

World Poetry Day



March 21 is designated annual ‘World Poetry Day’, by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The broad aim is the use of poetic expression to support linguistic diversity, particularly providing opportunity for languages that may be endangered, to be heard.

People worldwide use this day to acknowledge poets and poetry, to read and listen to poetry, and to raise the profile of poetry in mainstream media.

Practiced throughout history – in every culture and on every continent – poetry speaks to our common humanity and our shared values, transforming the simplest of poems into a powerful catalyst for dialogue and peace.

<https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/worldpoetryday>

Poetry features prominently in the Australian Curriculum, mentioned in every Year Level Description, and featuring in listening and speaking, reading, writing and responding. Working



with poetry can be both an integral component and a feature in our study of language and literature.

World Poetry Day is a great opportunity to dive right in to exploring this aspect of our curriculum, and the languages of our classrooms.

[Red Books Poetry](#) Poetry object opportunity opens on March 21, to acknowledge this day.

Poetry in the classroom – procedure

Requirements:

- your memory of poems from school/other contexts
- some of the classic Australian poems
- contemporary Australian poems and poets
- ideas for using poetry in ways other than reading

What to do:

1. Make a list of the poems that have affected you, or that you remember.
2. Conduct an online search by poet, title, the bits you remember; print anthologies have an index of first lines, because this is what we tend to remember. Some links to sites are below.
3. Explore these, and read; listen if there is a recording (some sites use synthesised speech and don't do any poem justice, except perhaps Edwin Morgan's [Computer's First Christmas Card](#). Students can use this as a model for other greeting cards, then synthesise the speech and record them).
4. Read each poem aloud, the way you would want to be read to.
5. Start your list of poems you will read to your students.
6. Get to know Australian poets. Include those who write in languages other than English. Parents with a first language other than English will help here, as the poetic form is universally valued. Display poems, and have the language experts read them with the students.

7. Poets are real people who care about things, and write what they feel. Find out about each poet, and how they came to write the poem you want to read, if you can. Judith Wrightson was a passionate conservationist, so her [poems about the Australian environment](#) are filled with this passion. Students recognise this.
8. Stick to one genre if you like. Student interest will be limited by your choice. [Australian bush poetry](#) is appealing to students through to Year 6, and can be read repeatedly. [Classic ballads](#) often tell stories of the hardships and challenges of life.
9. Explore different types of poems to work with for student writing. Bring some knowledge to your teaching, without limiting students to a copy-cat poems or the strictures of the acrostic.
10. [Honey Sandwich](#) website is about Elizabeth Honey's *Honey Sandwich* poem and book of the same title, and a lot about poems, writing and reading them, and what makes a poem.
11. Use poems to demonstrate the features of language that you want your students to learn about. Imagery, metaphor, creativity in language are all in poems, encapsulated neatly in packages ranging from several lines to great rambling tales of drama and excitement. Get to know these texts, they will help you teach English even more effectively.
12. Read poems to your students every day. Make poems accessible to your students. The story, the rhyme, the rhythm, the imagery, the passion and the power of poetry are universal.
13. Publish every student's poem. Put them on show for others to read, and have frequent poetry readings. Australian poet Stephen Herrick suggests nominating a 'POET-TREE' in the school, where poems are displayed for reading and for comment – this fits well with NSW English K-6 Syllabus Objective E.

World Poetry Day is both a reason and an excuse for focusing on poetry in the classroom, in the near future, and in the longer term.

Resources

Here are a few poems to consider reading to your students:

- [Sick](#), by Shel Silverstein
- [Adventures of Isabel](#), by Ogden Nash
- [Eating Words](#) by Katherine Hauth
- [Disobedience](#) by A. A. Milne



- [The Rime of the Ancient Mariner](#) by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Long and involved – an epic)
- [The Letter A](#) by Darren Sardelli, printed in the NSW School Magazine ‘Blast Off’ in 2016

And some resources to chase up:

- [The Red Room project](#) - poetry writing competition starts on World Poetry Day, March 21, supported by lots of resources. Check them out [here](#).
- [Tadpoles in the Torrens](#) includes poems and ideas for children writing poems. Purchase through ALEA and you will use it repeatedly
- [Australian Children's Poetry](#) – poem of the day, competitions and ideas; very current.
- [Stephen Herrick](#) conducts workshops with schools; inspiring. He appears on the Australian Children's Poetry website, with links to his own websites and publications.
- [The Scottish Poetry Library](#)
- [Children's Poetry Archive](#)
- [The poem as comic strip](#) is an interesting idea you could try with Stage 3 students
- [Poem Hunter](#) has many poems and poets. Ignore the ads that are very annoying, and the spoken voice which is robotic and unpleasant.
- [Suggested texts](#) for the NSW English syllabus, poetry section - *The variety of poems ... here will ... give student writers the confidence to experiment with language, to create new sounds, overturn sense and take risks.*



Poetry can inspire and inform all aspects of English. They are short, so easily read, and ... *allow students to see how much difference changing a word or a line here or there can really make to the poem.*

NSW Board of Studies 2012

"Every form of poetry is unique, but each reflects the universal of the human experience, the aspiration for creativity that crosses all boundaries and borders of time, as well as space in the constant affirmation of humanity as a single family. That's the power of poetry!"

— Audrey Azoulay, Director-General, on the occasion of 2019 [World Poetry Day](#)

References

NSW Board of Studies (2012) Suggested Texts for the NSW English K-10 Syllabus at <https://syllabus.nesa.nsw.edu.au/assets/global/files/english-k10-suggested-texts.pdf>

