

INSPIRING
STUDENTS



POETRY

OUT LOUD

2014–2015

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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The National Endowment for the Arts was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. To date, the NEA has awarded more than \$4 billion to support artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector.



The Poetry Foundation, publisher of *Poetry* magazine, is an independent literary organization committed to a vigorous presence for poetry in our culture. It has embarked on an ambitious plan to bring the best poetry before the largest possible audience.

Poetry Out Loud is a partnership of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Poetry Foundation, and the state and jurisdictional arts agencies of the United States.

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Oregon
2014 State Champion
Roselynn Reyes



Poet Robert Frost



Wyoming
2014 State Champion
Sara Ellingrod



Poet
Edna St. Vincent Millay



Nevada
2014 State Champion
Christian Schunke



Poet Langston Hughes



Colorado
2014 State Champion
Alice Kilduff



Poet Dylan Thomas



Michigan
2014 State Champion
Matthew Webb



Poet Emily Dickinson

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* Additional lesson plans can be found at
poetryoutloud.org/teaching-resources/lesson-plans

Welcome

Can there be any subject more difficult to teach in the modern classroom than poetry? Students who take their culture at the speed of the Internet may not easily find it in a measured, majestic poem that comes down to us from the past. But a great poem has much to tell if we can find a way to listen. It will speak to us and for us, giving voice to times of great joy or great loss. “Why should I study this poem,” the student may ask, “let alone try to learn it by heart?” And we may answer, “Because it is a chance to make a friend for life.”

The National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation have partnered with state arts agencies on an exciting program, Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest, which helps students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage. By encouraging your students to study, memorize, and perform some of the most influential and timeless poems of the English language, you immerse them in powerful expression and provocative ideas.

Although many students may initially be nervous about reciting in front of their peers, the experience will prove valuable—not only in school, but also in life. Much of the future success of students will depend on how well they present themselves in public. Public speaking is a skill people use every day in both the workplace and the community.

Hearing the spoken words of classic and contemporary poets we learn that we are not alone, that men and women always have felt as we feel, that the human spirit has been the one constant in the history of our kind. In this way the recitation of poetry brings history to life; in this way it creates community.

Poetry recitation as a competitive event is as old as the Olympic Games. Along with wrestling, long-distance running, and the javelin toss, the ancient Olympics included contests in music and poetry. Performers trained for years and traveled great distances to compete. Please join us in restoring the energy and esprit of poetry recitation nationwide with Poetry Out Loud.

**National Endowment for the Arts
Poetry Foundation**



The 2014-15 school year marks the 10th anniversary of the Poetry Out Loud program. Since 2005, nearly 2.5 million students from more than 7,300 high schools have participated in Poetry Out Loud. The 2015 National Finals will take place on April 28th and 29th at Lisner Auditorium on The George Washington University campus in Washington, DC. The National Semifinals and Finals will be webcast live at arts.gov, and you can follow Poetry Out Loud on Twitter at [@PoetryOutLoud](https://twitter.com/PoetryOutLoud) and [#POL15](https://twitter.com/POL15).

Program Overview

The NEA and the Poetry Foundation have partnered with the state arts agencies of the United States to support Poetry Out Loud. Since it was piloted in 2005, Poetry Out Loud has grown to include millions of students across the country. Champions from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico compete at the National Finals in Washington, DC, each spring.

CONTEST STRUCTURE

Poetry Out Loud uses a pyramid structure that begins at the classroom level. Winners advance to a school-wide competition, then to a regional and/or state competition, and ultimately to the National Finals.

CLASSROOM TIME AND SCHEDULE

The curriculum for Poetry Out Loud has been designed to fit into a teacher's busy schedule. The program takes place over the span of 2 to 3 weeks, according to each teacher's interest and agenda, and it does not require full class periods. To accommodate schools' testing demands and vacation calendars, Poetry Out Loud can be implemented at the school-level any time during the fall and through early winter, with slight variations by state. Please check with your state Poetry Out Loud coordinator for your state's specific schedule. (Visit poetryoutloud.org to identify your state coordinator.) **Schools must register with their state Poetry Out Loud coordinator to participate in the official program.**

NCTE AND COMMON CORE STANDARDS

Poetry Out Loud satisfies most of the NCTE English Language Arts Standards as detailed on page 35. In addition to memorizing and performing great poems, students will have the opportunity to discuss poetry and—if the teacher wishes to use the supplemental lesson plans—to write poetry of their own. Alignment with Common Core Standards is set forth on page 36.

AWARDS

The following awards are offered for the official contests conducted by the state arts agencies, the Poetry Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. The awards do not apply to other unofficial contests.

State Awards: Each winner at the state level will receive \$200 and an all-expenses-paid trip (with an adult chaperone) to Washington, DC, to compete at the National Finals. The state winner's school will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. One runner-up in each state will receive \$100; his or her school will receive \$200 for the purchase of poetry books.

National Awards: A total of \$50,000 in awards and school stipends will be given at the Poetry Out Loud National Finals, including a \$20,000 award for the National Champion.

Awards will be made in the form of lump sum cash payouts, reportable to the IRS. Tax liabilities are the sole responsibility of the winners and their families.

LEGAL PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

No student may be excluded from participation in this program on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, disability, or national origin. Schools may determine eligibility for classroom- and school-level Poetry Out Loud programs pursuant to local and state law. **Participation in both the state competitions and the National Finals is restricted to U.S. citizens or permanent residents with valid tax identification or Social Security numbers, in keeping with federal law.** Foreign exchange students and other visitors are not eligible to compete for titles or official awards at the state and national level, unless they are U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

Rules

The following is a list of some basic rules that apply to Poetry Out Loud. For more details on these rules and other guidance on the competition, please thoroughly review this entire guide.

Note: Only schools registered with their state Poetry Out Loud coordinator are eligible for the official competition.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

- **Grade Level:** Only currently enrolled students in grades 9-12 are eligible, with an exception made for 8th-grade students participating in a 9th- through 12th-grade class.
- **Citizenship:** Competitors at the state and national finals must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents with valid tax identification or Social Security numbers. Tax identification or Social Security numbers are required to receive prizes, including cash payments or travel awards. Students are responsible for verifying their eligibility. State coordinators and teachers are responsible for notifying students about legal participation requirements.
- **State Finals:** A student may not advance to the state finals without competing in a lower-level competition.
- **Homeschooled Students:** Homeschooled students may participate by competing in a contest at a local school (at the school's discretion) or with other local homeschooled students. Contact your state coordinator for specific guidelines.
- **School Not Participating?** Students unable to participate at a local school should contact their state Poetry Out Loud coordinator to discuss other opportunities for inclusion in the state's official competition.
- **Repeat Champions:** Only National Champions are not eligible to compete in subsequent years.

POEM ELIGIBILITY

- **Poem Anthology:** All poems must be selected from the Poetry Out Loud print or online anthology, which is updated every summer. Check www.poetryoutloud.org after September 1, 2014, to view the official Poetry Out Loud anthology for the current school year. *Only versions of poems from the official anthology may be used in the contest.*
- **Can't Find a Poem?** Poems may be removed from the online anthology before September 1, 2014. These poems are no longer eligible for competition, unless they are in the print anthology.

- **Poem Criteria:** At the state and national finals, students must have 3 poems prepared. One must be 25 lines or fewer, and one must be written before the 20th century. The same poem may be used to meet both criteria, and may be the student's third poem.

COMPETITION

- **School Competition:** Schools must hold a competition of at least 2 students to select their champion. If that champion is unable to attend the next level of competition, the runner-up should be sent.
- **Evaluation:** Students must be judged according to the Poetry Out Loud evaluation criteria from the 2014–2015 Teacher's Guide (pages 13-15).
- **Rounds:** State and national finals consist of 3 rounds of competition. Competitions at lower levels may have fewer rounds, but students must recite only 1 poem in each round.
- **Poem Order:** The order in which the poems are recited is up to the student, but poem order may not be switched once submitted to the competition organizer.
- **Judging:** Rankings are based solely on evaluation sheets submitted by judges. Judges should not convene to discuss performances during the competition. Judges may not reconsider their scores after they are submitted. Judges' decisions are final.
- **Scoring:** Scoring is cumulative. The scores from all rounds should be added together to determine the winner.
- **Ties:** In the event of a tie, the tied student with the highest overall performance score should win; if that also results in a tie, look to the highest accuracy score. If scores remain tied, consider having students pick 1 poem to recite again as a separate score to break the tie.
- **Props:** Students may not use props or wear costumes during their recitations.

From left: 2014 Third Place Finalist Natasha Vargas of New Jersey, 2014 Second Place Finalist Lake Wilburn of Ohio, and 2014 National Champion Anita Norman of Tennessee.



Organizing the Contest Events

LEAD TEACHER(S)

We recommend that each school identify 1 or 2 teachers to serve as the Poetry Out Loud coordinators. Duties for lead teachers will include enlisting fellow teachers to participate, distributing materials, organizing the school events, and keeping in touch with the state Poetry Out Loud coordinator.

Begin organizing your school event as early as possible in order to ensure greater attendance by the school community. Please see page 9 for tips on promoting the event. Additional guidance, including sample press releases, can be found at poetryoutloud.org.

LENGTH OF CONTEST – SCHOOLS

Classroom contests can be held during class periods. A school's final contest should run less than 2 hours; any longer than that can be difficult for the audience. Ideally, 6 to 15 students should compete in each school's final contest. If your school has 6 to 15 classes participating in the program, send 1 winner from each class to the school finals. If fewer than 6 classes are participating, 2 students from each class may advance to the school finals. If more than 15 classes are participating, you might consider holding grade-level competitions first, allowing 2 or 3 students from each grade to advance to the school finals. In structuring your contest(s), keep in mind that each recitation takes approximately 3 to 4 minutes. Judges will require another minute to mark scores, yielding a rough average of 4 to 5 minutes per recitation.

NUMBER OF POEMS AT EACH CONTEST LEVEL

For the classroom contest, students must prepare at least 1 poem to recite. Participants in the school finals should prepare 2 poems for recitation. Students who advance to the state and national levels must have 3 poems prepared. Students will recite their poems in rounds, not consecutively, delivering 1 poem in each round. A third round, if included, may consist of a smaller number of the highest-scoring competitors.

POEM SELECTION

Students must select poems from the official Poetry Out Loud print or online anthologies. Not all poems on the CD, DVD, or in the lesson plans are eligible for the competition. **Any poem in the printed anthology is eligible even if it is not available online.**

It is strongly recommended that students who compete beyond the classroom level select poems of various styles, time periods, and voices. Diversity in the selections will offer a richer and more complete performance. For the state and national competitions, students must select 1 poem of 25 lines or fewer and 1 poem written before the 20th century. The same poem may be used to meet both requirements, and may be the student's third poem. Lists of eligible poems are available at poetryoutloud.org.

Students must provide the titles and authors of their poems and the order in which they will be recited in advance to the contest coordinator. Students may not change their poem selections or order once they have been submitted. This will enable the coordinator to have copies of the poems collated for the judges and prompter,

and contest evaluation sheets prepared. Organizers may not dictate which poems are to be recited in which rounds.

VENUE

Reserve a school theater, auditorium, or other appropriate venue. The ideal setting will have a stage and theater-style seating. Competitors will stand alone on stage in front of the audience while reciting their poems. Other competitors may either be seated to the side of the stage or in the front row of the audience. Depending on the size of the venue, amplification may be appropriate.

STAFFING THE COMPETITION

At the school-wide competition, you will need volunteers to serve in a variety of roles:

Coordinator (1 or 2). The lead teacher(s) may be best suited for this role. The coordinator will ensure that the event runs smoothly, all volunteers are present, judges are briefed before the event, scoring is accurate, etc.

Emcee (1). An emcee will guide the competition from start to finish, providing welcoming remarks, introducing judges and students, and announcing winners. The emcee or the coordinator will need to keep an eye on the judges to make sure they have enough time to complete their scoring before the next student begins to recite. Since judges may need a minute between recitations to finish scoring and hand in their evaluation sheets, you may want to ask the emcee to entertain the audience or fill that time with biographical information about the poets or competing students (which you would need to have prepared). Another idea is to have music, live or recorded, between recitations.

Judges (3–5), accuracy judge (1). See page 10 of this Teacher’s Guide for advice on selecting judges.

Prompter (1). It is important to have someone following along with the recitations, ready to prompt a student who may get stuck on a line. Prepare a notebook with a large-font copy of each poem, in the order of recitation, for the prompter. Seat the prompter in the center of the front row, and have them follow along with the text as each student recites. Show the students where the prompter is sitting before the contest begins so they know where to look if they get lost during their recitation. If a competitor is stuck for several seconds and looks to the prompter for help, the prompter may provide the next few words of the poem to get that student back on track.

Score tabulator (1–2). While the competition is taking place, someone should input the judges’ scores in a database so that no time is wasted totaling scores after the recitations are finished. An Excel spreadsheet works well for this purpose. A template is available at poetryoutloud.org. It may be helpful for the tabulator to have an assistant collect the contest evaluation sheets. **Remember to test your tabulation system before the event.**

Ushers. You may want to create a program for the event that lists the competitors and the poems they will be reciting, while also recognizing any local businesses that contributed to the contest. If so, plan on a few ushers to hand out programs.

INTRODUCING AND RECITING THE POEM

At the competition, the emcee should introduce students as they come to the stage to recite. It is the student's job to identify the poem by accurately announcing both the title and the author. (For example, "'The Lake Isle of Innisfree,' by William Butler Yeats" or "'The New Colossus,' by Emma Lazarus.") A student's own editorial comments before or after the poem are not allowed. Recitations must include epigraphs if included in the Poetry Out Loud anthology; however, footnotes included with the poem in the Poetry Out Loud anthology should not be recited. Stanza numbers and dedications included with the original poem are optional, and their inclusion or omission should not affect the accuracy score. The poem must be delivered from memory.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE

A typical school competition may look something like this, based on 10 students, an average recitation time of 3–4 minutes each, and 1 minute between recitations for scoring:

1:00 pm	Welcoming remarks and introduction of the judging panel, prompter, and accuracy judge. Recognition of any sponsors. Recap of the evaluation criteria for judging the recitations.
1:05	Calibration Round. A volunteer not participating in the actual contest recites a sample poem so the judges can practice scoring.
1:10–2:30	Recitations, taking place in 2 rounds. In the first round, students will recite their first poem. In the second round, students will recite their second poem.
2:30	Five-minute intermission for scoring to be completed, and winner and runner-up to be determined.
2:35	Announcement of winner and runner-up. Presentation of certificates and any prizes.

AWARDS

A certificate of participation is available at poetryoutloud.org. You may wish to solicit prizes from local businesses, if appropriate. Select a school champion as well as a runner-up. Depending on the guidelines of your state competition, 1 or both of these students may advance to the next level of competition. Please check with your state Poetry Out Loud coordinator.

Publicity Tips

During the 2014-15 school year, Poetry Out Loud celebrates its tenth anniversary, reaching nearly 2.5 million students from more than 7,300 schools nationwide in the past decade. The Poetry Out Loud contest is a great way to raise school spirit and generate positive visibility for your school. Here are some simple ways to increase awareness of Poetry Out Loud, as well as share your students' achievements, with the community at large.

IN YOUR SCHOOL

- Display a Poetry Out Loud poster in the school library, cafeteria, or hallway.
- Post a “save-the-date” notice on the school calendar and on bulletin boards throughout the school.
- Send a notice announcing classroom champions to the school website or newsletter.
- Publicize the school-wide competition on the school website and in the student newspaper.
- Write an article about the school-wide contest for your PTA newsletter.
- Announce classroom winners and the school-wide competition, in the daily PA broadcast, or at assemblies.
- Include a “poem-a-day” poetry recitation in the daily PA broadcast.

SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

- Teachers can post Poetry Out Loud assignments and results on their individual blogs. School blogs can post updates on Poetry Out Loud school contests.
- Set up a free Twitter account for your school or classroom. Remember to use the Poetry Out Loud hashtag — #POL15 — to be part of the larger conversation about POL throughout the school year.
- Set up a Facebook page for Poetry Out Loud at your school; post updates on the program.
- If your school allows video sharing websites such as YouTube, use them to highlight videos that complement Poetry Out Loud learning objectives.
- If you use broadcast channels to feature students reciting poems, please be aware of poetry usage rights. Unless the poem recited is public domain (published in or before 1923), you are responsible for investigating copyright permissions to contemporary poems through the publishers. Publisher information for contemporary poems can be found on the individual poem pages of the Poetry Out Loud website.

IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- Call your community newspaper (we suggest the metro section editor), and invite a reporter to attend the school-wide competition. See the sample media advisory on the website.
- Invite a prominent member of the local media to serve as a judge or master of ceremonies for the school-wide competition.
- After the event, send the local newspaper a follow-up press release highlighting the contest, along with photos from your event. See the sample follow-up press release on the website.
- Send a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Use the letter to showcase your school's participation and to discuss the benefits of poetry in the classroom.

Judging the Contest

JUDGING THE CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL CONTESTS

The teacher can serve as the sole judge for a classroom contest. At the school finals, 3 judges should be sufficient—a group of teachers may serve as judges, or you may invite some community members to judge the contest. Appropriate judges might be local poets, actors, professors, arts reporters, politicians, or members of the school board. Judges should have some knowledge of poetry, although they need not be experts. Be sensitive to conflicts of interest—actual or perceived—with your judging panel.

A copy of the Poetry Out Loud contest evaluation sheet may be downloaded at poetryoutloud.org. Print the contest evaluation sheets before the school contest, and fill in the names of the participants and the titles of the poems they will recite. Have these in the order of recitation before the competition, with 1 set for each judge.

Prepare the judges in advance:

- Send them the students' poems ahead of time, printed out or electronically, so they are familiar with them and can assign consistent complexity scores. No judge other than the accuracy judge should be following along with the printed text during recitations—they will be too distracted.
- Send them a copy of the Judge's Guide, printed from poetryoutloud.org.
- Invite them to ask questions and schedule an orientation or conference call prior to the contest so all judges have consistent scoring advice. Encourage them to watch the archived Poetry Out Loud Judge training webinar at poetryoutloud.org.
- Encourage them to view the video examples of National Finals recitations on the Poetry Out Loud website and the Poetry Out Loud YouTube channel; they should practice scoring these before the competition.

During the competition, separate the judges a bit from the rest of the audience so they are not distracted. Judges should not have any interaction with the contestants or the audience until after the competition has ended. Judges must not convene to discuss their scores—they should rate recitations individually and then immediately turn in their evaluation sheets. This practice not only keeps the contest moving, but also ensures that judges are scoring independently, based on merit only. Warn judges that they will not be able to revisit scores after they turn them in.

After each recitation, the score tabulator or an assistant will collect the completed contest evaluation sheets. The accuracy judge's score will be added to each evaluation sheet as scores are tabulated. Scoring is cumulative; the scores from each round should be totaled to determine the winner.

ACCURACY JUDGE

Assign a separate person to serve as an accuracy judge. The accuracy judge will mark missed or incorrect words during the recitation. The accuracy score sheet can be found on page 12, and also can be downloaded from poetryoutloud.org. Print out the accuracy score sheets before the contest, and fill in the names of the participants and the titles of the poems they will recite. Have these in order of recitation before the competition and give a set to the accuracy judge, along with a notebook with a large-font copy of each poem, in the order of recitation, so he or she may follow the recitations.

Contest Evaluation Sheet

NAME OF STUDENT:

TITLE OF POEM:

	Weak	Below Average	Average	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Physical Presence	1	2	3	4	5	6
Voice and Articulation	1	2	3	4	5	6
Dramatic Appropriateness	1	2	3	4	5	6
Level of Complexity	1	2	3	4	5	6
Evidence of Understanding	1	2	3	4	5	6
Overall Performance	1	2	3	5	7	9

TOTAL: _____ (maximum of 39 points)

ACCURACY JUDGE'S SCORE: _____ (maximum of 8 points)

FINAL SCORE: _____ (MAXIMUM OF 47 POINTS)

Poetry Out Loud Accuracy Score Sheet

NAME OF STUDENT:

TITLE OF POEM:

Maximum Score	8	points
Inaccuracy Deduction (subtract)	— ____	points
Prompt Deduction (subtract)	— ____	points
FINAL ACCURACY SCORE	____	points*

*Lowest possible score is 1 point

Accuracy judge: Follow along with the text of the poem as the competitor recites. Mark the text each time there is an error in accuracy. You may want to mark all minor inaccuracies the same (since each is worth a 1 point deduction), and flag the bigger mistakes differently. After the recitation, use the guidance below to assign a point deduction to each mistake. To get the final accuracy score, count up the point deductions, and subtract them from the maximum score of 8 points. *Remember that the accuracy score is added to the contest evaluation sheet of each judge.*

Example: If the competitor repeated a word (-1 point), confused an article (-1 point), and skipped one line (-3 points), that would be 5 points subtracted from the maximum score of 8. The final accuracy score would be 3 points.

Minor inaccuracies, resulting in a 1 point deduction, include:

- Confusing a pronoun (“he” instead of “she”)
- Confusing an article (“a” instead of “the”)
- Pluralizing a word or vice-versa (“horses” instead of “horse”)
- Replacing a word with a similar word (“jump” instead of “leap”)
- Confusing the order of words (“hops and skips” instead of “skips and hops”)
- Skipping a word
- Repeating a word
- Adding a word

Major inaccuracies, resulting in larger deductions per occurrence, include:

- One line out of order -2 points
- Repeating a line -2 points
- Skipped 1 line/skipped 3 or more words in the same line -3 points
- Reversed 2 stanzas -5 points
- Skipped 1 stanza -6 points

Use of prompter: Each time a student uses the prompter, 3 points will be deducted from the final accuracy score.

The inclusion or omission of stanza numbers or dedications should not affect scoring. Likewise, the addition of a “Thank you” at the end of the recitation, while discouraged, should not figure in the accuracy score.

Evaluation Criteria and Tips for Contestants

Teachers, coaches, and students may also find it useful to view the scoring rubric in the Judge’s Guide. Guidance on implementing Poetry Out Loud for students with disabilities is available at poetryoutloud.org.

PHYSICAL PRESENCE

This category is to evaluate the physical nature of the recitation. Consider the students’s **eye contact**, **body language**, and **poise**.

Advice for the student:

- Present yourself well and be attentive. Use good posture. Be confident.
- Use eye contact to make a direct connection with the entire audience; don’t focus solely on the judges.
- Nervous gestures, poor eye contact with the audience, and lack of poise or confidence will detract from your score.
- Relax and be natural. Enjoy your poem; the judges will notice.

Qualities of a strong recitation:

The student appears at ease and comfortable with the audience. He or she engages the audience through physical presence, including appropriate body language, confidence, and eye contact—without appearing artificial. All qualities of the student’s physical presence work together to the benefit of the poem.

VOICE AND ARTICULATION

This category is to evaluate the auditory nature of the recitation. Consider the student’s **volume**, **pace**, **rhythm**, **intonation**, and **proper pronunciation**. At the National Finals, contestants will use a microphone; when appropriate, one should be used in school and state competitions as well.

Advice for the student:

- Project to the audience. You want to capture the attention of everyone, including the people in the back row. However, do not mistake yelling for good volume or projection.
- Proceed at a fitting and natural pace. People may speak or express themselves too quickly when they are nervous, which can make a recitation difficult to understand. Do not speak so slowly that the language sounds unnatural, awkward, or falsely dramatic.
- With rhymed poems, be careful not to recite in a sing-song manner.
- Make sure you know how to pronounce every word in your poem. Articulate.
- Line breaks are a defining feature of poetry, with each one calling for different treatment. Decide whether a break requires a pause and, if so, how long to pause.

Qualities of a strong recitation:

All words are pronounced correctly, and the volume, rhythm, and intonation greatly enhance the recitation. Pacing is appropriate to the poem.

DRAMATIC APPROPRIATENESS

Recitation is about conveying a poem's sense primarily with one's voice. In this way, recitation is closer to the art of oral interpretation than theatrical performance. (Think storyteller or narrator rather than actor.) Students may find it challenging to convey the meaning of a poem without acting it out, but a strong performance will rely on a powerful internalization of the poem rather than distracting dramatic gestures.

The reciter represents the poem's voice during the course of a recitation, not a character's. The videos of National Finals recitations on the Poetry Out Loud DVD and website will help illustrate this point. Appropriate dramatization subtly enhances the audience's understanding and enjoyment of the poem without overshadowing the poem's language.

Advice for the student:

- Do not act out the poem. Too much dramatization can distract your audience from the language of the poem. Your goal should be to help audience members understand the poem more deeply than they had before hearing your recitation. Movement or accents must not detract from the poem's voice.
- You are the vessel of your poem. Have confidence that your poem is strong enough to communicate its sounds and messages without a physical illustration. In other words, let the words of the poem do the work.
- Depending on the poem, occasional gestures may be appropriate, but the line between appropriate and overdone is a thin one. When uncertain, leave them out.
- Avoid monotone delivery. If you sound bored, you will project that boredom to the audience. However, too much enthusiasm can make your performance seem insincere.

Qualities of a strong recitation:

The dramatization subtly underscores the meaning of the poem without becoming the focal point of the recitation. The style of delivery is more about oral interpretation than dramatic enactment. **A low score in this category will result from recitations that have affected character voices and accents, inappropriate tone and inflection, singing, distracting and excessive gestures, or unnecessary emoting.**

LEVEL OF COMPLEXITY

This category is to evaluate the comparative complexity of the poem, which is the result of several factors. A poem with complex **content** conveys difficult, sophisticated ideas that the student will be challenged to grasp and express. A poem with complex **language** will have intricate diction and syntax, meter and rhyme scheme, and shifts in tone or mood. Poem **length** is also considered in complexity. Please keep in mind that longer poems are not necessarily more difficult. In well-written verse, deep meaning can sometimes translate into brief poems, where each word resonates with the next. Poems with significantly challenging content and language may not need length to score well. Every poem is a different combination of content, language, and length, and the judges should score accordingly based on their independent evaluation of each poem. Judges must score consistently for this category. For example, if two students recite the same poem, a judge should give the same score to both students for Level of Complexity.

Advice for the student:

- For competitions beyond the classroom level, select poems of various styles, time periods, themes, and tones. This diversity of selection will allow judges to see your mastery of various elements of complexity.
- Make sure each poem you choose is one that speaks to you, whatever the level of complexity. If you are able to connect with a poem, that internalization will ripple positively throughout all of your scores.
- Remember that a longer poem is not necessarily a more complex poem.

EVIDENCE OF UNDERSTANDING

This category is to evaluate a student's comprehension and mastery of a poem. The poet's words should take precedence, and the student who understands the poem best will be able to voice it in a way that helps the audience to understand the poem better. To do this, a student must effectively use intonation, emphasis, tone, and style of delivery.

Advice for the student:

- In order for the audience to understand the poem fully, you must understand the poem fully. Be attentive to the messages, meanings, allusions, irony, tones of voice, and other nuances in your poem.
- Be sure you know the meaning of every word and line in your poem. If you are unsure about something, it will be apparent to the audience and judges. Don't hesitate to ask your teacher for help.
- Listen to track 4 on the audio CD (or on the Poetry Out Loud website) in which poet David Mason introduces Yeats's "The Lake Isle of Innisfree." In his comments, he advises you to think about how you should interpret the tone and volume and voice of your poem. Is it a quiet poem? Is it a boisterous poem? Should it be read more quickly or slowly, with a happy or mournful tone? Your interpretation will be different for each poem, and it is a crucial element of your performance.

Qualities of a strong recitation:

The meaning of the poem is powerfully and clearly conveyed to the audience. The student displays an interpretation that deepens and enlivens the poem. **Meaning, messages, allusions, irony, tones of voice,** and other nuances are captured by the performance. A low score is awarded if the interpretation obscures the meaning of the poem.

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

This category is to evaluate the overall success of the performance, the degree to which the recitation has become more than the sum of its parts. Has the student captivated the audience with the language of the poem? Did the student bring the audience to a better understanding of the poem? Did the physical presence, voice and articulation, and dramatic appropriateness all seem on target and unified to breathe life into the poem? Does the student understand and show mastery of the art of recitation? The judges will use this score to measure how impressed they were by the recitation, and whether the recitation has honored the poem. Judges may also consider the range of a student's recitations with this score; a student is less likely to score well in overall performance when judges note that a student's style of interpretation remains the same regardless of poem choice. A low score will be awarded for recitations that are poorly presented, ineffective in conveying the meaning of the poem, or conveyed in a manner inappropriate to the poem.

ACCURACY

A separate judge will mark missed or incorrect words during the recitation, with small deductions for each. If the contestant relies on the prompter, points also will be subtracted from the accuracy score from each judge. Eight points will be added to each judge's contest evaluation sheet for a perfectly accurate recitation.

Teacher Preparation

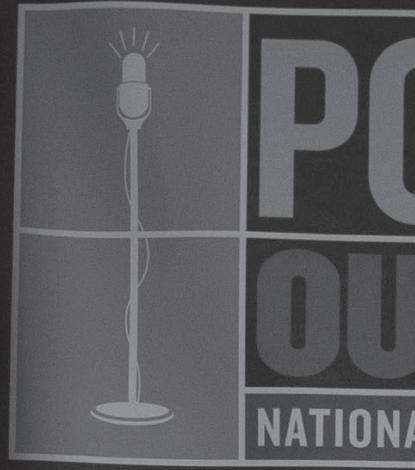
- 1. Have students browse the poems.** We have provided an extensive online anthology that includes several search options. Allow time for the students to explore the selections, either as homework or a classroom activity, and have the students pick some poems they may memorize.
- 2. Begin class with a poem a day.** Another way to expose students to poetry that they might not discover on their own is to read or recite a poem to them at the start of each class period. This duty might be performed by the teacher, students, or both. Poetryoutloud.org has a poet of the day feature, including poems and poet biographies that may be read aloud.
- 3. Ask each student to select poems to memorize.** Allowing students to choose their own poems enhances the educational value of the program. Encourage them to build up range and level of complexity, keeping in mind that long poems are not always the most difficult. You may want to have them master a poem with a simpler narrative first and then have them pick a poem they are attracted to but might not completely understand. The process of memorizing and reciting should help students internalize the author's message and further explore phrases and lines they could not master initially. Find videos on the selection and memorization of poems at www.poetryoutloud.org/poems-and-performance/watch-video.
- 4. Discuss the poems in class.** Understanding the text is the most important preparation for reciting poetry aloud. If a student doesn't understand the text, neither will the audience. Lead class discussions about the students' selected poems.
- 5. Have students memorize the poems.** Share these memorization tips with your students:
 - Rewrite your poem by hand several times. Each time, try to write more and more of it from memory.
 - Read your poem aloud before going to sleep at night, and repeat it when you wake up.
 - Carry around a copy of your poem in your pocket or bag. You'll find several moments throughout the day to reread or recite it.
 - Practice your poem by saying it to family and friends.
- 6. Model recitation skills in the classroom.**
 - With the class, develop a list of bad habits that take away from the performance, such as inaudible volume, speaking too quickly or too slowly, monotone voice, fidgeting, overacting, and mispronunciations.
 - Then develop a list of elements of a successful recitation, such as sufficient volume, an appropriate speed with the proper pauses, voice inflection, evidence of understanding, correct pronunciation, and eye contact with the audience.
 - Play portions of the audio and the videos as further examples.
 - Recite poems yourself — this is a powerful way to show students it can be done.
- 7. Practice the poems.** Allow class time for students to practice their poems. Break the class into pairs of students (rotating each session), and have each student practice with a partner. Partners should offer constructive criticism, using the contest evaluation sheet and evaluation criteria as a guide.
- 8. Include creative writing exercises.** Creative writing is a natural complement to Poetry Out Loud. For that reason, we have included a number of optional writing exercises and lesson plans for teachers at the back of this Teacher's Guide and at poetryoutloud.org.

Suggested Class Schedule

- WEEK 1**
- **Have students explore the anthologies and choose poems to memorize.**
(1 full class session)
 - **Read and discuss some of the poems in class.**
(2–3 full class sessions)
 - **Model effective and ineffective recitation practices for the students.**
(1 full class session)
-

- WEEK 2**
- **Have students practice their poems with different partners each day.**
They should also work on their memorization and performance outside of school. Students should have their poems completely memorized and be able to recite without using a printed copy by the end of the week.
(15 minutes per day)
 - **Hold practice contests.**
Break up the class into groups. Have 1 student at a time perform for the rest of the group, who act as judges. Discuss the scoring choices with them. Encourage discussion about how the student interpreted and presented the poem.
(1 full class session)
 - **Implement the lesson plans and writing exercises.**
While reserving a portion of each class period for recitation practice, you may offer a more complete poetry unit by using the lesson plans provided in this Teacher’s Guide or on the website.
(1–5 full class sessions, optional)
 - **Hold the classroom recitation contests at the end of the week.**
Bear in mind that it takes an average of 4 or 5 minutes to recite a poem and judge the recitation. Teachers should structure the contest in a way that best fits their schedules.
(1–2 full class sessions)
-

- WEEK 3**
- **Hold the school-wide recitation contest at the end of the week.**
Winners of the classroom contests will prepare 2 or 3 poems for recitation and will compete in the school-wide competition at the end of this week. Ideally, the school-wide competition will take place at a campus assembly, thus enhancing the entire student body’s exposure to poetry and giving the contestants a larger audience. Students who have competed before big groups will be more comfortable with the audiences at the state competitions and National Finals.
(1–2 hours; school assembly)



present

POETRY OUT LOUD NATIONAL RECITATION CONTEST

*Poetry Out Loud State Champions
gather for the 2014 National Finals on
April 30 at the Lisner Auditorium in
Washington, DC.*



Lesson Plan: The Tone Map

Periods: 1 to 3, depending on the final project chosen

NCTE standards: 1, 2, 3, 6, 12

Common Core standards: Anchor Standards for Reading 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and Anchor Standards for Language 3, 4, 5

INTRODUCTION

In his introduction to the Poetry Out Loud CD* (track 2, “The Power of Poetry”), poet Dana Gioia says that reciting poetry and listening to others recite it can train our “emotional intelligence.” Later, in track 30, Gioia points out that most poems tell a “narrative of emotions”: that is, they move through a series of moods and tones of voice, arranged in a particular order to tell a particular emotional story. Even when the poem seems like a simple series of images and even when we can’t say exactly what events took place in the poem, there is usually an emotional drama playing out from the beginning of the poem, through the middle, and into the end, as the poem tries to arrive at some emotional resolution.

As students learn to name the tones of voice that the poem moves through, they will learn to describe mixed emotions, such as “sweet sorrow,” and to distinguish subtle shifts in tone and mood. They will build their vocabulary of feeling, train their emotional intelligence, and prepare themselves to speak more accurately and confidently about any piece of writing or work of art.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this lesson, students will have opportunities to:

- Listen to poems being recited, with an ear to how the performer has adopted different tones of voice over the course of the performance
- Mark, visually, where and when those shifts of tone occurred
- Use a rich and varied tone vocabulary to name each shift in tone, looking up words they do not know
- Practice “mapping” a poem on their own, in a precise and nuanced way
- Write instructions to a classmate on how he or she should recite the poem, with evidence to support why this series of tones of voice is correct

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- The Poetry Out Loud CD or access to the online Poetry Out Loud Audio Guide
- A CD player or computer
- Printed copies of the poems you play from the CD, which can be found in the Poetry Out Loud anthology
- A good dictionary

* The audio CD may still be used, although it is no longer part of the packet. The CD contents can be found online at poetryoutloud.org/poems-and-performance/listen-to-poetry.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

1. The day before you begin this lesson, hand out a copy of the tone list at the end of this lesson plan. Feel free to trim the tone list to suit your students; however, the longer it is, the more varied and subtle your students' descriptions of tone will be. Explain that they will be using this list to describe the changing tones of voice that an actor uses to convey the emotions in a poem, and ask students to circle any words on the list they do not know. Assign students to look up some or all of these words—no more than 2 or 3 words each, probably—and to bring in the definitions and the full tone list when they return.

2. To begin the lesson the next day, introduce the idea that most poems tell a “story of emotions”: a series of moods that change as the poem moves from start to finish. Whether or not we understand what everything in the poem means, we can experience, enjoy, and convey to others the poem's emotional drama. We do this by recognizing the changing tones of voice that the speaker of the poem adopts as the poem moves from beginning to end.

- On track 32 of the CD, introducing “Miniver Cheevy,” Gioia speaks about how recitations must sometimes convey mixed emotions. You can also illustrate this point with “Jenny Kissed Me,” which is somewhat shorter and perhaps therefore easier to work with in class.

3. Play Kay Ryan's recitation of “Jenny Kissed Me” (track 3). Ask students to listen for the tonal turning points they hear in Kay Ryan's recitation. You will probably want to play it several times. At this point, students need only jot down notes about where in the poem—at what words or phrases—they hear the poem shift in mood, or the performer shift in her tone of voice.

4. Now, using the tone list, have the students brainstorm names for each tone they have heard. Encourage them to combine terms whenever they need to: for example, “bantering disbelief” is different from “stunned disbelief,” and both are different from “horrified disbelief.” You could explain that emotions don't always come in primary colors; often colors blend, and shade into one another. The more accurate their descriptions are, the more distinctions they can learn to recognize.

- Perhaps bring in and hand out some free color samples from a paint store to illustrate this: bright white is different from eggshell white is different from cream, etc.
- If there is a tone word they wish to add to the list, let them.
- Students do not need to agree on the tones they hear; however, they should be able to support their descriptions by reference to the poem, and by reciting the section of the poem at issue, in the tone of voice that they hear. Let other students evaluate whether the poem makes emotional sense when said that way.

Lesson Plan: The Tone Map

continued

5. Hand out the “tone map” of “Jenny Kissed Me” printed below. (You may download it from the Poetry Out Loud website.) Explain the format: in the left column we find the poem, divided into sections according to where the tone might shift. Note that tone shifts may be the same as the poem’s lines, stanzas, or sentences, but shifts in tone may also take place in shorter units, such as phrase by phrase. In the right column are names for the tones of voice one might hear in the poem, and therefore should try to convey in performance.

Section	Tone
Jenny kissed me when we met,	Fond reminiscence
Jumping from the chair she sat in;	Amused, affectionate
Time, you thief, who love to get Sweets into your list,	Still amused (now by Time, rather than by Jenny), but growing a little wary, a little scornful
Put that in!	Disdainful
Say I’m weary,	Shrugging
Say I’m sad,	Candid, a little sad
Say that health and wealth have missed me,	Lightly or playfully regretful
Say I’m growing old,	Real regret
But add,	Rallying, insistent
Jenny kissed me.	Marveling, contented

Discuss the tones in this “tone map” with the students. Are these the tones they heard in Kay Ryan’s reading? If not, how would they describe what they heard? Do they think that parts of the poem should be read in a tone that is different from both Ryan’s recitation and the tone map? What tone seems better in what section, and why?

6. To begin the next part of the lesson, remind students that performers will find different emotions in a single poem, and will convey these in contrasting tones of voice. Play track 11 of the CD, with three performances of Hamlet’s “To be or not to be” speech, as an example. Have students discuss the contrasting tones they hear in these different readings. What different questions do the actors seem to be asking? Which performance do they prefer? Why?

7. Now hand out a copy of William Wordsworth’s sonnet “The World Is Too Much With Us.” Working in pairs, have students mark where the shifts in tone occur, and then have them draft a “tone map” of the poem using the tone list.

8. From the CD, play Angela Lansbury’s reading of “The World Is Too Much With Us” (track 13). In this performance, you will hear an actress trying to bring out the emotional drama in a poem that may seem merely intellectual or abstract. Ask the students whether Lansbury’s performance of the poem matches their “tone map,” either in terms of where she has shifted tones, or in terms of the tones and emotions she brings to the poem. Where does Lansbury’s differ from theirs? How would they describe her shifts in tone? Which choices do they prefer, and why?

9. As a final project for this lesson, choose one of the following options:

- Have students write a “Memo to Lansbury,” as though they were her director. The memo should go through the poem section by section, explaining any problems they find with the tones portrayed in Lansbury’s performance, and how they think she should perform the poem differently. Tell students that they must justify their recommendations to the actress—who is, after all, a trained professional—in terms of the emotions and ideas and motivations they see in each section of the poem.
- Have students choose a poem they wish to recite from the Poetry Out Loud anthology, and format it as a two-column “map” at home. Before they perform their poem, they should tell their classmates the series of tones they wish to convey. After the recitation, students should respond by telling the performer whether he or she was successful at conveying those tones, and also whether they think that the tone for any section or sections was incorrect—and if so, why, and what it ought to be.
- Have students choose a poem they want to recite from the Poetry Out Loud anthology, and exchange it with a classmate. Students will then prepare, at home, a two-column “map” of the poem and write a short “Director’s Memo” that explains the tones of voice that the performer should convey, with an explanation for each. The next day, have students pair up, exchange maps and memos, and recite one another’s poems. They can then give each other feedback on what seemed right or unsuccessful in both the director’s memo and in the performances.

Lesson Plan: The Tone Map

continued

THE TONE LIST

Here is a list of tones that students may find in poems. It is not comprehensive, and students should be encouraged to add to it as needed; as the teacher, you should also feel free to trim it to suit your students and class level. Keep in mind that the longer the list is, the more nuanced and powerful your students' emotional vocabulary will be.

You may download the Tone List from the Poetry Out Loud website.

abashed	bristling	disrespectful	horrified	provocative	solemn
abrasive	brusque	distracted	humorous	questioning	somber
abusive	calm	doubtful	hypercritical	rallying	stern
acquiescent	candid	dramatic	indifferent	reflective	straightforward
accepting	caressing	dreamy	indignant	reminiscing	stentorian
acerbic	caustic	dry	indulgent	reproachful	strident
admiring	cavalier	ecstatic	ironic	resigned	stunned
adoring	childish	entranced	irreverent	respectful	subdued
affectionate	child-like	enthusiastic	joking	restrained	swaggering
aghast	clipped	eulogistic	joyful	reticent	sweet
allusive	cold	exhilarated	languorous	reverent	sympathetic
amused	complimentary	exultant	languid	rueful	taunting
angry	condescending	facetious	laudatory	sad	tense
anxious	confident	fanciful	light-hearted	sarcastic	thoughtful
apologetic	confused	fearful	lingering	sardonic	threatening
apprehensive	coy	flippant	loving	satirical	tired
approving	contemptuous	fond	marveling	satisfied	touchy
arch	conversational	forceful	melancholy	seductive	trenchant
ardent	critical	frightened	mistrustful	self-critical	uncertain
argumentative	curt	frivolous	mocking	self-dramatizing	understated
audacious	cutting	ghoulish	mysterious	self-justifying	upset
awe-struck	cynical	giddy	naïve	self-mocking	urgent
bantering	defamatory	gleeful	neutral	self-pitying	vexed
begrudging	denunciatory	glum	nostalgic	self-satisfied	vibrant
bemused	despairing	grim	objective	sentimental	wary
benevolent	detached	guarded	peaceful	serious	whimsical
biting	devil-may-care	guilty	pessimistic	severe	withering
bitter	didactic	happy	pitiful	sharp	wry
blithe	disbelieving	harsh	playful	shocked	zealous
boastful	discouraged	haughty	poignant	silly	
bored	disdainful	heavy-hearted	pragmatic	sly	
brisk	disparaging	hollow	proud	smug	

Lesson Plan: Poems Put to Use

Periods: 1, with an optional take-home project

NCTE standards: 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 12

Common Core Standards: Anchor Standards for Reading 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10 and Anchor Standards for Language 3, 4, 5

INTRODUCTION

In track 2 of the Poetry Out Loud CD* (“The Power of Poetry”), poet Dana Gioia spells out 4 practical advantages to be found in studying and reciting poetry:

- Poetry offers mastery of language, and stocks the mind with images and ideas in unforgettable words and phrases.
- Poetry trains and develops our emotional intelligence.
- Poetry reminds us that language is holistic—that how something is said is part of what is being said, with the literal meaning of words only part of their whole meaning, which is also carried by tone of voice, inflection, rhythm.
- Poetry lets us see the world through other eyes, and equips us imaginatively and spiritually to face the joys and challenges of our lives.

Later, on track 17, poet Kay Ryan concurs. “Poetry is for desperate occasions,” she says. By memorizing a poem, you have it to pull out when you need it—not necessarily the whole poem, but the scrap of it that comes to mind in a difficult time.

Because students may not have scraps of poetry memorized already, and may never have called one to mind, it may be hard for them to believe Gioia and Ryan. This lesson will help them do so, by getting them to imagine situations in which a scrap or two of poetry—whether recited or simply thought of—can be put to use. Using fiction, letters, or political speech, students will write about poems being put to use and, in the process, imagine the practical advantages that having poems memorized can bring.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this lesson, students will have opportunities to:

- Listen to poems being recited, and to the commentaries of the performers.
- Find passages in poems which they find striking or memorable.
- Imagine situations in which those passages may be put to use, whether to console, encourage, taunt, flatter, or otherwise make an impact on a listener.
- Write short stories, letters, or speeches in which at least three passages could be quoted effectively to move another character or the listener / recipient.

*The audio CD may still be used, although it is no longer part of the packet. The CD contents can be found online at poetryoutloud.org/poems-and-performance/listen-to-poetry.

Lesson Plan: Poems Put to Use

continued

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

To teach this lesson you will need:

- The Poetry Out Loud CD or access to the online Poetry Out Loud Audio Guide
- A CD player or computer
- The Poetry Out Loud anthology in its print or online version

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

1. Introduce students to the idea that poems can be useful to recite—the whole poem or just part of it—in a variety of real life situations. Brainstorm with them what some of those situations might be, for example:

- When faced with bad news or difficult times
- At a wedding, funeral, or other life-cycle event
- As a toast or grace before meals
- In a romantic relationship or during a marriage proposal
- During a speech or other effort to move an audience, whether it be voters, colleagues, teammates, or others you wish to lead

To illustrate such moments, you might cite historical examples, such as Winston Churchill’s recitation of the Claude McKay sonnet “If We Must Die...” to rally resistance to the Nazis during World War II. Or you might turn to fiction and movies. Many children’s books and adult novels have scenes where a scrap of poetry is deployed to good effect.

In each book of J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*, poems are recited by characters; for example, in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, there are poems prominently featured in the chapters “The Shadow of the Past,” “The Old Forest,” “Strider,” “A Knife in the Dark,” and elsewhere. In the film of *The Return of the King*, meanwhile, Theoden cries out a short poem to the Rohirrim as they ready their cavalry charge to break the siege of Gondor.

Other films featuring poetry include *Skyfall* (M quotes Tennyson to James Bond), *Bright Star* (about the life of John Keats), *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (W. H. Auden’s “Funeral Blues”), *Il Postino* (various love poems by Pablo Neruda), *Slam* (poems by Saul Williams), *Sylvia* (Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath recite Chaucer and Shakespeare to one another), and *In Her Shoes* (Elizabeth Bishop’s “One Art” and “I carry your heart with me” by e. e. cummings). The Academy of American Poets has a useful, annotated list of “Poetry in Film, Radio, and TV” at www.poets.org/text/poetry-film-radio-tv.

2. Play tracks 7 and 17 of the CD to illuminate contexts in which poems—whole poems and scraps of them—were recited: by David Mason to his girlfriends, and by Kay Ryan’s grandmother to her, as she grew up. Pose questions to your students about these uses of poetry, for example:

- Why might Mason have wanted to recite Donne to his girlfriends?
- Are there different lines or phrases from the poem that would have been better to recite in different contexts? (Some might work better as a “pick-up line,” perhaps, while others might be better for an apology or an excuse.)
- Why might Kay Ryan’s grandmother have treasured those lines from Longfellow?
- Why might she have wanted her granddaughter to hear them, growing up?

3. Now it’s time to get your students searching for their own striking lines and phrases. Send students to the Poetry Out Loud anthology in search of memorable passages. They should gather at least 3 passages from different poems. The meaning of the passage in its original context is less important than the power the student finds in it, and the student’s ability to imagine each passage being put to use in some situation.

*Texas
2014 State Champion
Kristina Watkins*



Lesson Plan: Poems Put to Use

continued

If you wish, you can make this a “treasure hunt” assignment. Go back to the list of situations you brainstormed in step one of the assignment, situations such as:

- When faced with bad news or difficult times
- At a wedding, funeral, or other life-cycle event
- As a toast or grace before meals
- In a romantic relationship or during a marriage proposal
- During a speech or other effort to move an audience, whether it be voters, colleagues, teammates, or others you wish to lead

Give each student a situation, and ask him or her to find 3 appropriate lines or phrases; or, give the whole list to each student, and tell each to look for 1 line or phrase that could be of use in each context.

- If students are using the online anthology, you can keep them from being overwhelmed by telling them to look first at poems whose titles begin with a particular letter. Or, if you prefer, suggest they use the “Keyword Search” feature on the website.
- Try not to steer them to particular poems or poets, as one goal here is simply to encourage exploration, helping students discover poems, poets, and lines they might not otherwise have encountered

To keep students from grabbing lines at random, tell them to justify the choice—either orally or in writing—by briefly imagining a moment when that line or phrase would come in handy. A few sentences will usually do.

4. To make this a full-fledged creative writing assignment, ask each student to bring his or her chosen lines and phrases home and write a short piece of prose—2 to 3 pages, or longer if you prefer—in which the lines or phrases are used. Make sure that students realize that people often quote scraps of poetry totally out of context; they don’t need to know the whole poem, or keep the whole poem in mind. The prose they write can take several forms, for example:

- A story, in which 1 or more characters recite lines of poetry
 - The recitation may be external or internal, as the line or phrase comes to a character’s mind
 - The lines or phrases need not and, in fact, should not be the only things that the characters say; rather, they should be used sparingly, and their effect on the main character or on others should somehow be shown
- A letter, in which the author quotes striking lines or phrases from poems in order to move or convince the recipient in some way
- A speech, in which the quotations are used to rally, exhort, encourage, or otherwise persuade listeners to act

In every case, the context can be historical, as in a letter home by a soldier during the Civil War, or contemporary, set in the United States or anywhere in the world. The important goal of this lesson is for students to imagine situations where it can make a difference to know a poem—or even part of a poem—by heart.

Lesson Plan: The Tabloid Ballad

Periods: 1; an optional second, if you want to separate the writing and performance of the ballads into two days

NCTE standards: 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 12

Common Core Standards: Anchor Standards for Reading 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 and Anchor Standards for Language 3, 4, 5

INTRODUCTION

To many students, the word “ballad” will call to mind a slow, probably sentimental song. In the world of poetry, however, a ballad is a lively storytelling poem written in what is called the ballad stanza.

The ballad stanza is simple to illustrate and recognize, and not very hard to describe. In its most familiar version, the ballad stanza is 4 lines of alternating four-beat (tetrameter) and three-beat (trimeter) verse, with the second line rhyming with the fourth. Students may recognize this form from the theme song to “Gilligan’s Island,” written out here with the accented syllables (the “beats”) in capital letters:

Just SIT right BACK and you’ll HEAR a TALE,
A TALE of a FATEful TRIP
That STARTed FROM this TROPic PORT
A-BOARD this TIny SHIP.

Or they may remember it from “The Owl and the Pussy-Cat,” by Edward Lear:

They dined on mince, and slices of quince,
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,
They danced by the light of the moon. . .

And although the four-beat and three-beat lines have been combined into one long seven-beat line—a change in the layout, but not in the sound—they will hear it in Robert W. Service’s “The Shooting of Dan McGrew”:

A bunch of the boys were whooping it up in the Malamute saloon;
The kid that handles the music-box was hitting a jag-time tune;
Back of the bar, in a solo game, sat Dangerous Dan McGrew,
And watching his luck was his light-o’-love, the lady that’s known as Lou.

Lesson Plan: The Tabloid Ballad

continued

This might just as well be written out as:

A bunch of the boys were whooping it up
In the Malamute saloon;
The kid that handles the music-box
was hitting a jag-time tune;
Back of the bar, in a solo game,
sat Dangerous Dan McGrew,
And watching his luck was his light-o'-love,
the lady that's known as Lou.

Now it looks like the ballad it is.

This lesson will teach your students about the typical metrical forms of the ballad (how they sound), and the typical narrative moves of the ballad (how they tell their stories), by having them write ballads based on comic, even outrageous source material. In doing this, they will join a long tradition of sensationalist journalism written in ballad form: the tradition of “broadside ballads,” like the one that Shakespeare mocks in *The Winter’s Tale*—

Here’s another ballad of a fish that appeared upon the coast on Wednesday the fourscore of April, forty thousand fathom above water, and sung this ballad against the hard hearts of maids. It was thought she was a woman and was turned into a cold fish for she would not exchange flesh with the one that loved her. This ballad is very pitiful and true.

—or like this one, whose description appears in Robert Graves’s *English and Scottish Ballads*:

A most miraculous strange and trewe ballad of a maid now dwelling at the town of Meurs in Dutchland, that hath not taken any food this 16 years and is not yet neither hungry nor thirsty: the which maid hath lately been presented to the Lady Elizabeth the King’s daughter of England. This song was made by the maid herself and now translated into English.

Stories like this now find themselves told in *The Weekly World News* and other outrageous supermarket tabloids. Your students will turn the clock back, and rewrite them as ballads.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this lesson, students will have opportunities to:

- Listen to the sounds of several ballads being spoken
- Listen to how ballads tell stories
- Learn to hear, and to write, the typical rhythms of the four-line ballad stanza, with optional variations
- Write a comic ballad themselves, using those rhythms and narrative structures

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

To teach this lesson you will need:

- The Poetry Out Loud CD or access to the online Poetry Out Loud Audio Guide
- A CD player or computer
- Copies of supermarket tabloid articles, either in the newspapers themselves (*The Weekly World News*, *The Star*, *The National Enquirer*, and so on) or clipped selectively from the papers by you, or in an anthology of such stories like *Bat Boy Lives! The WEEKLY WORLD NEWS Guide to Politics, Culture, Celebrities, Alien Abductions, and the Mutant Freaks that Shape Our World*, available in the Humor section of many bookstores
- Optional: computer access, so that students can read ballads from the Poetry Out Loud online anthology

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

1. Introduce students to the term “ballad,” and explain the difference between what this term means when describing popular music—a slow, usually sentimental song—and the more technical meanings it has when describing a poem.

You will want them to know that the ballad is a lively storytelling form of poetry, and that this story typically gets told in a particular way:

- Ballads start quickly, without much introduction or narration, as in the famous opening of “Sir Patrick Spens”:

The king sits in Dumferling town
Drinking the blude-reid wine:
‘O whar will I get a guid sailor
To sail this ship of mine?’

Why is the king in Dumferling town? What sort of party is this? Why does he need a good sailor? The ballad plunges into its subject, and leaves us with questions.

- Ballads often jump from scene to scene as they move from stanza to stanza, without much exposition or narrative to connect the events.
- Often, ballads use dialogue, rather than narration, to advance the plot.
- Ballads often feature repeated refrain-lines, which may be nonsense (“fol-de-rol-de-rolly-o”) or details that the poem returns to obsessively (“in this kingdom by the sea,” or “of the beautiful Annabel Lee”).
- The narrator generally remains anonymous and unidentified, so that our focus stays on the story, rather than on the storyteller.

You will want them to know the most basic ballad stanza: alternating four-beat and three-beat lines, with the second line rhyming with the fourth, as in the examples in the Introduction.

Lesson Plan: The Tabloid Ballad

continued

You may want to show them a few common variations on the basic ballad stanza.

- In “Jabberwocky,” Lewis Carroll writes stanzas of four-beat lines with alternating rhymes, so that line 1 rhymes with line 3, and line 2 with line 4, like this:

’Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

“Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!”

- In “La Belle Dame Sans Merci,” John Keats writes ballad stanzas made of 3 four-beat lines, and then a two-beat closing line, like this:

I met a lady in the meads
Full beautiful, a fairy’s child;
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her EYES were WILD.

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She looked at me as she did love,
And MADE sweet MOAN.

*Montana
2014 State Champion
Sowmya Sudhakar*



- Edwin Arlington Robinson uses the same ballad stanza as Keats in “Miniver Cheevy”:

Miniver loved the days of old
 When swords were bright and steeds were prancing;
 The vision of a warrior bold
 Would SET him DANcing.

Miniver sighed for what was not,
 And dreamed, and rested from his labors;
 He dreamed of Thebes and Camelot,
 And PRIam’s NEIGHbors.

- Edgar Allan Poe adds an extra pair of lines to the ballad stanzas of “Annabel Lee,” mostly continuing the rhythmic alternation of four- and three-beat lines:

It was many and many a year ago,
 In a kingdom by the sea,
 That a maiden there lived whom you may know
 By the name of Annabel Lee;
 And this maiden she lived with no other thought
 Than to love and be loved by me.

What’s most important is for students to get the sound of the ballad in their ears, and to learn that ballads tell stories in a particularly lively, scene-by-scene style.

2. To help students hear the sound of the ballad, play “Jabberwocky” (track 8 on the CD), and the selections from “Annabel Lee” (track 30). To help students hear the sound of the ballad when they read it from a page, you may wish to have them look at some ballads on the Poetry Out Loud website as well. The following poems are in ballad stanzas, with some variation:

- “Miniver Cheevy,” by Edwin Arlington Robinson
- “A Red, Red Rose,” by Robert Burns
- “It Couldn’t Be Done,” by Edgar Albert Guest
- “La Belle Dame Sans Merci,” by John Keats
- “Sir Gawaine and the Green Knight,” by A. Yvor Winters
- “The Birth of John Henry,” by Melvin B. Tolson
- “The Listeners,” by Walter de la Mare

3. Set out the supermarket tabloids or tabloid articles that you have gathered, and let students cut out or photocopy the articles they wish to write about. If several students wish to write about the same article, let them. It will be fun for them to compare their ballads when they are through. Now have the students write a ballad about the event or the person in the tabloid article, using either the standard ballad stanza (alternating four-beat and three-beat lines, rhyming ABCB) or some variation. If they choose a variation, they should stick with the same pattern throughout the ballad. Be sure to tell the students that the poem can and probably should be funny, and give them a minimum length—probably 4 or 5 stanzas—for the ballad. Make sure they know the ways a ballad usually tells its story, and encourage them to use these techniques as often as they can.

4. After the students have drafted their ballads, you can let them take the drafts home to be polished and revised before performing them in class. Or, if you prefer, you can ask students to share their “tabloid ballads” right away with the class.

5. Since this is a fun, informal lesson, you may not want to evaluate student ballads in any formal way. If you want to respond to them, however, or have fellow students respond, you will probably want to use questions like these:

- Did the ballad use some version of the traditional ballad stanza?
- Did it tell its story quickly, moving scene by scene and using dialogue to move the plot forward?
- Did it use typical ballad tools, like repeated lines or phrases?
- Was it memorable?

No matter how rough or polished their efforts, students will come away from this lesson with a lively, hands-on appreciation of the form—and the pleasures—of the ballad.

NCTE English Language Arts Standards

Poetry Out Loud fulfills the following NCTE Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12. Teachers who make use of the optional writing activities and lesson plans found here and at www.poetryoutloud.org will also satisfy Standard #5.

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
9. Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.
10. Students whose first language is not English make use of their first language to develop competency in the English language arts and to develop understanding of content across the curriculum.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Common Core Standards

Poetry Out Loud aligns with the following Common Core standards depending on each individual teacher's lesson plan.

Anchor Standards for Reading (RL.9-10, RL.11-12)

Key Ideas and Details

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. 2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. 3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure

4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone. 5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole. 6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words. 8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence. 9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Anchor Standards for Language (L.9-10, L.11-12)

Knowledge of Language

3. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate. 5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

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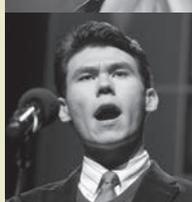
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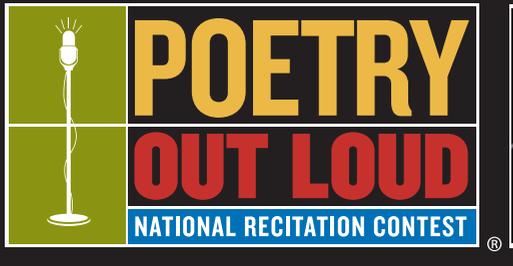


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