

AUTHOR AND POET

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The Poetry Pad Guidebook

Helping children to read, write and perform poetry

Key Stage 1

INTRODUCTION

“Poetry is language at its most distilled and most powerful”

Rita Dove

Poetry is a gateway to develop a love of language and literature.

Carefully chosen words placed precisely on the page have the capacity to captivate the mind and touch the heart. This allows us to engage with language in a way that is both playful and profound.

Poems are often less daunting for a child to read than a heavy book. Bite-sized, they provide children with meaningful chunks of language that are easier to chew over and digest.

This makes the language they encounter in poems sticky and when language sticks, we are more likely to use it in our own speech and writing and do so with a higher degree of success.

The musicality of poems makes things even stickier: the words and phrasing we encounter, the themes and ideas we consider, the images and sounds we create in our heads. It is why learning to recite poems by heart is such a powerful tool for learning.

Reading poetry fuels our imagination. It helps strengthen and embolden our vocabulary choices, builds reading fluency and deepens a wide range of comprehension skills.

Writing poetry gives children the opportunity to craft their own work, develop the art of expression and enables them to discover their own unique writing style.

Performing poems and sharing them with others is not only satisfying but also builds confidence. It gives children a genuine reason to write. Nobody really writes for an audience of one, especially if that one is always their class teacher.

Poetry is a gateway to develop the **WHOLE** child.

In a world that is increasingly complex, children need opportunities to explore their feelings and understand the perspectives of others. Through poetry, children can experience and explore joy, sadness, wonder and humour, all within the safe confines of the written word.

Poetry has the power to build empathy and helps us to connect with each other through shared ideas and common experiences. Such connectivity is important, it helps us to find our own place in the world and understand the lives of others. It unites us.

Becoming a poet and falling in love with this beautiful language we call English is without doubt a journey worth taking. It is empowering. It can be life affirming and life changing.

I sincerely hope that your learners fall in love with the poems I have created and are inspired enough to put pen to paper and get creative themselves.

By sharing their work with others, not only will they become a more confident little human, they will also become someone who understands the power the spoken and written word holds and appreciate more fully the delight and the beauty that poetry can bring.

The Poetry Pad

There are two books in this series. Each book contains eight poems and each poem showcases a different poetic form for children to read, write and perform.

Each poem is supported by a video accessible on The Poetry Pad.

Here learners will be able to listen to and watch me talk about how I came to write each poem, the challenges I faced and how I overcame them to create something I am proud of and want to share.

Discussing the writing process is essential if children are to be enthused enough to embark on their own writing journey and continue on its path when the going gets tough.

Writing is not easy, it takes effort. A well-crafted poem does not appear on the page by itself. However, with a little patience, some determination and a lot of self-belief, any one of us can create a mini-masterpiece.

READING Each Poem



Each exemplar poem is accompanied by a set of questions designed to help encourage class discussion and elicit deeper thinking. Each set of questions are layered so that they gently immerse readers in the text and support them as they consider more intently the themes, ideas and language choices each poem has to offer.

The strands of comprehension covered when analysing each poem will enable children to:

- **Predict**
 - What might this poem be about? Where might it be set?
 - Might this suggest how the poem should be read? Why is this?
 - What prior knowledge leads me to think this?
- **Retrieve Specific Information**
 - What facts can I discover whilst reading the poem?
 - How will I locate this information?
 - Will this be during my reading of the poem or afterwards?
 - Will skimming and scanning the text and looking for key words help me? How so?
- **Summarise & Sequence**
 - Can I summarise the poem as a whole or create sub-headings for each verse?
 - What choices have led me to do this within the text and beyond?
 - Am I able to visualise the poem and draw pictures that will help me sequence the events?
- **Consider Vocabulary Choices & Authorial Intent**
 - What does a particular word or phrase mean?
 - Do they have a literal or figurative meaning?
 - Why might the poet have chosen to use them? What effect do they have on the poem and the reader?
- **Infer & Deduce**
 - How can I think deeply about this poem?
 - What clues within the poem and prior knowledge outside of the poem help me to do this?
 - Might other readers think differently to me? Why might this be?
- **Evaluate**
 - How successful is this poem? How well does the poem do what it does? What is its value?

Discussion around these layers of understanding will strengthen their appreciation of individual poems and poetry as a whole. It will also provide a firm foundation on which children can begin to construct their own poems and establish their unique writing identity.

Suggestions for comparative texts to consider alongside each poem are offered so that children are exposed to a variety of authors and a wider range of writing styles. This will enable them to make valuable links between the various poems they encounter. Not only does this broaden their literary knowledge but, more importantly, it enriches the reading experience. Great readers make great writers, not least because they are constantly being exposed to great text.



WRITING Their Poem

Magnificent Magpies



While exploring each poem, children should be encouraged to magpie any shiny ideas or language they may wish to adapt or include in their own work.

Anything that sparkles enough to make a child want to note it down for later use, can be placed in their personal Magpie Jotter. Never tell a child what to place in this jotter. If they place something in there themselves, they are much more likely to value it and want to use it in their own work later on.

Before learners embark on writing their own version of each poem, it is important that they view you as a positive writing role model. Seeing you write your own poem (with their help) is essential.

Not only will they see in real time how you organise and sequence your ideas, but they will also see the importance of drafting and editing your work when refining your final piece.

This shared experience allows them to appreciate and value the writing journey more fully, especially if they too have contributed to the writing process. Once completed, your class can then support each other using a pair then square model to create and critique each other's work.

As such, when it comes to writing their own independent poem, they will have experienced and have access to a range of models from which to gain confidence and inform their own work.

A scaffold for each poetic form is supplied to help structure and support this modelling process. However, it is important to note that when writing their own poems, this scaffold is optional. If their final poem is to be truly independent, children must be allowed to follow their own path if they wish to do so.

Teacher discretion will be needed for those who lack confidence in their own writing ability but, where possible, a free write ethos is to be embraced in order to ensure individual flare and creativity can take place.



PERFORMING Their Poem

When performing their poems, it is important for children to recognise that it is often better to anchor your poem with a brief introduction. This helps set the scene, settles your audience and calms the prospective speaker.

Consideration should therefore be given as to how this could look.

- How will I introduce my poem?
- How personal will my poem be? Will it be meaningful?
- How long will my introduction be? Why is it important to keep it brief?
- Will I ask my audience to listen out for anything specific? Why might I want to do this?

A top tip to remind learners of is to keep it short, keep it simple and keep it focused. Let your poem and your performance talk for itself. If your introduction is too long, your audience will tend to switch off before you have even begun.

Prior to reading their poems to an authentic audience, consideration should be given as to how they might do this effectively. The two main areas to focus on are:

- A) How will the performance of my poem sound?
- B) How will the performance of my poem look?

It is also important that sufficient time be given over to practicing their poem before they perform it. This will give them confidence and allow them to take ownership of the performance itself.

When practicing with their peers, conversations can be had as to how they might want to adapt or improve their performance and discussion take place as to why this may be the case.

Your Voice Choice



This is essential if you are to bring your poem to life and infuse it with both meaning and emotion. No one will remember a poem that is read in a monotone and no one will remember a poet who isn't passionate about reading their own work. Be proud of your poem and show it.

Various aspects of reading aloud have been separated into six key elements.

This list is by no means exhaustive and it must be remembered that rather than work in isolation, each aspect works in partnership with the others to produce a richer, more meaningful reading experience.



Pitch: The musicality of your reading voice, including tone and intonation.



Power: The strength given to your reading voice, including volume and stress.



Pace: The speed and rhythm at which we read.



Punctuation: The adherence to and understanding of the marks an author has placed upon the page.



Pause: The knowing of when not to read and for how long.



Passion: The emotion of reading and the development of a reader's love for the written word.

Facial Expressions & Body Language



It is noteworthy that performances do not have to be all singing and all dancing. Some of the greatest deliveries of their work are when poets are seated and keep movement to a minimum.

Maya Angelou's performance of her poem *Still I Rise* is a masterclass of how a well-considered voice with few (but meaningful) body movements and facial expressions provides a powerful arrow in your quiver when producing an impactful performance.

You can watch her demonstrate this here and other poets are readily available to watch online too. Choose wisely. Showing such models of excellence will influence your learners on many levels.



The Art of Reciting by Heart



Being shackled to a piece of paper when you read your poem dulls your performance and means that you are less free to express yourself and showcase your work.

Time, therefore, should be given over for learners to learn their poem by heart and practice reciting their poem paper free. Discussion and activities can be undertaken to help children achieve this and it is useful to share with learners how you try and remember the poems you have written or love to recite.

Here are some suggestions:

See it

Try writing out your poem by hand and illustrating it with patterns and pictures.

Try drawing the images key words and phrases create in your mind.

Try sketching a road map using different colours to illustrate your poem's journey.

Move it

Try walking in time to your poem as you speak it.

Try clapping, tapping or clicking to the beat of your poem.

Try making up gestures that match the words or ideas in your poem.

Hear it

Try being in a quiet place so you don't get disturbed or distracted.

Try adding music, percussion or sound effects to your poem.

Try recording yourself and listening back to your poem in snippets.

Say it

Try repeating your poem to yourself in the mirror.

Try using different voices before choosing the voice you like best.

Try speaking your poem to somebody else... your family, friends or family pet.

Above all, help your learners to value and enjoy the reading to write process. Encourage them to embrace the challenge of creating and performing their work to make it a more memorable and meaningful experience, one that they will treasure for many years to come.

Exemplar Videos



Each poem is supported with an exemplar performance. Simply click on each title to watch.



Read, write & perform... poetry!



THE TIGER INSIDE

A Simile Poem

A simile poem relies on the use of similes to compare and connect different ideas. Such comparisons create strong images in our mind's eye, helping us to visualise a thought or scene more vividly. This makes it more memorable. Similes use *like* or *as* to make such comparisons. However, it is important to remember that this form of language is figurative and that such comparisons are not meant to be taken literally.

READING

Predict

What qualities does a tiger have? Make a list with your teacher.

Read this poem's title. Where inside might this tiger be?

Do you think this tiger will be a fierce tiger or a friendly tiger? Why do you think this?

Fluency Practice

Watch and listen to the poem being read.
Practice reading the poem out loud to a Reading Buddy.

To watch my performance, please scan the QR code.



Orientation Questions

Read verse one. Fill in the table below: (act out your answers too)

The poet summons their tiger inside whenever...		
①	②	③
④	⑤	⑥

Read verse three. List four similes the poet uses to describe their tiger inside. Draw and label your answers.

	as	like	
--	----	------	--

Evaluative Question

Why do you think the poet wrote this poem?

Re-Orientation Task

Draw a box around the four main parts of this poem. Use the key below and explain your choices.

Box #1 = blue

Box #2 = orange

Box #3 = black

Box #4 = green

Deeper Thinking

Why do you think this poem begins with a long list of feelings? Are these feelings positive or negative?

These feelings are all negative and the reason why someone might need to summon their inner tiger. To begin this poem with such a long list tells us that there are many reasons why we might want to call upon our tiger inside to help us gain the confidence and courage to feel more positive about ourselves.

Consider why the poet uses each simile we find in verse three.

- A] *as sharp as a tooth*: this is a play on the word *sharp*. If someone is sharp, they are said to be very clever. It also reminds us of the power of a tiger's bite.
- B] *as bright as the sunrise*: this is a play on the word *bright*. It is another way to say that someone is clever. The orange glow of a sunrise also reminds us of the colour of a tiger's fur. Like a sunrise, our tiger inside gives us hope that things will get better no matter how dark the situation may appear to be.
- C] *strong like a hero*: this is a play on the word *strong*. A hero is not just physically strong but is emotionally strong too. This helps us to be resilient enough to tackle any situation we might find ourselves in.
- D] *bold like a thunderous din*: this is a play on the word *bold*. Someone who is bold is willing to take risks, face challenges and is confident. Tigers look bold with their blazing coat and sharp stripes. They also have a bold roar, a roar that is empowering and would give us the courage to face our fears head on.

In verse five, the poet uses an ellipsis. Why do you think they did this?

Just before the ellipsis we are told to take a deep breath. The ellipsis forces the reader to pause and do just this. When we have negative thoughts or feelings, instead of becoming overwhelmed or giving up altogether, it helps if we can stay calm and relax. Try it. This helps us to feel more positive and gives us time to think of ways to resolve the issue we might be facing.

How does verse six differ from verse two? Why do you think the poet made this change?

The poet is trying to tell us that we all have a tiger inside us and is encouraging the reader to find theirs. By telling us about their tiger first, the poet is confirming that this works. If it works for them, it can work for you too!

Authorial Intent

Which word is written in capitals? Why might this be?

What else do you notice about this word?

Do you think this is a spelling mistake? Why? Why not?

Why might the poet have wanted to spell *ROOAAARRRR* like this? Discuss.

Why do you think this word has been given a verse of its own?

Find and copy a word in verse one that means *to demand help or to call someone to attend*.

Find and copy a word in verse five that means *to instruct someone to approach, especially with a gesture that uses a finger or hand*.

Act out both of these words. How are they linked? Discuss.

Write the word *thunderous* on a wipe board. Underline its root.

What do you think this word means? Why?

Write the word *fearful* on a wipe board. Underline its root. Circle its suffix.

What do you think this word means? Why?

How many times does the poet use an exclamation mark?

Where and why might the poet have used them? Discuss.

What effect do these have on the lines they appear in?

Key Words

beckon

bold

fearful

hero

pride

summon

thunderous

timid

THE TIGER INSIDE



Whenever I'm timid or feel all alone,
Whenever I'm scared of the dark or unknown,
Whenever I'm nervous and just want to hide,
Whenever I'm shy or whenever I've cried...
I summon my tiger inside.

My tiger, my tiger, my tiger inside,
My tiger, my tiger inside!

My tiger is clever, as sharp as a tooth,
As bright as the sunrise that shines like the truth.
My tiger is strong like a hero within,
My tiger is bold like a thunderous din.

ROOAAARRRR!

So when you feel fearful or pushed to one side,
Beckon your tiger, stand tall and have pride.
Just take a deep breath... be brave and feel free,
Remember the tiger inside you and me.

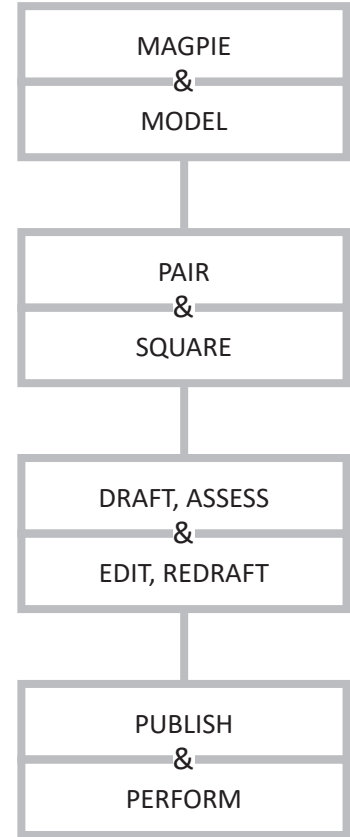
Your tiger, your tiger, your tiger inside,
Your tiger, your tiger inside!

Supported

- Step 1: Read other simile poems. Magpie your favourite parts.
- Step 2: Help your teacher write their simile poem. Watch how they do it.
- Step 3: In pairs, try creating a simile poem based on the ideas you have encountered.
- Step 4: Join another pair. Compare your poem with theirs. Help each other to improve your poems or join forces and create a better version as a group.

Independent

- Step 1: Begin to write your own simile poem. Use the examples you have looked at and created, as well as any ideas you have put in your Magpie Jotter to help you.
- Step 2: Once finished, let your teacher or AI assess your poem. Allow them to give you some pointers as to how it might be improved. Share your poem with a Writing Buddy and see what ideas they come up with too.
- Step 3: Read the suggestions for improvement you have been given. Choose which ones you want to make. Edit and redraft your poem until you are happy with your final effort.
- Step 4: Copy your final version out and decorate it. Think about how you would like to share your poem with others and practice performing it.



Creativity & Flare

I Want to Be

I want to be...

Strong like a family,
Happy as a melody.

Wise like an oak tree,
Humble as a bumble bee.

Helpful like a teacher,
Faithful as a preacher.

Free like a bird,
As bold as a word.

Sweet like a strawberry,
Clever as a library.

Proud like a peacock,
Steady as a ticking clock.

Funny like a punchline,
Bright as the sunshine.

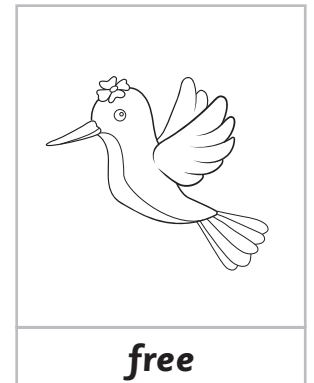
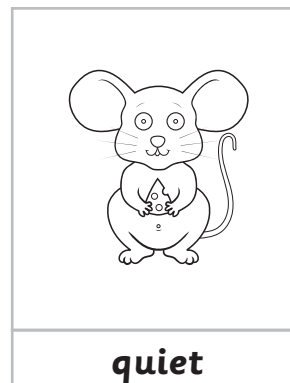
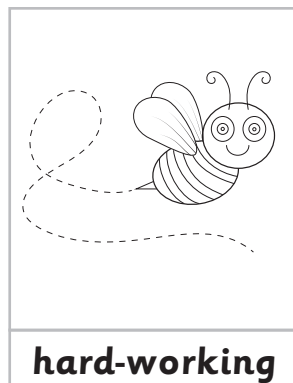
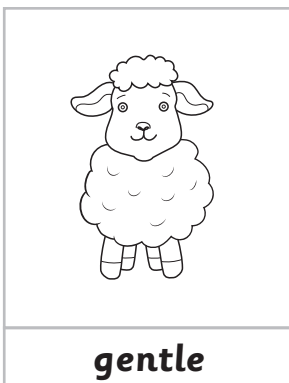
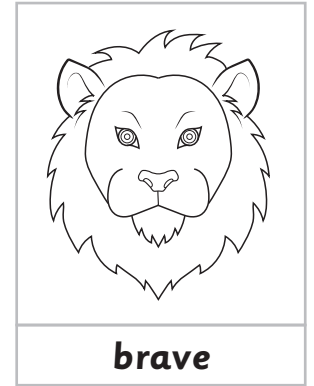
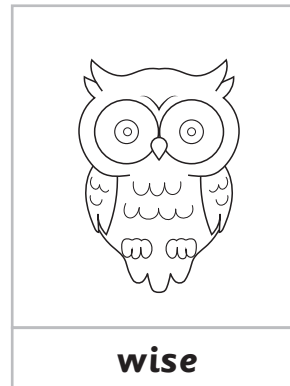
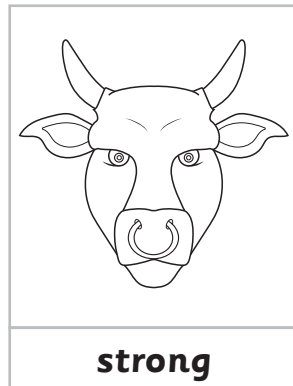
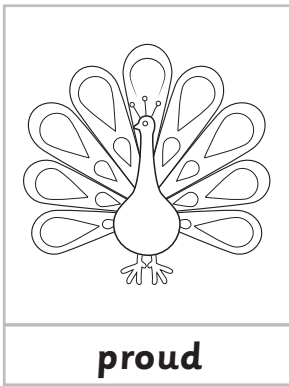
Joyful like a leap frog,
Loyal as a sheep dog.

Loved like a favourite mug,
Loving as a big warm hug.

That's all I want to be!

Comparative Texts

- ★ Everything At Once
Lenka
- ★ Roar
Katy Perry
- ★ The Lion Inside
Rachel Bright
- ★ Ravi's Roar
Tom Percival
- ★ Young Zoologist: Tiger
Samantha Helle



SCAFFOLD

Count the number of syllables on each line.

• •• • •• • •• ••

11 My tiger, my tiger, my tiger inside,

• •• • •• ••

My tiger, my tiger inside! **8**

Whenever I'm _____ ,

Whenever I'm _____ .

If ever I'm _____ ,

If ever I'm _____ .



I _____ my _____ inside.

My _____ , my _____ , my _____ inside,

My _____ , my _____ inside!



Twelve horizontal lines for writing a poem.

 To watch my performance,
please scan my QR code. 

The Poetry Pad CPD



A venue of your choice.



All staff are welcome.



A time and date that suits you.



Visit my website to book.



John is an independent Literacy consultant and recognised specialist in developing children's reading and writing.

He works with schools throughout the UK to improve standards, secure best practice and achieve outstanding results.

THE POETRY PAD



This course can be facilitated as a half or full-day's training.

It considers when and how we can encourage children to read, write and perform a wide-range of poetry and explores the benefits this has for the developing learner.

Prices available
upon request

COURSE OUTLINE

Part I:

The session will begin by considering the important role poetry has to play when learning to master the English language.

We will explore how to embed poetry within Literacy to ensure you create a curriculum that is meaningful, engaging and accessible to all.

Using a Read, Write and Perform approach that includes a wide range of high-quality texts, we will also consider the importance of writing for purpose and with an authentic audience in mind.

Brew & Biscuit Break

Part II:

We will discuss how to structure and implement a poetry-based project that develops communication skills and provides opportunities for learners to create, collaborate and showcase their work.

I will demonstrate this using poetic forms that can be used across both Key Stages. This will highlight the importance of teachers becoming a strong role model and the need to provide learners with genuine opportunities for wider reading.