

National
POETRY
Day 7 October
2021

POETRY BY
HEART

nationalpoetryday.co.uk

#NationalPoetryDay
#ChooseAPoem

Key Stage 3-5

Explore poetry to find a poem that speaks to you
Craft it for performing it out loud
Share it with friends and family on National Poetry Day

This guide offers practical steps to utilise Poetry By Heart's vast online collections to enjoy this National Poetry Day challenge on your own or with friends.

We Wear the Mask

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
We wear the mask!

Paul Dunbar, 1896



1. CHOOSE A POEM

Start with the [11+ timeline](#) or [14+ timeline](#) to find a poem you love. If you're still stuck, use our [11+ video guide](#) or [14+ video guide](#) to help you explore. There is also a selection of poem performance videos in the [11+ performance gallery](#) or [14+ performance gallery](#).

If you want a choice that we recommend, how about the thought-provoking poem ['We Wear The Mask' by Paul Dunbar](#)?



2. PRACTISE SPEAKING IT OUT LOUD

Speaking a poem aloud is all in the preparation - here are our top tips:

See it: Look at the words and think about the images they create. Imagine the first line as a movie scene – who's there, what's happening or about to happen? Try writing out the poem and illustrating it or creating a storyboard.

Sound it: Listen for the sounds of the words and the poem's movement. Try saying it in different tones of voice. Try clapping the poem's beat or walking in time to it. Try different speeds, where to place pauses and moments where the rhythm changes.

Mark it: When you know how you want to say your poem, create a 'script' for reading aloud. Use underlining, colours and symbols to remind yourself where to go faster or slower and where you want your voice to go up or down, louder or softer.

Slow it: Count to 10 before you start to get your listeners ready to listen. Speak slowly: pause for 1 second at a comma or dash, 2 seconds at a colon or semi-colon and 3 seconds at a full stop. No punctuation? You decide where the pauses go!

Savour it: Don't 'swallow' the words at the end of one line because you're rushing to say the next one – enjoy saying every word! Think about how to make an impact with the final line and count to ten after the last word to let it sink in.

3. SHARE IT ALOUD WITH PEOPLE ON 7 OCTOBER

Celebrate National Poetry Day by sharing your poem aloud in school, at home or in the park – or create a video and share it with friends and family who live further away.

If you enjoy that, you could take part in **Poetry By Heart 2022**
- the national competition for children and young people
speaking poems by heart
poetrybyheart.org.uk

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