, and video trailers for inspiration. A single student can tackle the entire poem, or thirteen volunteers can each recite a single stanza, standing on the sidelines or “on base” till their turn and then moving to a makeshift “home plate” to offer his or her stanza. For variety, three volunteers can say the phrases in quotes that are attributed to Casey, the umpire, and a fan (in stanzas 8, 9, and 10) and everyone can join in on the exclamation, “Fraud!” in stanza 11. Record their readings and performances and post them on the Internet to add to the worldwide Casey collection.

(Common Core Standards RL.4.2; RL.4.5; RL.5.2; RL.5.5; RL.5.6; RL.5.7; RL.6.5; RL.6.7)



Secondary (7–12)

“We Real Cool,” by Gwendolyn Brooks (p. 119)

This poem offers opportunities for individual as well as group participation. Invite seven volunteers (the “Seven at the Golden Shovel”) to speak the first seven lines, one line per person. Then they can all join in on the final line (“Die soon”) extra slowly. In additional readings, the whole class can chime in on the word “we” as it appears multiple times in the poem, for even greater emphasis. Talk with students about the contrast between the first and last lines, the story in between, and about the tough issues raised in the simple words. What does it mean to be “cool,” and how do we walk the line between trying new things and making smart choices?

(Common Core Standards RL.7.4; RL.7.5; RL.8.4; RL.8.6; RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.2; RL.9-10.4; RL.9-10.5; RL.11-12.1; RL.11-12.4; RL.11-12.5; RL.11-12.6)

Four Score and Seven Years Ago *and other poems about war*

Primary (K–3)

“Ukase,” by Pfc. C. G. Tiggas (p. 144)

This short poem penned by a soldier reflects a simple but powerful wish in the midst of war. Four confident volunteers can lead a reading or recitation by each taking a two-line couplet until the whole class knows the poem by heart and can join in. Encourage the students to pause for a moment before saying the final line. Talk with students about what the soldier means by “the things we fought for” and make a group collage of images of some of those items. Mail the collage to a soldier or troop with a local or school connection. Students can copy the poem (in their best handwriting) to accompany the collage.

(Common Core Standards RL.K.5; RL.1.4; RL.2.4)

Intermediate (4–6)

“First The Came for the Jews,” by Martin Niemöller (p. 149)

This powerful piece came from a pastor during Hitler’s rule over Germany. It can be performed solo or with multiple voices; four volunteers can each read or recite a triplet or tercet of lines (lines 1, 2, 3; 4, 5, 6; 7, 8, 9; 10,11,12) offering a different voice for the Jew, the communist, the trade unionist, and the narrator. For greater impact, the repeated line “and I did not speak out—” can be spoken by the whole class. You can also discuss bullying, and standing up (or not) for others who find themselves powerless in the face of bullies.

(Common Core Standards RL.4.2; RL.4.5; RL.5.2; RL.5.5; RL.5.6; RL.6.5; RL.6.9)

Secondary (7–12)

“The Unknown Soldier” by Billy Rose (pp. 146–147)

In this classic poem, we hear “the spirit voice” from the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. He asks a series of questions that prompts us to examine the motives behind wars and conflicts. A narrator can set the stage by reciting the first two introductory stanzas, and then a series of eight volunteers can perform the remaining stanzas in the voices of the “spirit.” Many of these stanzas are posed as questions which the students can use as cues for intonation. Ask students to think about the last two lines—do they think the soldier died in vain? Why would he “do it all over again,” and would they, if it was them?

(Common Core Standards RL.7.5; RL.8.6; RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.2; RL.9-10.5; RL.11-12.1; RL.11-12.2; RL.11-12.5; RL.11-12.6)

The World Is So Full of a Number of Things *and other poems about nature*



Primary (K–3)

“Tommy,” by Gwendolyn Brooks (p. 160)

Nature is a favorite topic of many poets, as well as students, and also lends itself to science connections in teaching. For this poem, two groups of students can read or recite the lines—one group taking the first four lines, the second group taking the last four. You can also bring in a small flowerpot and soil, and actually plant a seed after sharing the poem aloud. As the flowerpot is tended, invite students to read or say the poem each day as they water it and watch for the seed to sprout. Display a copy of the poem nearby.

(Common Core Standards RL.K.5; RL.1.4; RL.2.4; RL.3.5)

Intermediate (4–6)

“What Are Heavy?” by Christina Rossetti (p. 155)

Break the class into two groups to share this poem orally. One group will read the question portion of each line of the poem (e.g., “What are heavy?”), while the other group will read or recite the answer portion of each line of the poem (e.g., “sea-sand and sorrow”). Once they become expert at the reading/recitation, challenge them to switch places and say the opposite parts. Talk about how the poet offers both a concrete (“sea-sand”) and abstract (“sorrow”) answer to the questions she poses. Discuss how each item answers her question (“What are heavy?”), too. Brainstorm other questions and concrete/abstract answer pairs that they might offer (e.g., What are light? Sunbeams and friendship).

(Common Core Standards RL.4.2; RL.4.5; RL.5.2; RL.5.4; RL.5.5; RL.5.6; RL.6.4; RL.6.5; RL.6.7; RL.6.10)

Secondary (7–12)

“In beauty may I walk,” from the Navajo, translated by Jerome K. Rothenberg (p. 159)

This distinctive poem can be performed in a variety of ways, given how students may choose to interpret the unique arrangement of lines and phrases. One approach might be to challenge two volunteers to master the lines along the left margin, with one of the students chiming in only each time the word “beauty” or “beautifully” occurs in the poem, to add emphasis. You can cue the entire audience to join in on the words “may I walk.” Practice it with a variety of tempos, quick and slow, with pauses for emphasis, or as more connected text. If possible, invite a dancer, dance instructor, or music teacher to add movement, music, or rhythm instruments.

(Common Core Standards RL.7.4; RL.7.5; RL.7.7; RL.7.10; RL.8.4; RL.8.10; RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.2; RL.9-10.4; RL.9-10.5; RL.9-10.10; RL.11-12.1; RL.11-12.2; RL.11-12.4; RL.11-12.5; RL.11-12.7; RL.11-12.10)

Creative Presentation Alternatives

Students can also generate their own creative ways to present poetry. In her book, *Awakening the Heart: Exploring Poetry in Elementary and Middle School*, Georgia Heard reported that “one first-grade class performed a poem using silent movements, and the rest of the class guessed which poem they were performing” (1999, 13). Barbara Chatton, in *Using Poetry Across the Curriculum* (2010), challenges us to consider adding pantomime; sound effects; puppets, for younger students; and background music, and inviting students to translate their favorite poems from English into other languages.

Students may want to adapt their favorite poems to rap, chants, or yells, and to accompany them with puppets, props, gestures, or clapping. Poet Sara Holbrook, in her book *Wham! It's a Poetry Jam: Discovering Performance Poetry* (2002), provides helpful guidelines for staging poems in a variety of ways, including hosting contests and competitions. Invite guests to read poetry aloud, including bilingual members of your community who can read poems in both English and other languages.

Poetry Performance

Oral reading demonstrates for students the ways to use the voice to express thoughts, feelings, and moods. Thus it is important to establish a respectful sense of audience for poetry performances. Poetry performance can help teach them to listen attentively, respectfully, and responsively. Poetry is a wonderful way to bring families together—encourage parents and even grandparents to help students learn their poems and invite them to attend the performances.

If you feel ambitious and the performance bug has caught on, consider orchestrating a “flash mob” to perform a poem as a group in a public venue. This requires coordination and practice but can be a fun and memorable moment; and be sure to film it to enjoy again and again.



Audio Poetry

We start by sharing poems out loud with students for the pleasure of the words, sounds, rhymes, and meaning. In her book, *Reading and Writing Poetry: A Guide for Teachers*, Judith Steinbergh (1994) recommends having a listening center or audiobook adaptations to highlight oral poetry as well. Recorded poems, along with their corresponding written forms, provide both the visual and the oral model that promotes learning and memorization. Many recordings of poets reading their own poems are available, including Shel Silverstein, Jack Prelutsky, Langston Hughes, and William Carlos Williams. There is nothing quite like hearing the poem spoken in the poet's voice. When students become comfortable with reciting poetry aloud, they may want to record themselves reading a favorite poem, copy the poem in their best handwriting, or create a digital version, then illustrate it and present their poem performance as a gift to a loved one.

In addition, several Websites offer audio versions of new and classic poems. Check out the following:

POETS AND WRITERS, INC.

Multimedia area includes audio, video, podcasts, and slideshows
pw.org

POETRYMAGAZINE.COM

Audio and video clips of individual poems and poets
poetrymagazine.com

FAVORITE POEM PROJECT

Videos of average citizens reading their favorite poems
favoritepoem.org

POETRY ARCHIVE

Archive of audio recordings of poets reading their work, including a children's poetry area
poetryarchive.org

LIBRIVOX

Amateur recordings of literary works in the public domain
librivox.org

Web-based Poetry Resources

As we look for ideas for sharing poetry creatively, be sure to include web-based resources. There are several hundred web sites and blogs that make poems available; these often include recordings of poets reading their poems, and/or biographical information about poets. Here are ten of the most extensive and user-friendly.

1. Poetry Foundation
2. Poetry Out Loud
3. The Academy of American Poets
4. Poetry 180
5. Poetry Daily
6. The Library of Congress Poetry and Literature Center
7. Poetry Speaks
8. PoetryMagazine
9. Teen Ink magazine
10. Poetry Hill Poetry

poetryfoundation.org
poetryoutloud.org
poets.org
loc.gov/poetry/180
poems.com
loc.gov/poetry
poetryspeaks.com
poetrymagazine.com
teenink.com
potatohill.com

Poetry Blogs

Most established poetry blogs participate in a weekly "Poetry Friday" celebration, posting a poem or poetry-related items on Fridays. Some include teaching activities and even welcome student participation. Here is a select list of ten blogs that are particularly helpful in sharing poetry with students.

1. Poetry for Children by Sylvia Vardell
2. Wild Rose Reader by Elaine Magliaro
3. The Miss Rumphius Effect by Tricia Stohr-Hunt
4. The Poem Farm by Amy Ludwig VanDerwater
5. Writing the World for Kids by Laura Purdie Salas
6. GottaBook by Greg Pincus
7. David L. Harrison's blog
8. Lee B. Hopkins Poetry Award Teaching Toolbox
9. The Poetry Friday Anthology
10. The Poetry Teacher's Book of Lists

poetryforchildren.blogspot.com
wildrosereader.blogspot.com
missrumphiuseffect.blogspot.com
poemfarm.blogspot.com
laurasalas.livejournal.com
gottabook.blogspot.com
davidlharrison.wordpress.com
leebennethhopkinsaward.blogspot.com
poetryfridayanthology.blogspot.com
poetryteachersbookoflists.blogspot.com

Q&A with Caroline Kennedy

Question: Where does your deep and ongoing interest in poetry come from? How was poetry important as you were growing up?

Answer: *I am descended from a long line of bookworms—both my parents loved to read and so do I. When she was a little girl, my mother used to memorize poems with her grandfather. She always treasured her memories of the time they spent together and tried to pass that love of words and ideas on to my brother and me. When I was a child, instead of buying presents for my mother and my grandparents, we would have to choose a poem or write one ourselves, copy it down, and illustrate it as a gift. My mother saved them all and put them in a special scrapbook. Although I remember complaining about having to do this, when I look at the scrapbook, I can tell that we enjoyed ourselves writing poems about each other or competing to see who chose the best poem. My grandmother used to encourage family recitations of “The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere” when my cousins and I would visit her house. It was a lot of fun when everyone did it together. So on both sides of my family, poetry was made into something fun, and something that brought us together. My memories are not just of the poems, but the happy times surrounding them.*

Question: Which poems did you memorize as a child? And for what occasions? Which poems did your own children memorize (and when)?

Answer: *When I was very little, I memorized poems about the seaside for my father because that was his favorite place. I remember how happy he was when I recited Edna St. Vincent Millay’s “Second Fig”. I also memorized “Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening” by Robert Frost, like most children do. My brother memorized Shakespeare sonnets for Mother’s Day and he liked to be in plays, so he memorized a lot of other speeches and poems. I had two cousins who were always memorizing really long poems like “The Cremation of Sam McGee”, or “Casey at the Bat,” so one year I memorized “The Charge of the Light Brigade” to try to keep up with them. My own children know how much I like poems so they have memorized some of their favorites for me, starting with “A Visit from Saint Nicholas” (“Twas the Night Before Christmas”). My son memorized “The Red Wheelbarrow” by William Carlos Williams when he was young, and then “The Jar” by Wallace Stevens when he was older. My daughters memorized “The Poison Tree” by William Blake and “He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven” by William Butler Yeats when they were in middle school.*

Question: How did you come to be involved in poetry projects in high schools in your area? What advice do you have for teachers, librarians, and parents who want to develop a love of poetry in young people?

Answer: *I think a love of ideas, and the ability to express those ideas, is the most powerful gift we can give to young people. Reading poetry is a great way to do that. Poems explore the most profound feelings and experiences we have, and encourage us to see the world as it could be. Reciting and performing also help kids to put their ideas into action and appreciate their own voice. There are a lot of problems in the world today, and we need young people to solve them. I think that developing the ability to read thoughtfully, think clearly, and speak forcefully will help make that happen. By sharing their own love of language, and connecting great works of literature and poetry to the issues of today, adults can pass on their belief in the power of words and ideas to change the world and the joy that poetry can bring.*

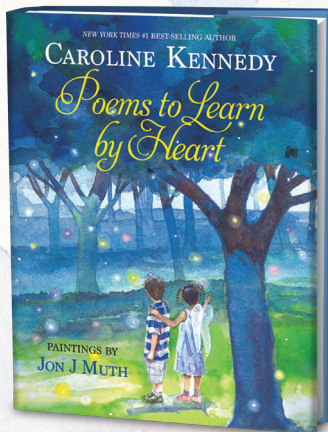


Caroline Kennedy is the editor of ten *New York Times* best-selling books on American history, politics, constitutional law, and poetry, including *She Walks in Beauty: A Woman’s Journey Through Poems* and *A Family of Poems*. She works to bring the power of the spoken word to students in New York City schools and is shown here with Destiny Campbell and Denisse Cotto, who helped select the poems in the book.

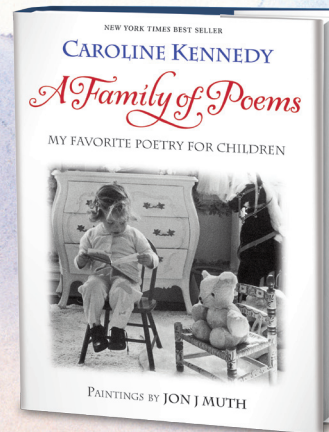


Common Core Standards

As you engage students in hearing, reading, and learning these poems, you may be surprised to know how many of the Common Core standards you'll be teaching, particularly if you allow time for discussing the poems following the reading and performance. The English Language Arts Standards of the Common Core that align with each poem activity have been identified in parentheses following the activities for each designated grade level (e.g., RL.3.5.). Refer to parts of stories, dramas, and poems when writing or speaking about a text, using terms such as "chapter", "scene", and "stanza"; describe how each successive part builds on earlier sections). Obviously more general Speaking and Listening standards would be addressed in sharing and performing poetry, too. You'll find an itemized list and description of all the Common Core Standards for the English Language Arts area on the Web at: <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy>.



Poems to Learn by Heart
Hardcover: 9781423108054



A Family of Poems, My Favorite Poetry for Children
Hardcover: 9780786851119

This guide was created by Dr. Sylvia Vardell, professor of literature for children and young adults at Texas Woman's University, author of the best-selling *Poetry Aloud Here*, and keeper of the noted Poetry for Children blog.

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