



FOR SCHOOLS CELEBRATING NATIONAL POETRY DAY 28 SEPTEMBER 2017

National Poetry Day is an annual celebration of poetry and all things poetical. It's about everybody sharing poetry, reading poetry, writing poetry, enjoying poetry, and living poetry! For schools this can be a chance to make more of something already enjoyed throughout the school or it can be a launch pad for new experience and enjoyment.

Through poetry we get to read for meaning, to explore different ways in which words can work together, find out more about feelings and expressing feelings, and build empathy. By celebrating National Poetry Day schools can give their pupils opportunities to find their own connections with poetry, as well as inspiration for their imaginations and creativity.

Poet Joseph Coelho, one of National Poetry Day's Ambassadors says:

Poetry literally breaks reading and writing into bite-sized chunks. It is a fun, non-threatening way for children to become more literate. In poetry sessions I've seen elective mutes stand up at the front of their class and read, been told by countless teachers that 'that student never normally puts pen to paper', watched children cry and laugh and think together.

On National Poetry Day - and every day - make sure that poems are everywhere for everyone.

Read them, read them aloud, illustrate them, perform them, write them, sing them.

Based on a four day festival of poetry run with Hull primary schools as part of the No Limits Learning Programme, here is a pack of tips and activity ideas to help schools celebrate poetry on National Poetry Day and beyond.

Poetry allows our children to break free from the constraints of the national curriculum and see the value in their own work and creativity (teacher Collingwood Primary School Hull)

HOW TO PLAN YOUR CELEBRATION

Plan your school's National Poetry Day celebration all together. If poetry is already a regular part of school life, National Poetry Day is a chance to celebrate it, and share it more widely.

You may want to use National Poetry Day to inspire and set activities in place for poetry to play a key part in children and young people's learning and reading pleasure.

Get every class talking about poetry – What do they know about poetry? How do they feel about poetry?

Decide together what you want the day to achieve, for example:

- More people knowing about poetry
- More people enjoying poetry
- Knowing about more kinds of poetry
- Feeling that you could be poets
- Fun!

What activities would you like to do to achieve this? For example:

- Poetry displays around the school
- Have a poetry slam
- Have a whole school poetry party – or a poetry party with parents
- Meet a poet

In the next sections you'll find more ideas for

activities, things to talk about, and poetry to read.

How will you know what the day has achieved – and tell people?

- Record it – photos, videos, podcasts
- Make displays about activities and work from the day
- Write about it in blogs and newsletters
- Ask everyone what they liked best, and what they got from the day
- Are students talking about poetry more? Reading it more? Writing it more? Enjoying it more?

How will you keep the momentum going? See page 6 for ideas towards this.

THINGS YOU CAN DO – SIMPLE AND FUN

Here are ideas to choose from and enjoy on National Poetry Day, and every day! Make sure you have lots of poetry books everywhere.

Things to talk about

What is poetry? What does it mean to you? Ask people what they think poetry is – how would they describe it? What does poetry mean to them? Is it something that rhymes; or that doesn't have to rhyme? Is it funny, beautiful, boring? Does it help you feel or understand things?

Make a list and see how many different things poetry can be to different people

You could have this discussion to start off your planning for National Poetry Day.

What kinds of poetry do you know?

Make a list of all the different kinds of poetry people know of – e.g funny verse, limericks, rap, haikus, nursery rhymes, free verse, story poems. Put the list up on the wall for people to see, and add to it as they meet new kinds of poetry.

Talking about a poem

When you share a poem together read it through more than once, maybe a few times. Have copies of it for people to read; ask people if they would like to read it aloud to the class.

Then talk about it – start by asking people 'Why

do you like – or not like – this poem?' Make it clear that everyone is right – there is no right or wrong answer. Everyone will find their own meanings, likes and dislikes, and that makes for great arguments and discussion.

Here are some more questions you could ask:

- What do you think is the main thing being said in this poem?
- How does the poem make you feel? Why?
- Any bits/lines which you specially like?

Things to do

Create a poem from words in a newspaper. Cut out words and phrases that you like from newspapers and magazines. Spread them out to see what you've got, move them around and group them.

What might you write a poem about?

Arrange the cuttings to make a poem. Children can add their own words too if they like.

Reading aloud

Enjoy reading aloud your favourite poems, and listening to each other reading theirs. As you read and listen you'll find yet more meaning and pleasure.

Look for story poems like *The Highwayman* (Alfred Noyes), *The Owl and the Pussycat* (Edward Lear) or *The Lady of Shalott* (Alfred Lord Tennyson) – and how about picture books in rhyme, like *The Gruffalo* (Julia Donaldson) and *The Cat in the Hat* (Dr Seuss)?

Learning poetry off by heart.

Learning to say or perform a poem aloud can be a great confidence builder – and great fun! And it can indeed be 'by heart' – getting pleasure from the poetry, and a deeper understanding of the words - and being able to share that pleasure with others.

A good way to learn by heart is in a group: put a poem up on the whiteboard (choose one with strong metre and rhyme, much easier to learn than free verse); ask the children to read it aloud a couple of times, then cover it up and see how much they can remember, a line at a time. Split the class in half and make it a competition.

FREEDOM AND POETRY

The theme for this year's National Poetry Day is 'Freedom' – use this to inspire some of your poetry activities.

Freedom: imagery in poetry

Together explore metaphors and similes in the poetry you read – e.g: 'Hope is the thing with feathers' (Dickinson); 'My heart is like a singing bird...' (Rossetti).

Collect on a flipchart everyone's thoughts about what freedom can mean – e.g. not in prison, free to choose/do what you want.

Create lines beginning with:

Freedom is...
As free as...

Use your lines to begin or be part of a poem about freedom – this could be done individually or as a group. Decide what form you'd like for your poem – will it rhyme or be free verse? Might it have rhythm, a chorus? Or be a simple haiku?

Or you could try an acrostic, based on the word 'freedom.' This is a poem where, if you read down the first letters of the lines of the poem, you get a word which is actually the subject of the poem. For example:

Flying high in the clouds
Rising above the earth
Every bird has freedom
Enjoying the thrill and the
Dance of the wind,
Over mountains, seas and cities,
Magnificent.

Watch poets 'live'

Watch poets reading and talking about their work on CD, video and the internet. Find and listen to your favourites, and get to know new ones, like the National Poetry Day Ambassadors <http://nationalpoetryday.co.uk/ambassador/>

Fun with words – Alliteration!

Choosing words starting with the same letter gives wonderful sounds to poems.

Look at this description of a fox:

His fur was freaked.
His foxy face was frantic as he flew. A few
feathers fluttered out of his mouth...

F for Fox by Carol Ann Duffy

Have a go – you could make up your own sentences and phrases, describing different animals e.g. 'the darting dog dived into the ditch'

Fun with words – Onomatopoeia!

Balloons pop. Water drips. Fierce dogs
growl. Thunder roars.

Think of some more phrases like this where the verb sounds like the thing it is describing – just as the word 'pop' sounds like the sound of a balloon bursting!

'List' poems

Making a list of things can turn into a poem e.g. in Michael Rosen's poem *The Greatest* each verse is a list of people and the things they are greatest at:

I'm the world's greatest at sport...
...I'm the world's greatest inventor

Children at Alderman Cogan Primary School in Hull wrote this poem called *No Word of a Lie*:

I'm the first person on earth and that's no
word of a lie
Both my eyes are the colours of the rainbow
and that's no word of a lie
I wrote the Collins English Dictionary and
that's no word of a lie

It concluded:

Alright, alright, you know we are lying
We're the biggest liars in our school
And that's no word of a lie!

What lies could your children tell?

Inspiration with a well-known poem

Here is a way of further enjoying a favourite poem or getting to know a new one – and then being inspired to write your own.

Choose a poem, and spend time reading it

together and talking about it, including the context in which it was written. Hide the title – and ask people what title they would give it. When you feel you're getting to know the poem, have a go at giving it a new first or last line.

Or take the first line and then follow on by writing your own poem. This can be a powerful way of being inspired by the feelings of the original to write about your own feelings.

MORE THINGS YOU CAN DO

Here are some more ideas for poetry activities, including several involving the whole school and families.

You'll also find some great ideas and lesson plans in the National Poetry Day special Education Resources <http://nationalpoetryday.co.uk/education/>

Poetry aloud: Poetry slam

A poetry slam is a poetry competition where poems are judged by the audience who give each poem a mark.

- People read their favourite poems – or poems which they have written
- Take turns in reading out the poems
- After each poem the audience holds up score cards (1-5) – or gives a show of hands at the end of each round

Hold rounds, with one person going out in each round until you have a winner.

Poetry aloud: Choral poetry

With choral poetry everyone learns and recites a poem together in a group. It's an enjoyable way of experiencing poetry with everyone joining in together.

- Short, humorous narrative poems are good for this
- As well as unison, you could include solo voices, or children reciting in pairs or threes
- Think about variations in pace and volume – you can have good fun with this!
- And actions, gestures, body movements and finger plays

Poetry 'X Factor'

You might want to do this individually, in pairs, or in small groups.

Choose a poem and decide how you are going to 'perform' it – e.g. learn and recite it, read it aloud together, take turns in reading different parts, add noises and actions, beat out a rhythm.

Then have a special poetry show – read and recite your chosen poems to your class/the school. You could have a 'judging panel' – e.g. teacher/some pupils – to give feedback. Make the feedback positive and helpful, with tips and ideas for how else you could present the poem.

Vote for the poem which you think has the biggest X Factor!

Acting out poems

Many poems work well in performance. For some ideas have a look at Julia Donaldson's *Perform a Poem* – and choose a poem which everyone is keen to have a go with.

Read and talk about the poem together, and then divide it up so that children in twos or threes can work together on actions for their part of the poem.

The groups then come together and each group acts out their part. Give feedback to each other – say which parts worked well and suggest ideas for how it might be better, so that together you can shape up the whole performance.

Poetry party

Invite parents and friends to a special poetry party with poetry performances, music, slide shows of pupils' poetry. It could include any of the activities above – e.g. a poetry slam, 'X factor', or choral poetry.

Depending on the space and audience size, people could sit at tables with refreshments – even dance to the poetry!

Having a poet in to visit

Working with poets Joseph Coelho, Chris McCabe, Kate Fox, Sophie Herxheimer and Shazea Quraishi really inspired the children in our Hull primary schools. Actually meeting with a poet and hearing them read and talk about their work, can be a

special experience. It can trigger fresh enthusiasm for poetry, or encourage pupils to realise that they too can be poets. Here are some practical tips for arranging a visit:

Where to book:

- Direct with poets via their websites
- Through your school library service, or public library service
- Through your local bookshop
- The Poetry Society
- Authors Aloud www.authorsaloud.co.uk
- Contact an Author <http://www.contactanauthor.co.uk/>
- Speaking of Books <http://www.speakingofbooks.studysupport.info/>

Funding

If funding is tight, think about joining up with other schools. Your poet could maybe visit two schools in the same day – or schools could come together, especially where a poet likes to do sessions with larger audiences.

It's great to get involved with local poets – and they might also then like to become a Patron of Reading at your school. <http://www.patronofreading.co.uk/>
See page 6.

Planning

Book your poet well in advance!

Writers' school visits diaries usually get well-booked up, sometimes a whole year ahead for events like World Book Day and National Poetry Day.

An early booking will also give you plenty of time to make arrangements with them, and to start to get to know their poetry with your class.

Sort out practical arrangements together about fee, invoicing etc.

Look after them

Make sure your poet knows how to get to your school, and is able to plan with you the sessions for the day, and any equipment needed.

Make them welcome, have someone to take them round; offer tea, coffee, lunch.

Think about what you hope will come out of the visit...

...and talk about this when you're arranging the day together, for example:

- Children's increased enthusiasm for poetry
- Children more confident about reciting poetry
- Children more confident about writing poetry
- A special book or slide show of children's poetry written following the visit
- A really enjoyable day – with pictures and maybe a film of the day!

N.B. See page 1 – How to plan your celebration

Link up with your school library and local library. They can suggest poets you might like to invite and they may be able to help in booking them. In addition they can lend copies of the poet's books, and, if needed, a venue for sessions.

Enjoy!

Other things you might think about:

Book sales: This depends on your school's policy.

If you do offer books for sale you can arrange this via your poet or his publisher (usually as sale-or-return), or with your local bookshop.

Skype/live web-chat: If you can't afford or arrange a real-life visit, maybe a virtual one is possible!

See <http://virtualauthors.co.uk/> This could be especially exciting for making contact with a poet in another country.

Booktrust offers a useful checklist for planning an author visit: <http://www.booktrust.org.uk/programmes/arranging-an-author-visit/>

It also has a funny but sometimes-true poem by children's author Philip Ardagh.

HOW TO KEEP POETRY ON THE PROGRAMME AFTER NATIONAL POETRY DAY

After all the excitement of the day, make sure that you keep up the momentum so that poetry is alive and well and enjoyed throughout your school.

Build some of these activities into regular school life:

- Tell everyone about National Poetry Day
- Make a display around the school's celebration of National Poetry Day, with photographs, quotes about the day, and poetry inspired by the day.
- Write about the day for the school newsletter and website.

Poetry display boards

If you haven't already set these up for National Poetry Day, put them up now so that they are all around the school. Encourage classes and individual pupils to put up their own poems, and their favourite poems. Have fun too in illustrating the poems and decorating the boards.

Poem of the week

On your display boards have a special space for 'Poem of the week'. Teachers could take it in turn to choose this – have lots of post-its available so that pupils can put up around the poem their thoughts and responses to it.

Make individual or class poetry anthologies

These could be anthologies of favourite poems or parts of poems, as well as pupils' own poems.

Think of a title for the anthology and design and create a title page. Use a ring-binder to collect all the poems together – you could make several copies, and make them available in classrooms and in the school library.

Set up a blog about poetry

Another way for pupils to write and talk (podcasts) about their favourite – and not so favourite – poems, and share their own writing.

Invite a poet to be a Patron of Reading for your school

A Patron of Reading is a school's special children's author, poet, storyteller or illustrator. The school and their patron develop a relationship over a period of time, with the patron helping to encourage and develop a reading for pleasure culture in the school. www.patronofreading.co.uk

More reading ideas

Here are some suggestions for poetry books for your classroom's poetry bookshelf! It includes books by National Poetry Day Ambassadors, plus just a few suggestions from the many inspiring, and enjoyable poetry collections for children and young people.

Author	Title	Publisher	ISBN
John Agard & Grace Nichols	A Caribbean Dozen	Walker Books	978-1406334593
Valerie Bloom	Hot Like Fire	Bloomsbury	978-0747599739
Lis Brownlee, Jan Dean & Michaela Morgan	Reaching the Stars: Poems about Extraordinary Women and Girls	Macmillan	978-1509814282
Joseph Coelho	Werewolf Club Rules!	Frances Lincoln	978-1847804525
Paul Cookson	Crazy Classrooms	Frances Lincoln	978-1847805058
Sally Crabtree & Sonia Esplugas	Magic Train Ride	Barefoot Books	978-1846866579
Sarah Crossan	One (a YA novel written in free verse)	Bloomsbury	978-1408827215
Nicola Davies & Mark Hearld	A First Book of Nature	Walker Books	978-1406349160
Jean Dean & Roger Stevens	The Penguin in Lost Property	Macmillan	978-1447248583
Julia Donaldson & Clare Melinsky	Poems to Perform	Macmillan	978-1447243397
Carol Ann Duffy (ed)	101 Poems for Children: A Laureate's Choice	Macmillan	978-1447220268
Matt Goodfellow	Carry Me Away	Matador	978-1785892608
John Hegley	I Am a Poetato	Frances Lincoln	978-1847803979
Ted Hughes	Collected poems for children	Faber	978-0571215027
Roger McGough, M Rosen, K Paul	You Tell Me!	Frances Lincoln	978-1847804440
Gaby Morgan (ed.)	Read Me 2: A Poem for Every Day of the Year	Macmillan	978-1447294009
Michaela Morgan	Wonderland: Alice in Poetry	Macmillan	978-1509818846
Brian Moses	Lost Magic	Macmillan	978-1509838769
Rachel Rooney & Ellie Jenkins	The Language of Cat	Frances Lincoln	978-1847801678
Joshua Seigal	I Don't Like Poetry	Bloomsbury	978-1472930033
Roger Stevens	Off By Heart	A & C Black	978-1408192948

'What is Poetry? An Essential Guide to Reading and Writing Poetry' published by Walker Books.
<http://michaelrosenblog.blogspot.co.uk/>

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