

THE ELEMENTARY CONUNDRUM:
"CAN POETRY BE FUN?"

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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THE ELEMENTARY CONUNDRUM:

"CAN POETRY BE FUN?"

by

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Reader: But what is Poetry?

Adrian:

Poetry is a beautiful mud-pie
Washed down with a glassful of stars.

Poetry is one of the best ways
Of singing to the whole wide world
Or whispering in the ear of your best friend.

Poetry tunnels you out of your dungeon.
Poetry captures the three-headed dragon.
And teaches it Ludo and Frisbee-throwing.

Poetry is a Mammoth in a shopping mall,
A beggar with no legs in Disneyland,
A chocolate bicycle,
A truthburger with French flies
And the moon's own telephone.

Poetry is your mind dancing
To the drumbeat of your heart.

Adrian Mitchell

A. Mitchell, The Orchard
Book of Poems, 1993.

ABSTRACT

If poetry could help better prepare future adults in their chosen disciplines, perhaps teachers, administrators, school boards and governments would be more receptive to include poetry as a core component of the curriculum. What other subject in our curriculum boasts of the capacity to challenge the intellect, charge the emotions, tickle the imagination, renew the spirit, stimulate the senses, enrich the body, calm the mind, lure the listener, motivate the reader, entice the writer and empower the speaker?

Poetry effects change. The young people who stand today before audiences and adjudicators seeking recognition in drama symposiums and public speaking forums are the adults who will stand in the courtrooms, classrooms, lecture halls, churches, boardrooms, parliaments, television and radio studios of tomorrow. They are the voices of passion, emotion, spirit, and conviction. Sadly many teachers decide against teaching poetry in their classrooms because they are afraid to do so. For some no doubt memories of poetry taught during their student days, consisting of antiquated rhyming masterpieces which they were forced to dissect, memorize and recite, has precipitated such a decision. Such a pedagogical decision may result in not only stunting our children's language growth, but also impairing their developments as the creative, passionate individuals of tomorrow's society.

The major purpose of this project is to establish a rationale for the inclusion of poetry as an integral part of a school language programme. Factors intrinsic to the enjoyment of poetry during the primary schooling years are examined and the constituent elements of fine poetry for children are identified. This project has

surveyed the related literature to expose teachers to the benefit of engaging on a course of "poetic" education in the primary years. The underpinnings of teachers' reluctance in entering upon such a course will be reviewed as well as the role of the teacher in presenting such work. To assist in the selection of appropriate poetry the constituent elements of children's poetry are examined, an annotated bibliography of recommended books is created, and an evaluation made as to a proposed course of action.

Part II of the project consists of the Poetry Companion for teachers. The theme of *Back to School* was selected because of its easy integration into the curricula for elementary grades and its ability to move, delight, inspire, and instruct. The nature of this theme also lends itself well to the development of cognitive thinking skills and affective personal and social goals. A variety of poetry books and anthologies were selected as useful resources. They are highly recommended for use with children in the elementary grades. The selection of material is flexible and can be utilized at the beginning, middle or end of the school year. It can also be incorporated into the Language Arts curriculum to develop listening skills, encourage oracy, promote reading spontaneity, and enhance creative writing.

The Poetry Companion includes a wide variety of poetry forms within a selected theme, some instructional strategies for use in the classroom as well as a bibliography of selected reading materials for teachers and an annotated bibliography of recommended children's poetry books.

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PART ONE

THE NATURE OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Poetry is universal in usage. Civilizations in one form or another have acknowledged the value of poetry. From the ancient writings of the Greeks and Romans to the hieroglyphics of the Egyptians and the sonnets of Elizabethan England, poetry has passed from one generation to the next while still retaining much of its significance and universal quality. Poetry has an ability to transcend space and time.

As an educational tool poetry is rooted deeply in the traditions of Anglo-Saxon educational systems. It has been valued as a way of preserving a community's culture and passing on local lore in the absence of a written language. Initially most, if not all, poetry was directed towards the adult population with little or no recognition of children as having particular needs. The dearth of children's poetry may have been directly linked to past society's perception of a child as a mini-adult, having similar wants and needs as their more physically and chronologically mature contemporaries. Fortunately contemporary society does not share the same myopic view of children and their literary requirements.

This project had its genesis in observations made during fifteen years spent teaching at the primary and elementary levels. The observations are that students' interest in both reading and writing poetry decreases as they pass through their primary schooling years towards the elementary years. The enthusiasm and eagerness of primary students to willingly select poetry anthologies and poetry

texts to read and to model, stands in stark contrast to the waning enthusiasm exhibited during the middle years.

With the onset of technology teachers are now pressured into using the latest software programs on the most up-to-date computers to maintain student interest. Given the choice of receiving a selection of hardback poetry texts or the latest CD-ROM with three-dimensional animation, it is no surprise when technology wins. How do teachers alter this mindset? Despite the reassurances embodied in a whole language philosophy, little has helped to increase and heighten the levels of interest in poetry. In this writer's experience most teachers remain uninspired, uneducated, unmotivated, and ill prepared to show poetry for all that it is - an enjoyable, meaningful experience. Students remain at the mercy of their less than effusive mentors, feeding from the same cup of indifference and apathy.

Problem

Rhymes and riddles of early childhood are part of the necessary foundation upon which to introduce the language of poetry. For the moment, advocates of the value of poetry can take solace in the fact that it is still possible to hear on the school playground the familiar chants, riddles and nursery rhymes which have been passed to today's generation. Will, however, the rhymes of yesteryear continue to play an important and influential part in the literary development of tomorrow's children?

Sadly children reveal a decreasing interest in poetry as they progress from early years through to the elementary grades, only to cease reading poetry entirely in adult life. The harsh reality appears to be that many teachers fail in their task to bring children and poetry together forging "the connection" which Huck, Hepler & Hickman (1993) and other theorists view as an essential pre-requisite to the

enjoyment and appreciation of this form of language use. Thematic poetry units designed for use with children in the elementary grades can help build a foundation upon which the enjoyment of poetry can grow. At present, thematic poetry units for use with children in elementary grades are not readily available to teachers in Newfoundland. Thematic units represent one very effective and efficient way of developing not only an interest in, but also a delight of, poetry beyond the primary years.

Purpose

The purpose of this project is threefold. Firstly to survey related literature in order to establish a rationale for using poetry as a means of educating children in the elementary grades; secondly to develop a teacher's handbook on a selected theme in poetry suitable to the needs of children in the elementary grades, that is all students in a regular classroom setting for the purpose of instruction; and thirdly to create an annotated bibliography of recommended poetry books as well as a list of teaching strategies and creative ideas for introducing, developing and enlivening a successful poetry unit in the elementary grades. The activities described have been classroom utilized by this writer.

Need

There is a need in today's classroom to move away from inadvertently fostering in our students, through lack of design rather than misbegotten motive, a dislike of poetry. Students should be exposed to the conviction that poetry is a way of developing a quality of creativity, inspiration and originality that is necessary in both Mathematics and Science. Poetry is the viable tool of inventors

who leap outside ordinary, mundane, and rational modes of thought. It is there in the experiences of scientists who search for, and find, that "Eureka" moment.

As educators we must re-evaluate the role of the teacher in forging pleasurable and rewarding relationships between children and poetry. We must look towards developing in children a delight in poetry and all that it brings. A pre-requisite to this goal is to recognize the ways in which teachers have previously alienated children from poetry and to prevent this unfortunate set of circumstances from continuing.

This project will take the reader on a journey through the meaning of poetry, its constituent elements, devices within, and forms of poetry for children. How children's poetry has evolved through the influence of changing cultural expectations and developing educational theory will be explored. The project will examine three questions: Why does interest in poetry begin to decline after the primary grades? Which poems are deemed suitable for purposes of enjoyment? How should educators present selected material to students?

Limitations

The poems and teaching strategies suggested in this project are concerned with poetry study for elementary students. The poems are designed for use within the regular classroom setting and cater to the varied needs of all children. It is not within the scope of this project to include poems for every occasion or indeed appropriate procedures for the commencement and delivery of all poetry units. Books used in the teacher's bibliography and the appended annotated bibliography are selected for their literary and educational value. In the writer's opinion they can assist children become more mature readers and writers of poetry by offering opportunities to creatively challenge imaginations as well as linguistic capabilities.

The recommended core and alternate lists of books is not exhaustive.

Methodology

To fulfill the purpose of this project a number of steps were followed. Studies relating to the education of primary and elementary children were reviewed. The value of using poetry as part of a Language Arts curriculum was also considered. From the studies, definitions of basic terms were selected and a rationale for the inclusion of poetry as part of Language Arts instruction was developed. From these resources a teacher's handbook of poetry using children's anthologies as its base was developed for use in the elementary grades.

For the purpose of this unit of instruction the writer chose the theme of *Back to School*. This theme was chosen because of its easy integration into the curricula for elementary grades and its ability to move, delight, inspire, and instruct children. The nature of this theme also lends itself well to the development of cognitive thinking skills and affective personal and social goals. Books of literary excellence were chosen in line with their relevance to the theme, suitability to the elementary grades, readability, content and appeal. A number of professional selection aids were used to assist in the selection of appropriate books. The recommended books were personally reviewed where possible. An annotated list of selected books was produced and several from the list were used as a base for the poetry handbook.

The next section of the project will survey related literature before developing a teacher's handbook for the purposes of enriching poetry teaching in the elementary grades.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Poetry: Definition

Poetry as a literary genre has given rise to a myriad of definitions. Chatfield, "poetry is the music of language conveyed to us in the music of words"; Coleridge, "poetry is the best words in the best order"; Bailey, "poetry is itself a thing of God"; and Voltaire, "the music of the soul, and, above all, of great and feeling souls" (as cited in Lucas, 1959, 1). William Stafford defines poetry as "talk with a little luck in it", while Felice Holman reflects "there is something about poems that is like loving children: They keep returning home and singing to you all your life" (as cited in Swartz, 1993, 104).

Definitions of poetry can be contradictory, inhibiting and even unenlightening but they have within a common element lending to poetry the ability to encapsulate in a few well-chosen words the entire spectrum of human emotion, experience and endeavour. Exposure to poetry allows the reader a literary experience of the most personal kind.

For Wordsworth (1885), poetry was the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotion. For Shelley, it was "the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds" (Bate, 1952, 434). Lee Bennett Hopkins (1987) claims the poet has the ability to take the ordinary and make it extraordinary and Boyd (1973) tells of the varied effects of poetry in that it "links people together through experiences crystallised in language rhythmically expressed and in values built up that would not be possible with other media of communication" (p.4). LaDonna Wicklund (1989) gives to poetry a more functional purpose being a "way of immersing students in language, giving even language deficient students pride in

authorship" (p. 478).

There is one constant with the respect to the view of poetry, or at least its effects. Burk (1992) claims it is all things to all people yet unique in that it "refuses to be pinned down to a single definition" (p. 26). Poetry is not easily defined because of its inherent "magic". We "feel" it works when language actually transcends its own limited dictionary definitions to allow us to set our minds dancing to the drumbeat of our hearts. Poetry resists any attempt to cast it in a single mould, or to assign to it a particular subject matter, form, style, or pattern. How much more difficult then is it for children to explain what poetry is when poets challenge themselves to find an appropriate definition?

It is too simplistic to view poetry, at least at its elementary level, as a collection of rhyming verse. It is more than metrical compositions, cadence, iambic pentameters, rhymes or collections of pleasing words. The caveat that one must be aware of is that just as all prose may not be literature, all that rhymes is not necessarily poetry. Pauline Peck (cited in Shapiro, 1979), suggests poetry is comparable with good conversation. "It should communicate; inspire; provoke; inform; tell of things that are, things that were, things that never will be, things that someday may be" (p. 96).

Poems are not just for special occasions or celebrations, but also for every day use. There are poems to fit any life experience, any emotional encounter, any genuine feeling or sensation. Poetry is a never-ending journey that allows the reader to rekindle lost emotion or to explore uncharted territory in which they may find what they have lost, and discover what they never knew. It begins with the first word and opens doors to magical worlds along the way. The journey may last only as long as it takes a snowflake to fall to the ground or it can span centuries, allowing one to speak to all ages and evoke a response that has survived through time. Poetry is timeless.

Developing Enjoyment of Poetry

Infants and young children delight in the action, sound, and rhythm of language. A smile shows their response to the finger plays, lullabies and nursery rhymes that accompany the simple events that encompass their worlds. For generations children have been lulled to sleep finding comfort, security and solace in the words of soothing rhymes.

Helbig (1987) suggests that poetry, as a childhood experience, can allow all children to take "familiar, everyday objects and mundane matters, things one seldom thinks much about...and invest them with new meaning through skilled use of rich, connotative language" (p.4). As children picture the cow jumping over the moon, the little dog laughing aloud, and the dish running off with the spoon towards the fading glow of an evening sunset, they are experiencing a new form of language use. It is the magic of poetry as it extends a helping hand to children and invites them to take their first steps in shoes of literacy. Here for the taking are the thoughts, emotions, and experiences of every kind. The all-embracing power of the nursery rhyme is at work.

Whatever a child's first encounter with poetry - the performing party piece, the recitation on stage during the annual festival or the melody of the first prayer spoken aloud by parents or grandparents - poetry can evoke an emotion and thus allow for the engagement of the child in the process of learning by developing their imagination and expanding their creativity.

The Misuse of Poetry in the Classroom

Fifteen years of practical teaching experience in both the primary and

elementary classrooms has shown this writer that children understand far more than they can verbalize. They have the capacity to imagine that which is outside or beyond their own life experiences. They delight in role-play and enter with ease and confidence the world of make-believe. With the onset of the technological age children's imaginations are dulled by technological gizmos. They are rarely encouraged to think for themselves, take time to pause, reflect upon, or predict outcomes. The high-speed world of computers silently encourages instant results, praising high scores and suggesting better outcomes next time. The instant gratification appeals to today's modern youngster where time is of the essence and bigger is better every time. The writer's suggestion is that we step back, slow down and have our young charges use their minds and imaginations to explore where these instruments can take them.

Poet William Jay Smith (1979) suggests that the initial steps to enjoying poetry are "natural and harmonious", but questions what happens after the doors to creativity and imagination have been opened. Clearly somewhere along the way poetry becomes for many children "the dullest and least enjoyable of literary expressions" (p. iv). Teachers can sympathize if they have had the misfortune of combating restless children more intent on surviving a poetry lesson than participating in any meaningful way. The teaching of poetry should not be approached as a battle of attrition, where teacher and student leave the field content on having survived.

In a quest to analyze the decline in poetic reading practices among adolescents and adults, Bugeja (1992) has interviewed both poets and critics. He has compiled a list that outlines their responses and points the finger of blame towards a variety of sources. His "litany of literary clichés" ranges from "too much television" to "declining educational values" (p. 32). Many of his sources, however, point to the teacher as having a particularly lasting influence. One might

postulate that the messenger rather than the message is the key to the decline.

In an attempt to accentuate the educational value of poetry, McClure, Harrison and Reed (Hickman & Cullinan, 1989), suggest that teachers "tend to equate their task to the teaching of biology: just as one dissects a frog, they dissect poems to see what makes them jump" (p.174). Poetic dissection is indeed unfortunate as one would hope that inasmuch as a child can be amused by a frog jumping, thus piquing their natural curiosity, a teacher would first foster in children a love of poetry in all forms before exposing the poem's constituent elements. The analogy of allowing one to appreciate the joys of automobile travel before learning how the car's engine operates is apropos.

Huck et al. (1993) investigate the misuse of poetry in the classroom and identify several ways a teacher can unwittingly stifle a child's interest in poetry. One mistake frequently made is the poor selection of poetry that results in poems that are too difficult, sentimental, or abstract for their charges. The poems fail to reflect the child's experience. When children are asked to analyze every word of every poem, particularly poems which have no appeal, the result is a rejection of poetry and what they believe poetry to represent. The teaching error lies in a failure to develop in children a true appreciation of poetry and allow the child to decide on his/her own what poetry means. Huck, Hepler and Hickman (1987) posit "...if the point of a joke has to be explained, it is no longer funny. If one has to explain a poem, its beauty and resultant mood will vanish" (p. 436).

Alienation of children from the joy of poetry can also occur by requiring memorization of poems selected solely by the teacher. We forget that children voluntarily memorize poems they have selected themselves. Enjoyment based on personal selection appears to be the victor over teacher encouraged rote learning.

Terry (1974) researched the loss of interest in poetry as children grow older and suggested that children's interest in poetry begins to decline after the fourth

grade. Reasons for this decline are divided into two broad categories. First, there is a neglect of poetry whereby too few teachers read poetry or make use of poetry across the curriculum on a regular basis. Second, the selections of poetry for elementary children are frequently inappropriate or unsuitable. Few would argue that Shakespeare's love sonnets are a little too heady for even the worldliest five year-old. Teachers must remember to play to, and select for, their audiences. It is therefore hardly surprising that children fail to develop a love for or an appreciation of poetry when their exposure to poems is limited or of a kind too far advanced for their particular needs.

Terry (1974) revealed what every student who has been force-fed mundane readings of mindless selections of poetry can attest, that is, that this strategy of learning is a primary factor in the rejection of poetry. Senses become dulled by poetry that is too difficult or too abstract and rather than respond with spontaneity and eagerness, children become disillusioned and bored. They stop seeing the wonder and awe poetry provides. The magic of the poetic spell breaks as teachers jade the senses of the young. A rigid pattern of structure replaces spontaneity. Form and structure prevail over substance and enjoyment. The child is the casualty sacrificed on the altar of inappropriate selection.

The Role of the Teacher

Poetry is often the most neglected facet of the contemporary language curriculum. Shapiro (1979) suggests that for the teaching profession "unless poetry is a vital factor in one's own life, we know little about it and thus feel uncomfortable in using it in the classroom" (p. 91). This statement rings true to the sometimes harried teaching profession. "Better the devil you know than the one you don't" might be our appropriate mantra. Often in a profession beset by

budgetary restraint, more demands being made upon it with less time within which to implement them, there is tremendous comfort in the familiar. Yet in this age of modern educational technology, it is unlikely that every teacher will feel comfortable with the wide array of software packages or modes of technology available. It is unlikely, however, that these teachers will withdraw such equipment or instruction as they see both the benefit and need of this knowledge in our society. The practical reality of this type of required skilled-based technical education triumphs over the teacher's own deficiencies. Teachers work and upgrade to acquire these requisite skills. Sadly the same cannot be said for the teaching of poetry. As educators we must not only help produce "technical doers" but encourage "artistic thinkers".

Many teachers seem to experience difficulties with the use of poetry in schools. Some are hesitant to use it extensively because poetry has not played a large part in their lives. They may have read or attempted to write poetry occasionally, but feel at a loss when it comes to encouraging their protégées to read, write, or experience the genre.

Within the last two decades poetry has become more accessible. The publication of interesting, easily enjoyed poems and stimulating anthologies provides the basic dietary requirements from which the child may sample, savour, digest and perhaps ask for second helpings. How then does the classroom teacher encourage children to begin writing poetry? What are the essentials involved in encouraging the use of poetry in schools and how can teachers go about achieving them? This writer's view does not emphasize the product, i.e. the finished poem, but rather the processes that lead to its production. A teacher's primary concern should be to assist the child's development as a writer, specifically developing the processes involved in writing. From this point of view a poem becomes one possible outcome of the child's writing. The poem might be inappropriate to the

child's ideas, feelings, attitudes, or emotions on another day, but for today the poem may express most simply what the child wishes to say.

This writer would suggest that the first essential in encouraging poetry writing is to encourage poetry reading. Before we can expect children to write poetry, they need to become aware of what poetry is and what it can do. It is important to create a positive environment within the classroom. In such an environment, poems wide ranging in type, subject matter, and style, can be read to the children everyday. The poems should reflect the work of various authors - established poets, other schools and the children themselves. As poetry becomes a part of the natural rhythm of the classroom, the range of poems used can then be broadened gradually to introduce more wide-ranging subjects or styles. Not only should the teacher read poetry to the children, but the children should also be encouraged to read poetry themselves. Children, when encouraged, will avail of opportunities for both quiet reading for enjoyment and pleasure and also reading aloud to share favourites. The view of poetry as an enjoyable, interesting part of everyday classroom activities is reinforced.

Reading poetry inspires children to develop effective writing techniques. Exposure to poetry in this way allows children to discover the possibilities of writing poetry - attempting to use the "best words in the best order" - creating an effective poem. Here too teachers may hesitate, unsure of how to achieve the most successful results. The teacher's role must involve helping individual children to become more effective writers. Guiding them as they develop techniques and strategies to assist their writing development is the main goal. Sadly too many times a child's individuality is forfeited when the teacher concentrates on the end product at the expense of everything else. It is most important that individual children be helped and encouraged to develop their own skills as writers without particular words or ideas being imposed upon them. It is better to have many

poems that have not quite succeeded, where children have attempted to express themselves and their views, than never to have experienced poetry. These learning experiences will benefit their writing development in the long term.

The abilities of children vary. When children fail to grasp the same concepts at the same time, classroom teachers continue to juggle their curricula in an attempt to meet the challenges of their charges. In planning an approach to teaching poetry, teachers must account for the different stages of development - the wide range of vocabulary, the understanding of simile and metaphor, the ability to understand or use particular techniques such as alliteration or personification, and the varying abilities to revise, edit and rewrite. While some children will need to be shown the effectiveness of similes, others may be at a different stage in the writing process and need encouragement, for example, to find alternative words for 'said', 'nice' or 'go'. The individual responses form the basis for the teacher's help, guidance and suggestions.

The role of the teacher does not end when a positive poetry environment has been established within the classroom. Having encouraged poetry reading where children can experience first hand what poetry is and what it can do, the teacher needs to consider ways of encouraging the children to write poetry. Reading poetry aloud alerts children to the possibilities of writing poetry. One way for furthering this is to create a communal poem based on a particular theme. Following a discussion, both the children and teacher brainstorm ideas and suggestions. A list of words, phrases, thoughts and expressions is compiled and recorded by the teacher. Together the children and teacher try to work the list into a poem, keeping in mind the 'best words in the best order'. The process is relatively easy to work through. Each word or phrase can be discussed, alterations considered, and thoughts expressed more effectively. In a non-threatening situation children can offer a smorgasbord of ideas to the overall poem as it takes

shape. A poem evolves - by example rather than by imposition.

The role of the teacher has become one who guides and facilitates children's learning. Didactic practices of past generations of teachers have been replaced with the encouraging practices of advisers who foster the importance of process, not end product. These advocates recognize children's capabilities of thinking for themselves and urge children to bring personal perspectives to their thinking about poetry. The joy of poetry must surely lie in the recognition that "correct interpretation" no longer controls the poetry instruction of a new millennium. Children can learn that every interpretation is accepted because it is personal. It may be noted, however, that the more children know about poetry, how poetry works, the particular circumstances surrounding a poem, the poet, and so forth, the richer and more enlightened an individual interpretation may be. It is important to note that children, after reflection and discussion, may go back to the poem - they may even change their entire response! Rosenblatt (1978) attempts to clarify the relationship between the reader, the text, and the poem. She values the personal interpretation that the individual reader brings to the text but also acknowledges what may be learned indirectly through others' experiences with the same text. Views may change, and the reader may come to see how an initial experience with a poem may now appear inadequate, confused, or impoverished. The reader may then be stimulated, or motivated to attempt to call from the text a better poem, a different response, or another experience. The learning experience is bolstered by exposure to the views of others and not limited to the personal experience as the only means of interpretation.

If poetry is of such benefit and universal appeal to children, why then does it fail to flourish in the classroom? Wrigg (1991) suggests the prosaic, uninspiring manner in which poetry was presented in the teacher's own classroom experiences is responsible for evoking "a negative mind-set which is not conducive to

approaching poetry with any likelihood of success" (p. 251). He postulates that in teaching poetry many teachers will parallel their early experiences of failure and attempt to circumvent their inadequacies by overcompensating other components of the Language Arts curriculum, whilst building a rationale which will support this in-depth coverage. Thus, they avoid delving into the murky depths of the poetic, in effect, suspending their poetic licenses.

Shapiro (1979) and Wrigg (1991) attempt to defend teachers' beliefs when teaching poetry, and adhere to an impassioned stance in which the blame for incompetent poetry instruction lies with the teachers' own education and ignorance about poetic literary expression. Thus begins a never-ending cycle which each year spawns new followers. It is difficult to draw universal sympathy for this position. Every critic of poetry education will draw attention to a different reason why children turn against poetry. Perhaps no one expresses a view more emphatically or bluntly than the late Canadian man of letters Northrop Frye (1963), a Shakespearean scholar who believes that the blame rests solely with teachers who "kill the child's interest in poetry by analysing it" (p. 17).

Are children to be forever handicapped by a teacher's genuine lack of interest in poetry? Are tomorrow's adults never to be blessed with an appreciation of poetry? Teachers can share an enthusiasm for poetry with children if these professionals come to realize that the value of poetry lies, not in the reading of the stanzas or the frequency of the rhyming couplets, but rather, in the child's response. Teachers can discover the warmth and emotion of poetry that reaches out and extends welcoming hands to the listener. Alas, poetry will always be at a disadvantage when it lacks committed enthusiasts in schools, and children's natural responses to rhyme and rhythm will continue to hibernate. As Boyd (1973) suggests, children's senses are "not yet jaded and they respond eagerly to experience which is fresh and new" (p. 4). Clearly the role of the teacher must be

to assist children in renewing their senses and surrendering to the "spontaneity" which Wordsworth recognized as the powerful feeling of poetry.

McClure, Harrison & Reed (1989) consider some approaches to poetry instruction. Evidence from surveys conducted suggests that "the interpretative approach" to teaching poetry "is commonly cited as one of the most salient factors contributing to the dislike of poetry" (p. 174). Clearly teachers must free their minds from dissection practices and abandon all beliefs that "only after receiving extensive drill" will children be "considered ready to study poetry" (p. 174).

Poetry is an art which is aural in appeal. Young children discover this appeal very early. They delight in clapping to the rhythmic beat and sounding out the rhyming words. They are eager to increase their repertoires and happy to savour the delights of this fascinating art form. Boyd (1973) recognizes this musical appeal of poetry as "the beginning of enjoyment and a firm foundation upon which to develop a taste for more and better poetry. The sound of words in itself gives pleasure, but most good poetry has *meaningful sound* as well as *musical sound*, and the sound of words gives pleasure without musical accompaniment" (p.5).

Children in elementary grades need to hear poetry read if they are to grow in both understanding and appreciation of it. The poetry that they hear must appeal to them if they are to enjoy it sufficiently to want to read it for themselves. The methods by which these objectives can be attained will differ and no one method will work for all children. Different teachers, different students, different poems require differing methodologies, but the common denominator that remains constant is one of enjoyment. The primary objective of every teacher who incorporates poetry into the Language Arts programme must be the mutual sharing by teacher and student of a rewarding, pleasurable, enjoyable experience.

Coody and Nelson (1982) reveal that studies conducted over the past fifty years indicate that children consistently enjoy three poetic elements, namely, rhythm, rhyme, and sound. Teachers should be encouraged to recall these three important elements when selecting poetry to read aloud to their students. Poetry demands enjoyment and confidence in reading. An enthused reader can merge the word and the music when the meaning is still to come. In so doing, children are spared the mundane voice of the teacher and instead tune into the melody and movement which flow from poetry if read with sincerity and vitality. The Irish poet William Butler Yeats wrote:

I have just heard a poem spoken with so delicate a sense of its rhythm, with so perfect a respect for its meaning, that if I were a wise man and could persuade a few people to learn the art I would never open a book of verse again (cited in Boyd, 1973, p.6).

Poems deserve a committed reading. From a purely practical point of view the participation of a child in the process leads almost inevitably to greater enjoyment of the art form. There must be the willingness to engage in behaviour ordinarily set aside for the exhibitionist. Exaggerating pauses, dramatizing differences in characters, whispering softly, shrieking wildly, shivering in anticipation, even donning cloaks, hats, and masks or waving artifacts all have their place if it illuminates the mood of the poem. Children bring to the classroom explosive imaginations and creative spirits. Some teachers remain on the other side of the desk, devoid of this creativity of spirit and freedom of imagination while years of frustration, tension, and neglect take their toll. We must release the enthusiasm and inspiration lying dormant within, waiting with baited breath, daring the teacher to take that second chance and bare the soul. Entrusted to the teacher is the creative power of the oral tradition, the ability to give life to a poem.

The task is a difficult one that comes easily to few. It does not come without practice and demands effort and enthusiasm to interpret the thoughts and feelings of the poet to others. Teachers are often afraid of embarking on poetry reading or writing because there appear to be no rules to keep, instructions to follow, or "correct" end result. In the writer's opinion to be granted such leverage is a blessing indeed as it affords the teacher the license of individuality and makes the task of poetry reading and poetry writing easier. It bestows a spontaneity that opens the door of opportunity for everyone. Success is apparent in the eyes of the listeners. The teacher waits in readiness to embrace a new voice in poetry. Rhyme and rhythm govern, and the sounds of words have a hypnotic power that children never fail to appreciate or to recognize. Playground rhymes and chants, rhyming slang and gibberish conversations appeal to children in the primary and elementary grades. Placing emphasis on word play and word sound, encouraging the repetition of rhymes and jingles, exploring the chanting aloud of rhythmic verse, evoke expressive responses and help to combine poetry and pleasure. These 'natural' responses arise from and enhance the child's tendency to enjoy and repeat any and all interesting sounds.

Playing with words can be enjoyable, but the greatest pleasure lies in some form of re-creation, by repeating aloud, reinventing, reinterpreting and rewording. By way of example, the ability to create new out of old has been superbly captured in story form by Roald Dahl (1983) in his book entitled Revolting Rhymes. This amusing and highly inventive collection of rhyming stories is based on familiar fairy tales. The punning title of Dahl's book prepares the way for the reversal of expectations, a humorous device which only works effectively when the original is well known and the parody is recognized. Dahl has a keen perception of how children really think and feel, of what frightens, amuses, worries or delights them. Children are drawn to what they recognize and to what strikes them as amusing.

Their taste in funny poetry is usually marked by a delight not in verbal wit, but in unexpected detail. A wonderful example lies in the story of *Cinderella* whose Prince is not all that he would seem: "Then up came Sister Number Two, /Who yelled, "Now I will try the shoe!" /"Try this instead!" the Prince yelled back. /He swung his trusty sword and *smack-* /Her head went crashing to the ground. /It bounced a bit and rolled around" (pp.6-8). The roars of laughter which this and similar references evoke can be the basis for reading aloud, or compiling an anthology chosen by the children.

Selecting Poetry for Children

What constitutes "good" poetry for children? Lukens (1986) posits that "poetry is poetry...poetry for children differs from poetry for adults in degree, but not in kind. Subject matter may differ, but our standards remain the same" (p.195). She believes that we may arbitrarily separate poetry for adults by subject matter and theme but while the interests of adults are the subjects of their poetry, so too the concerns of childhood are the subjects of children's poetry. Children are drawn towards the familiar. They like to read and write about what they know and have experienced. Animals, people, inanimate objects, nature, everyday experiences engage their attention.

The freshness of observation and the charm of innocence belong in the world of childhood. Arnstein (1962) illuminates the elusive matter of sentimentality when she contrasts the writings of children and adults. Given the same subject, she reveals that adults are more likely to employ trite adjectives or embellish their experiences so that they no longer belong in the eye of the beholder. Children on the other hand write out of experience, spontaneous personal reactions that represent their natural preoccupations, void of the

pretentiousness that seemingly comes with age. The writer suggests that Arnstein simply puts forth the hypothesis that children see the world as they expect it to be, while adults see it as they know it is.

Just as children write easily about personal experiences and what they know, they are also drawn to read about those experiences to which they can relate. Poems that deal with familiar experiences are favourites in the primary and elementary classrooms. Poems written in comparatively recent times capture the attention of young readers. These poems employ a vocabulary that is easier to comprehend which is in stark contrast to those of earlier times. Ultimately children select poems that appeal to them. Huck et al. (1993) support the view that children's poetry "differs little from poetry for adults, except that it comments on life in dimensions that are meaningful for children" (p. 452). Booth and Moore (1988) state that "there are experiences shared by the adult world that children cannot comprehend", but they suggest "children choose those aspects they can possess and put them into order and ignore what they cannot understand" (p. 42).

Hopkins (1987b) suggests that poetry can work with children of every age, grade, ability, background and culture. The gifted child, as well as the most reluctant reader, has something to gain from a poem. Poetry "...opens up a world of feelings for children they never thought possible" (p. 4). Hopkins agrees with Lukens that there is little difference between children's poetry and poetry for adults. He believes "poetry for children should appeal to them and meet their emotional needs and interests" (p. 9). Hopkins offers an interview with David McCord, noted children's poet, who in commenting on the durability of poetry for children and adults states:

Poetry for children is simpler than poetry for adults. The overtones are fewer, but it should have overtones. Basically, of course, it isn't different...But poetry, like rain, should fall with elemental music, and

poetry for children should catch the eye as well as the ear and the mind. It should delight, it really has to delight. Furthermore, poetry for children should keep reminding them, without any feeling on their part that they are being reminded, that the English language is a most marvelous and availing instrument (p. 104).

This writer would suggest that the teacher is the instrument of delivery, the medium through which the poet is given the opportunity to speak to others. Kormanski (1992) believes that teachers should enjoy the poetry they are presenting to their classes, for if "the teacher likes a poem then it will probably be enjoyed by the children" (p. 185). Coody and Nelson (1982) consider the criteria to be applied in selecting poems for classroom use. They are cognizant that poetry for children "must meet high literacy standards" (p. 230) which when carefully chosen will embody "a unique blend of words that produce a special emotional appeal" (p. 233). How does one measure high literacy standards? This writer concludes that the measure of success lies in the child's own experience and reaction to the poem. Children who draw from a poem an enjoyment and eagerness to read, write, or listen to other poems have surpassed all literary expectations. A love of poetry grows from the smallest beginnings. When properly nurtured it can lead the way towards the works of the greatest poets.

The importance of selection cannot be understated. Sadly, too frequently, the selection of inappropriate material has resulted in a steady decline in the number of children who read poetry for leisure. Reeves (1958) believes that in selecting poems for children we "should apply the same criteria as for poetry in general, except that one must try to read it with the understanding, the vocabulary, and the feelings of a child" (p. 6). Studies on poetry preferences conducted by researchers such as Tom (1973) and Terry (1974) reveal that poems, which are serious in tone and sentimental in nature, do not appeal to children. Traditional

poems as opposed to those of a contemporary nature are often unsuited to the experiences, maturity, and interests of children. Poems that depend exclusively on imagery or figurative language, are generally difficult for most children to interpret. These academics reflect what has long been the classroom experience of the writer. Poetry of limited enjoyment value, despite academic acclaim will rarely entice child readers to explore the genre further, with, or without, the gentle prodding of an understanding teacher.

Along with attempting to expose a child to the wealth of literature available and, hopefully thereby prompting a certain degree of introspection, the life long habit of reading and sharing good poetry must surely be the goal of poetry teaching. Children can reach that goal if they are immersed in a wide variety of poetry that addresses interesting topics and popular themes. The only limitations of poetry for children as noted by Huck et al. (1987) are poems of passion and poems of nostalgia. Children do not readily relate to these emotions. The use of literary allusions, figurative language and imagery should, out of necessity, be used sparsely, and when used, should always relate to a familiar experience that is within the child's capacity for responding to the poetry. Robert Louis Stevenson (1994) acknowledged the young child's innate appreciation of simile when he penned "My Bed is a Boat":

My bed is like a little boat;
Nurse helps me in when I embark;
She girds me in my sailor's coat
And starts me in the dark.

At night I go on board and say
Good-night to all my friends on shore;
I shut my eyes and sail away
And see and hear no more.

And sometimes things to bed I take,
As prudent sailors have to do;
Perhaps a slice of wedding-cake,
Perhaps a toy or two.

All night across the dark we steer;
But when the day returns at last,
Safe in my room, beside the pier,
I find my vessel fast.

(Appendix A, Poem 1)

When the poem becomes a part of the child's experience, the poet can use many literary devices. Booth and Moore (1988) recognize the expertise, excellence and power of the poets who write for children:

Because poems use a particular kind of language, as the poet creates with carefully chosen images, precise words, and effective patterns, the children begin to develop a sensitivity to words, rhythms and images as they experience them, need them, and use them (p. 31).

Personification is a trait displayed by all children. The favourite doll that speaks and hosts tea parties, or the tree house that holds many secrets and speaks to its inhabitants. Children find it perfectly natural to endow inanimate objects with personalities and lives of their own. Thus, when poets use these techniques, personifying objects and giving them human attributes, young children respond because the inanimate object is now real, a part of the life they know, alive in their experience. The successful poet has the ability to think like a child and see the world through the eyes of a child. To bond with the child's own thinking is the goal and indeed genius of every poet. It is the ability to translate everyday experiences into the magical, and breathe life and wonder into the world of the child.

Arbuthnot and Sutherland (1972) have studied the range of poetry which children enjoy. Their findings reveal that the likes and dislikes of the child reader are as varied as the children themselves. They found that some of the poets who are popular with children did not write for children at all. Rather, they have been adopted as favourites, indicating "both the diversity and the pattern not only of what children read but of what their societies changing ideas of a child's capabilities and preferences have been" (p. 324). In many respects this finding should not appear too startling as a child's appreciation of a particular work may be, and often is, on a very different level from that of an adult.

Across the literary genres, and through the ages, the preferences of children have rarely been limited to what was written or selected for them. Children have adopted poetry written for adults as their own. We do not need to look too far to find selections that have passed from adult to child through the generations. For example, Mother Goose rhymes supposedly written as political satire are now commonly associated with children. The satire is lost on children, and given the length of time since these rhymes have been written, the satire is most likely lost on adults as well. Mother Goose rhymes are among the first poems children hear read aloud by parents. They serve two purposes in that they aid restful slumber and expose the young child to poetry for the first time. Painter (1970) claims, the rhymes of early childhood "seem a natural part of living, even when the speaker is unskilled in the part of presentation" (p. 11). The appreciation for a particular piece of poetry must reflect something other than that for which the other intended. Beauty is truly in the eye of the beholder.

Sadly, many educators make the mistake of selecting **childish** as opposed to **childlike** poetry for children. The criteria for selection has not been carefully considered and children are subjected to mindless pieces which render them incapable of emotion and pre-suppose meagre intellectual abilities. Adults fail in

this instance to appreciate their audiences' ability to comprehend certain types of poetry. To look down on children as creatures who understand and appreciate only that which is slightly inferior, is at best insulting and at worst damaging. While children may not comprehend every word that they read, it is belittling to assume they are incapable of comprehending the message of the poet. Perhaps it is only the hands of a child that can sift and gather the grains of poetry, gently discarding the chaff. The role of the teacher must be to assist children in the process of sifting and gathering quality poetry by various poets. The great masters may write quality poetry or it may be the work of modern poets who write specifically for children. Ultimately we should be guided by the words of Huck et al. (1987) who summarize:

In evaluating a poem for children it makes little difference who the author is, provided the poem speaks to children in the language of poetry. Children deserve excellence in poetry regardless of its source, but it must speak to them at their point in time (p. 396).

This writer believes that children hold an innate affinity for poetry. Within each of us is the natural rhythm of life, the beating of a heart, the inhaling and exhaling of breath, the blinking of an eye, or the footstep forward. We share an innate rhythm, too often taken for granted. Lucas (1959) emphasizes the role rhythm plays in nature and our surroundings. He considers the ebb and flow of the tide, day following night and the clock marking the passage of time from one season to the next. Given the intrinsic nature of rhythm it is of little wonder that young children respond to the chant of the nursery rhyme or the beat of modern verse.

A variety of studies concerned with children's interest in poetry have been conducted since the 1920s. These studies reveal that opportunities should be

provided for children to select their own poetry. Clark (1978) is convinced that amongst other characteristics young children have:

bounding vitality, insatiable curiosity, and unimpeded physical movement, an enormous capacity to discover, to question and to be involved and absorbed; they show, too, an innate delight in sounds and words, marked independence and, at the same time, trust and belief in what grown-ups can be and can do for them (p.127).

The teacher's obligation is to ensure children experience poetry which captivates the reader, enralls the listener, provides enjoyment, stimulates the imagination, increases the powers of observation, and enhances appreciation of the child's environment. If the teacher can accomplish one or more of these results we can say the learning experience was successful.

Teachers today have the daunting responsibility of selecting poems which best expose children to a rewarding experience. Many teachers experience difficulty predicting which poems will appeal to their students. Children continue to surprise when they select poems deemed by adults to be too challenging, sophisticated or of poor quality. Enjoyable poetry, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. Poetry is an art experience and in all such encounters there is that inexplicable moment where transformation occurs - the poem becomes absorbed. By casting aside the formal dissection of poetry, eyes and minds are open to see the value of poetry as an art experience which enhances learning. When children read or listen to poetry they become the audience, when children write or recite poems they become sharers, translators, and creators. The key is that they participate.

It is helpful for teachers to identify those components which render poetry suitable for, and appealing to, children. Terry (1974) summarizes the findings of studies conducted during the 1920s thus:

1. Children are the best judges of their preferences.
2. Reading texts and courses of study often do not include the children's favourite poems.
3. Children's poetry choices are influenced by (1) poetry form, (2) certain poetic elements, and (3) the content, with humour and familiar experience being particularly popular.
4. A poem enjoyed at one grade level may be enjoyed across several grade levels.
5. Children do not enjoy poems they do not understand.
6. Thoughtful, meditative poems are disliked by children.
7. Some poems appeal to one sex more than another; girls enjoy poetry more than boys.
8. New poems are preferred over older, more traditional ones.
9. Literary merit is not necessarily an indication that a poem will be liked (p.10).

Terry conducted a national survey of children's poetry preferences in the early 1970s in order to determine their likes and dislikes. She based her findings on the responses of fourth, fifth and sixth-grade students. Favourite forms of poetry for children include the contemporary, the narrative and both modern and traditional limericks. She found that children enjoy the rhyme, rhythms and sound of poetry but dislike poems with abundant imagery and figurative language. That is not to say that children are unable to understand or relate to figurative language at all. Indeed Huck et al. (1993) claims the limitations of poetry for children are few. In this writer's experience young children readily respond to the figures of speech in the following poems:

Tractor

The tractor rests
In the shed
Dead or asleep,

But with high
Hind wheels
Held so still

We know
It is only waiting
Ready to leap-

Like a heavy
Brown
Grasshopper

- Valerie Worth

(Appendix A, Poem 2)

Children quite naturally relate to that which they have experienced. Those who have observed the grasshopper will be able to appreciate Valerie Worth's comparison of its shape with that of a tractor. Children will forge a connection with Barbara Hales poem entitled *Sidewalk Measles*:

I saw the sidewalk catch the measles
When the rain came down today.
It started with a little blotching-
Quickly spread to heavy splotching,
Then as I continued watching
The rain-rash slowly dried away.

(Appendix A, Poem 3)

The comparison of rain on a sidewalk with the way a person with the measles looks is one that children can understand. The metaphors lie within the realms of the child's own life experiences. There is delight in viewing two dissimilar objects and according each new meaning. Experiences such as these are

critical to a joyful poetic experience. The impact is lasting. With imaginations stimulated, children recall such images and increase their powers of observation.

Fisher and Natarella (1979) conducted a similar study with first, second and third-grade students using the same techniques and schools as the Terry study. Similar characteristics were found in the poems liked and disliked by the children in these grades. They too revealed preferences for humorous, contemporary poetry, narrative poetry and limericks. Sentimental, serious poems and the Japanese haiku were not rated very highly.

Several consistencies arise from these studies. Children across all grades like to hear the familiar and relate more readily to poetry which connects with their everyday experiences. Children take comfort in that which they know, and are more willing to share first-hand experiences. They are more able to expand reality or extend the truth and make the ultimate leap of faith into the inner world of their imaginations. Poems of fantasy which break the rules of factual experience allow for the use of the child's imagination. Dorothy Aldis (1952) demonstrates her ability to view a familiar experience through the imaginative eyes of a child:

On a Snowy Day

Fence posts wear marshmallow hats
On a winter's day,
Bushes in their nightgowns
Are kneeling down to pray,
And trees spread out their snowy skirts
Before they dance away.

(Appendix A, Poem 4)

Poems such as *On a Snowy Day* are an essential part of a teacher's repertoire

for they prompt the child to focus on the ordinary in an extraordinary way. They challenge the imagination, and they ask the reader to view the world with new vision.

Poetry in general offers a reader another perspective, another chance to see the mundane, the ordinary, the everyday, in a new and exciting way. Children are afforded the opportunity to personalize and to give meaning to the experience they are writing about. This opportunity takes their understanding beyond a collection of facts or ideas. The responses and interpretations will be as unique and individual as the children themselves. Mary O'Neill (1989) in Hailstones and Halibut Bones helps us to see colours in new and enlightening ways. As she describes the colour brown, the reader is acutely aware of the sensory images the poem conjures:

What is Brown?

Brown is the color of a country road

Back of a turtle

Back of a toad.

Brown is cinnamon

And morning toast

And the good smell of

The Sunday roast.

Brown is the color of work

And the sound of a river,

Brown is bronze and a bow

And a quiver.

Brown is the house

On the edge of town
Where wind is tearing
The shingles down.
Brown is a freckle
Brown is a mole
Brown is the earth
When you dig a hole.
Brown is the hair
On many a head
Brown is chocolate
And gingerbread.
Brown is a feeling you get inside
When wondering makes
Your mind grow wide.
Brown is a leather shoe
And a good glove-
Brown is as comfortable
As love.

(Appendix A, Poem 5)

Even younger children respond to the sensory images. The sounds, smells, tastes, feelings, and visual images are clearly described.

A review of the literature of poetry preferences tells this writer that specialized educational poetry programmes must be developed to meet the needs and interests of children, particularly those in the upper elementary grades. Fisher and Terry (1977) suggest "children's overall interest in poetry decreases in the upper elementary grades, perhaps because we are not capitalizing on their

preferences for poems about familiar, well-liked experiences, and for contemporary poems" (p.230). This writer agrees with this position and suggests that children should be given adequate time to enjoy and appreciate a poem before analyzing the meaning. Having taught groups of children in Grades 1 and 2, it is a fascinating experience to witness the pleasure and joy in the identification of the written letter and the recognition of the written word. It is that unforgettable moment when the 'light' is switched on and the written word speaks to the child. Nursery rhymes, which had until then been aural experiences, are magically transformed onto paper. The seeds of poetry now sown take root. The minds of children eagerly wait to be fed and nourished. Unfortunately upon teaching the same children four years later this writer found that their excitement, thrill and anticipation of hearing words dance on the pages of poetry books was absent. Culprits such as over-crowded curricula, time restraints, inadequate or inappropriate resources, low morales, and unimaginative teachers certainly share blame. At the primary level children are used to hearing and reading poems which are entertaining and with which they can easily identify. At the elementary level there lies the systematic fallacy that students must learn how to analyze poems in order to develop an appreciation of how a poem 'works'. While these two kinds of poetry activity remain detached, once inextricably woven together one destroys the other. What a cruel, mechanical way to destroy a budding poet.

Teachers may effectively select poetry which will enhance children's learning. Huck et al. (1993) suggest "a teacher will want to consider children's needs and interests, their previous experience with poetry, and the types of poetry that appeal to them. A sound principle to follow is to begin where the children are" (p. 469). Teachers who identify themes within the various subject areas of the curriculum are already on the way towards integrating poetry into their Language programmes. Themes such as *Back to School*, *Me and My Family*, *Halloween*,

Animals, Weather, Christmas, Colour, Friendship, Seasons, and The Five Senses are common to all primary and elementary school programmes. Poems corresponding to these themes are plentiful and commonly available in school and public libraries. The cross-curricular learning experiences are there for the taking.

Another consistent finding reveals that the poems selected by children did not necessarily correlate with the poetry selected by adults for children. The studies reveal children as the best judges of their preferences with adults inaccurately predicting the poems children like to read and listen to. Huck et al. (1993) contend that children need to develop tastes in poetry and should be exposed to a wide selection of poetic forms. Only having experienced poetry in various forms, by a variety of poets, can children provide a rationale basis for their preferences. They must be exposed to differing forms so that they can make an informed choice as to likes and dislikes.

Just as the eye often entices one to savour culinary delights which in turn satisfy the appetite, Sweeney (1993) suggests that it is often the presentation of a selection of poems which ultimately tempts the child to sample the material. She claims that poetry at any level will offer:

...a smorgasbord of ideas, feelings, and experience. Put a variety of good poetry on the table before children and they'll eat what they like and be nourished by it.

So if one student immediately inhales your poetry entree, and another leaps burping upon dessert, while still another gently picks at lettuce leaves; don't worry (p. 14).

Poetry is an intensely personal experience for everyone. Whether a poem moves us deeply, delights immensely, or opens doors to other worlds, then *for us* we can say that it has succeeded. Poetry is a subjective experience.

Summary

Children's pleasure in poetry begins with repeating rhymes and jingles in games. As long as poetry is perceived as old-fashioned, or lacks committed enthusiasts in schools, it will always be at a disadvantage. In the presence of such a state of affairs, children's natural responses to rhyme and rhythm tend to stagnate, or worse still, expire. If children in the elementary grades are to grow in their enjoyment of poetry and continue developing an appreciation of this art form beyond the primary years, they need to be exposed to poetry, hear poetry read aloud, share favourite poems with friends, as well as experiment with poetry writing in a relaxed, comfortable environment. They need to be exposed to learning experiences which surpass those typically offered in the general elementary Language Arts programme.

In the writer's opinion there has been a decided attempt by educational authorities to correct what was a severe lack of instructional materials designed expressly for use with children in the elementary grades. The Department of Education in Newfoundland has over the last decade provided to all elementary schools the following texts. **Annotated Bibliography of Children's Literature (1990)** and **Selecting Children's Literature: An Annotated Bibliography (1999)**. These materials can be used to assist and develop the needs, interests, and experiences of elementary students. Thematic units in poetry are but one example of offering an excellent means to effect cognitive, and affective growth. Inclusion of such units in a Language Arts programme promotes the use of poetry in schools in an inspiring, non-threatening, enjoyable atmosphere. Thematic units taught by enthusiastic, energetic, knowledgeable teachers can offer literary experiences which will appeal to children, challenge them to expand upon their interest in

poetry, reach their potential, and ultimately bring insight and pleasure into their lives. Poetry provides a broader based education that enriches students and can assist in their educational and artistic development.

POETRY IN THE LANGUAGE PROGRAMME

The Elements of Good Poetry

Koch (1973) claims that many details of adult poetry are difficult for children, but they are happy to have these details explained if they are interested in the poem. Children enjoy and savour the magic of poetry when they begin to see themselves as poets. As they write they will model, quite naturally, the writers' techniques they have been exposed to. Skills and techniques practiced in one piece of writing should be discussed with the teacher, carried forward, and developed in subsequent efforts. Through discussion and brainstorming sessions, teachers enhance the learning and ensure that progress is made in a manner that is non-threatening and most of all, fun.

Rhythm, sound, imagery, and figurative language are poetic techniques which are common to poetry written for adults and children alike. Teaching children to recognize these techniques is a logical step in deepening their understanding of poems they particularly enjoy. This writer will therefore consider these poetic techniques which help children in the development of their own poetry reading and writing.

Rhythm, Rhyme, and Sound

Eve Merriam (1968) suggests that rhythm is "the repeat of a beat...an inner chime that makes you want to tap your feet or swerve in a curve" (p.3). Children and adults respond to rhythm for it is part of the natural rhythm of life. In poetry, words reflect the rhythms and beats of life as expressed through meters, rhyming couplets, cadence and iambic pentameters. Cullinan (1989) expresses the rhythm

of poetry as the recurring accents and syllables "in the rise and fall of words spoken" (p.370). It is like the tide gently lapping upon a beach.

The poet uses rhythm to enhance what the words express. The regular and lilting rhythm in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Swing* creates the movement of the swing's arc:

How do you like to go up in a swing,
Up in the air so blue?
Oh, I do think it is the pleasantest thing
Ever a child can do!

Up in the air and over the wall,
Till I can see so wide,
Rivers and trees and cattle and all
Over the countryside-

Till I look down on the garden green,
Down on the roof so brown-
Up in the air I go flying again,
Up in the air and down!

(Appendix A, Poem 6)

The steady, rapid rhythm of David McCord's *The Song of the Train* echoes the sound of a train as it trundles faster and faster down the track:

Clickety-clack,
Wheels on the track,
This is the way
They begin the attack:
Click-ety clack,
Click-ety clack,
Click-ety, clack-ety,
Click-ety
Clack.

Clickety-clack,
Over the crack,
Faster and faster
The song of the track:
Click-ety clack,
Click-ety clack,
Click-ety, clack-ety,
Click-ety
Clack.

Riding in front,
Riding in back,
Everyone hears
The song of the track:
Click-ety clack,
Click-ety clack,
Clickety-clickety,
Clackety
Clack.

(Appendix A, Poem 7)

These two examples illustrate the impact rhythm can have on the main idea of a poem. Jack Prelutsky (1974) shows how rhythms can be skillfully adjusted to fit the subject matter of the poem, in this case, acrobats in a circus: "Over and over the tumblers tumble/with never a fumble/with never a stumble/ top over bottom and back over top/flop-flippy-floppity-flippity-flop" (p. 1).

The agile movements of the tumblers are reflected in fast moving lines and short vowels. The rhythm changes to a slower pace as the elephants join the circus ring:

"Here come the elephants, ten feet high,/elephants, elephants, heads in the sky./ Eleven great elephants intertwined,/one little elephant close behind" (p. 22).

The heavy, slow elephants follow the light, agile acrobats and the rhythm

plods along in a manner accustomed to an elephant walking.

In some poems word order, rhythm and pattern of the lines are suggestive of the movement within a poem. The repetition of the hard sounds of 'b' and 'p' in Eleanor Farjeon's *Mrs. Peck-Pigeon* captures the rhythmic bob of the pigeon's head:

Mrs. Peck-Pigeon
Is pecking for bread,
Bob-bob-bob
Goes her little round head.
Tame as a pussycat
In the street,
Step-step-step
Go her little red feet.
With her little red feet
And her little round head,
Mrs. Peck-Pigeon
Goes picking for bread.

(Appendix A, Poem 8)

In Robert Louis Stevenson's *Where Go The Boats?*, the arrangement of the words contributes to the rhythm of the poem. Stevenson's mastery of rhythm lies in his ability to manipulate the words until he finds an order and rhythm which communicates more than the literal message to the reader. Stevenson invites the reader to become lost in an adventure and to participate in the poem. The simple language and skilful use of rhythm, rhyme, long vowel sounds, and repeating pattern enables the reader to envisage the setting easily, and leaves ajar the door to another world, time, or place:

Dark brown is the river,
Golden is the sand.
It flows along forever,

With trees on either hand.

Green leaves a-floating,
Castles of the foam,
Boats of mine a-boating-
Where will all come home?

On goes the river
And out past the mill,
Away down the valley
Away down the hill.

Away down the river,
A hundred miles or more,
Other little children
Shall bring my boats ashore.

(Appendix A, Poem 9)

Of all the elements of poetry, the concept of sound offers the most enjoyment and pleasure to children. To Hiscock (1982) the end rhyme is a "major contributor to the musical quality of poetry which children so enjoy" (p. 50). This view is shared by Cullinan (1989) who believes that the "choice and arrangement of sounds make the music of poetry and, at the same time, serve to reinforce meaning"(p. 368). Examples of end rhyme in which the rhyming words are at the end of the line are found in Brian Lee's *The Man Who Wasn't There*:

Yesterday upon the stair
I met a man who wasn't there;
He wasn't there again today,
I wish, I wish, he'd go away.

I've seen his shapeless shadow-coat
Beneath the stairway, hanging about;
And outside, muffled in a cloak

The same colour as the dark;
I've seen him in a black, black suit
Shaking, under the broken light;
I've seen him swim across the floor
And disappear beneath the door;

And once, I almost heard his breath
Behind me, running up the path;
Inside he leant against the wall,
And turned and...was no one at all.

Yesterday upon the stair
I met the man who wasn't there;
He wasn't there again today.
I wish, I wish, he'd go away.

(Appendix A, Poem 10)

and Ogden Nash's *Adventures of Isabel*:

Isabel met an enormous bear,
Isabel, Isabel, didn't care.
The bear was hungry, the bear was ravenous,
The bear's big mouth was cruel and cavernous.
The bear said, Isabel, glad to meet you,
How do, Isabel, now I'll eat you!
Isabel, Isabel, didn't worry;
Isabel didn't scream or scurry.
She washed her hands and she straightened her hair up,
Then Isabel quietly ate the bear up.

(Appendix A, Poem 11)

Smith (1969) suggests the popularity of rhymes "which has become the inheritance of each successive generation of children" is due partly to "the ease with which all this traditional verse becomes part and parcel of every child's literary luggage" (p.10). Rhyme is synonymous with poetry for young children.

Searching for and finding rhyme is an enjoyable experience. The rhyming words in Mother Goose is maintained in children's playtime games, counting out rhymes and singing games. Children anticipate the rhyming word and wait expectantly for all to be revealed. As children listen however to the rhythmic lines and poetic images expressed for example in the collection of colour poems in Mary O' Neill (1989) Hailstones and Halibut Bones, they will realize, or come to learn, that a poem does not always have to rhyme. While rhyming poems adhere in the mind and linger longer on the tongue, children must be freed from the notion that all poems have to rhyme. Keele (1975) suggests that children "have fun finding images for things, and sharing their experiences by making word pictures. They are very good at this - their imagination knows no bounds if they are not confined by rhyme" (p.42). Free verse poetry is an appealing alternative to most children. Free verse allows the child to compose and create without the restriction and anxiety of finding that rhyming word. It encourages children to feel, sense, and create the mood which is right for them as it offers the opportunity to write from the heart allowing thoughts and feelings to flow freely. It encourages children to find form in the rhythm of the words they use.

Although the use of rhyme can add to and enhance the meaning of a poem, rhyme is only one aspect of sound. Alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia and repetition are among the other language resources of sound. The repetition of consonants, vowels, syllables, words, lines or phrases can achieve the poet's desired effect.

The alliteration produced by the repetition of the initial sounds of words is evident in Jack Prelutsky's *The Lurpp is on the Loose*. Here the poet uses the 'l' sound to create the humour in his verse: 'Oh the lurpp is on the loose, the loose/the lurpp is on the loose'. Children remember the fun of alliteration in familiar tongue twisters and respond to the humour that prevails in *Rhododendra*

Rosenbloom (1990) also by Jack Prelutsky:

"BUTTERCUP BANANA PEEL
CATERPILLAR CAMOMILE
ROSE REPUGNANT RAT REGRET
VINYL VIPER VIOLET".

Having sampled "ten kinds of fine perfume" children compete to create their own nauseating, but deliciously irresistible, scents. Opportunities to extend this experience can be availed of by introducing children to a variety of poems which use alliteration effectively. In *Working in Winter* (1995) by John More, elementary children respond enthusiastically to the repeated sounds as the poem tells the story of a cold day at work:

Silently the snow settles on the scaffolding,
The feathery flakes furry and flick their fragments,
The brown bricks piled on billowing polythene
Heap their heaviness to heavenly heights.
Workmen in woolly hats whistle into the wind
Or dance in donkey jackets to hold in heat,
Their toes tingle, the tips of their fingers freeze -
It's murder, mate, this job is, murder.
Roll on five o'clock!

(Appendix A, Poem 12)

Sounds carry the actions and movements of the poem to the reader's mind. The pictures and images remain while the senses integrate and help the reader experience fully the effect of the poem's ear-catching sound patterns. Children readily accept the invitation to model their attempts at alliteration after poems such as this one.

Assonance, the repetition of vowel sounds, is very similar to alliteration and

also speaks to the ear. In *Chanson Innocente II* by e.e. cummings, the poet combines both sound patterns very effectively. The repeated *t* sound at the beginning of the poem suggests an element of suspense:

hist whist
little ghostthings
tip-toe
twinkle-toe

while the repeated vowel sounds introduce the reader to the characters in the poem and reflect their sudden but silent movements:

little twitchy
witches and tingling
goblins
hob-a-nob hob-a-nob

little hoppy happy
toad in tweeds
tweeds
little itchy mousies

with scuttling
eyes rustle and run and
hidehidehide
whisk...

(Appendix A, Poem 13)

The use of assonance in this particular poem can be explored, developed, and understood more fully through drama and choral speaking. Small groups of children can narrate the poem and become the "twitchy witches" who "hobnob" with one another.

Occasionally poets will use onomatopoeia to appeal to the reader's senses and grasp their attention. This sound pattern uses words that make a sound like the action they are associated with. Shel Silverstein plays with onomatopoeia in his

poem *The Fourth*. He uses a skilful combination of words such as "CRASH", "BANG", "ZANG", AND "WHOOSH" to imitate the sounds of fireworks exploding on the fourth of July. So too, David McCord employs onomatopoeia in *The Pickety Fence*: "Give it a lick/Give it a lick/Give it a lick/With a rickety stick". He imitates the sound of hitting a picket fence with a stick throughout the complete poem. Both poems appeal to children as they can identify with the familiar experiences of hearing fireworks and running a stick alongside a fence.

Repetition is another way in which the poet may create a particular sound in a poem. Denman (1988) compares the repetition in poetry with the repetition that shapes a classical music piece such as Ravel's *Bolero*. The listener hears an easily recognizable, simple melody that is repeated over and over again. As a variety of instruments are added to the melody, the piece gradually builds to a powerful crescendo which climaxes in an exhausting finale. The "hummable" melody remains with the listener long after the music ceases to play. Thus is the effect of repetition on the ear. Poets use repetition when they want the listener or reader to be particularly aware of a feeling or an idea. The repetition of a word, phrase, or stanza helps to emphasize the poet's thoughts and draws the listener or the reader into the movement and melody of the poem. There are many examples of repetition to be found in children's poetry. Christina Rossetti's (1990) poem *Who Has Seen the Wind?* repeats the first line in each of its stanzas:

Who has seen the wind?
Neither I nor you:
But when the leaves hang trembling,
The wind is passing through.

Who has seen the wind?
Neither you nor I:
But when the leaves bow down their heads,

The wind is passing by.

(Appendix A, Poem 14)

In *Who Has Seen the Wind?* the question becomes an echo with the answer changing only slightly in the second stanza. For Cullinan (1989), "Repetition is like meeting an old friend again; children find it reassuring" (p. 368). They take pleasure in repeating the familiar words and become intrigued with the reassuring sounds of the language. James Kirkup makes effective use of repetition in his poem *Baby's Drinking Song* whereby the reader can listen to the baby: "sip a little, sup a little/drip a little, drop a little". Kirkup successfully emphasizes meaning through repetition. One can hear the short sucking sounds the repeated words create.

Repetition is a pattern that gives life and movement to a poem. Children recognize the thrill and delight to be found and savoured in the chanting, chousing, or echoing of repeated words and refrains. Poets consistently avail of devices such as rhyme, alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, and repetition, to add to, and enhance the meaning and enjoyment of poetry for children. Children who are exposed to a wide variety of rhyme schemes are more likely to develop a better understanding of, and appreciation for, the poet's ability to create the music which has captivated their hearts and set them dancing.

Imagery

Perrine (1963) defines an image as "the representation through sounds of sense experience" (p.4). The image may be visual or auditory, or it may refer to touch, taste, smell or movement. Introducing children to imagery can be as simple

as closing the eyes and stilling the tongue to allow sounds and pictures to fill the mind and quicken the heart. It is the process of capturing images with the mind, creating pictures as though a camera lies within the lines upon the paper.

Imagery holds particular appeal for children as it is consistent with the way children view and explore the world. Children are intuitively aware that an imagination can be used anywhere and at anytime. In the blink of an eye one can be transported to another world filled with wonder and the awe of make-believe. From the earliest years, fascinated with the senses of touch and taste, children place fingers and objects in their mouths, or take great delight in stroking the soft fur of a kitten's coat. Their sense of hearing responds eagerly to the tin-like music of the ice-cream van as the image of a forthcoming ice-cream seduces the sense of taste. Children naturally explore the world through heightened sensory experiences, imagery is best utilized as a learning tool when it appeals to these senses.

Denman (1988) describes imagery as follows:

The imagery of a well-written poem begs to be preserved. It entices us to enter into the world created by the poem, to see life as the poet created it, to abandon our ordinary perceptions and experiences, and to carry with us the vision of the world as the poet sees it. (p. 39).

Imagery can make the ordinary exciting and challenges us to view the world with new eyes. In *Sunflakes*, Frank Asch wonders how it would be if "sunlight fell like snowflakes". Polly Chase Boyden considers the feel of mud "all squishy-squash between the toes" in this children's favourite poem entitled *Mud*. Poetic imagery strives to leave a lasting impression on the reader. It is imagery at work when we recall the description of St. Nicholas who "had a broad face and a little

round belly/That shook, when he laughed, like a bowl full of jelly." When the reader sees, hears, smells, touches, or tastes a poem, then it can be said that the poem's imagery has been successful.

Good images linger in the mind's eye. Children like to take visual images in poems and express them artistically through art, dramatization, dance, movement and music. These modes of expression help to highlight the poetic images thus making the poem more meaningful and memorable for the child. Clement Clarke Moore's classic poem *A Visit from St. Nicholas* lends itself to a stage production. Each scene of the poem can be recreated whether by painting sets, assigning narrators, casting solo parts, choral reading, or adding music to enhance the melody of the words. When children are given the time, space and encouragement to develop their own ideas and suggestions for dramatization, they will make these poems their own. They become active participants in the process of creating.

While poetic imagery does not substitute for actual sensory experience, poets attempt to suspend our sense of reality and carry us to a secondary world where the power of language is revealed. Words trigger reactions that make our noses respond to the smell of baking bread and our taste buds tingle from the first tart sensation of a juicy apple. In Stanley Cook's *Gathering Leaves* we visualize the falling leaves participating in the race and hear the sounds of the brush and rake stacking the leaves before the child dives with a 'splash' into heap:

In autumn the falling leaves
Run races on the paths,
Tumble head over heels
And catch against the tufts of grass.

I gather them in a heap
With a stiff brush and a rake,
Though they are light as feathers
And do their best to escape.

Then I splash right into the heap
And the leaves wash over me
With a long swishing sound
Like a wave of the sea.

(Appendix A, Poem 15)

We feel a sense of anticipation and excitement because the poet has skillfully painted the picture and, in so doing, has awakened our senses.

Figurative Language

Children are unwitting masters of abstract thought. They see moving pictures in the clouds, twinkling eyes in the stars or a monster's arms attacking in the swaying trees branches. They explain the unfamiliar by combining the things they know. A *daddy climber* was the perfect description of a ladder in the eyes of this writer's three-year-old niece. She took the image of her father on a ladder and combined it with the action of ascending higher and higher into the sky.

As children grow and develop they question the world around them. They expand their knowledge, retrieve answers, become more literal in their thinking and are encouraged, praised and rewarded for making such progress. They demand accuracy, reason and explanation. Metaphoric thought becomes more difficult as it requires seeing what has become invisible to the naked eye. Denman (1988) suggests that while older children's vocabularies increase and expand, there is an aspect of their language development that diminishes. The innate awareness of the fictional world in all its richness and detail is replaced with fact and reality. The willingness to suspend disbelief vanishes and concrete thought becomes the

norm. Pity the growing child who no longer sees the world through rose-coloured spectacles.

Poets employ a variety of techniques to add meaning to their poems and to create lasting images. These techniques utilize imagery in the form of figurative language such as metaphors, similes and personification. Metaphor is a specific form of imagery which connects two objects that are essentially different. Dorothy Aldis speaks of "fence posts" wearing "marshmallow hats" in her poem entitled *On a snowy day*:

Fence posts wear marshmallow hats
On a winter's day,

Bushes in their nightgowns
Are kneeling down to pray,

And trees spread out their snowy skirts
Before they dance away. (Appendix A, Poem 4)

Children are encouraged to look with new freshness upon the familiar experience of snow on a fence. In John Ciardi's *Mummy Slept Late and Daddy Fixed Breakfast*, we read that "the waffles are like gravel pudding". While Ruth Whitman's *Listening to the Grown-ups Quarrelling*, the loud argument between two parents blows the children "like leaves against the wall". Sharing poems such as these exposes children to the endless possibilities metaphoric thought can bring to their writing.

When comparisons are made linking words with *as*, the poet uses a simile. Children enjoy creating their own similes and will illustrate wonderful images to accompany their thoughts. Asking children to complete short sentences or to fill in the missing word, extends a helping hand which leads with a leap of faith into the

world of imagination. *As hot as...*, and *as cold as...*, are examples of similes which is a form with endless possibilities. The child who feels *as baked as a bean* in a hot, overcrowded classroom has learned to bring a uniqueness and freshness to language through the use of similes.

A third form of figurative language is personification. Personification is the technique of attributing human qualities to non-human objects. The representation of a park bench as a person is simply portrayed in Aileen Fisher's *Snowy Benches*. Her poem *Houses* also employs personification whereby: "Windows are noses/windows are eyes/and doors are the mouths". Human features attributed to a house give life to a familiar inanimate object with which even the smallest child can identify. Figurative language is most successful when it is used in relation to the experiences of the child.

Forms of Poetry for Children

Early exposure to poetry often begins with Mother Goose Rhymes which are recited, chanted, or sung in conjunction with a multitude of activities in the home or at school. Children experience the joy of listening and responding to the rhymes and sounds of poems. Poetry comes in many forms and children should be exposed to differing forms so that their enjoyment is fully extended and occasionally challenged.

Children draw pleasure from stories when they are exposed to new experiences and relive the familiar. Thus it is no surprise that young and older children delight in the *narrative* as a favourite form of poetry. According to Benton (1978) "songs, ballads, rhymes and chants - the oral inheritance of all our literature - are the spring from which much subsequent children's verse draw life" (p. 11). Some of the best loved narratives such as Clement Moore's *A Visit from St.*

Nicholas and Dorothy Aldis' *Hiding* illustrate Benton's view. These narratives animate story characters who enter into the real life experiences of young children. Classic narratives such as *The Shooting of Dan McCrew* and *The Cremation of Dan McGee* by Robert Service, Longfellow's *Hiawatha* and Browning's *The Pied Piper* appeal to older elementary children who show increasing interest when events are more realistic or credible. Humour still prevails as children laugh aloud at the outrageously funny narratives in Shel Silverstein (1974) *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, *The Light in the Attic* (1981), and *Falling Up* (1996). Every child will have a favourite but in this writer's classrooms the poem entitled *Sick* has remained a favourite amongst children. This poem sets the scene for the imagination to dance with vivid images and invites the reader to utilize all five senses - a truly innovative way to captivate the interests of children by relating what all school children have no doubt experienced. The subject matter is central to the child's understanding as children relate easily to a feigned illness that disappears when the school day ends or the week-end arrives:

'I cannot go to school today,'
Said little Peggy Ann McKay.
'I have the measles and the mumps,
A gash, a rash, and purple bumps
My mouth is wet, my throat is dry,
I'm going blind in my right eye.
My tonsils are as big as rocks
I've counted sixteen chicken pox
And there's one more - that's seventeen.
And don't you think my face looks green?
My leg is cut, my eyes are blue -
It might be instamatic flu.
I cough and sneeze and gasp and choke,
I'm sure that my left leg is broke -
My hip hurts when I move my chin,
My belly button's caving in,

My back is wrenched, my ankle's sprained,
My 'pendix pains each time it rains.
My nose is cold, my toes are numb,
I have a sliver in my thumb.
My neck is stiff, my voice is weak,
I hardly whisper when I speak.
My tongue is filling up my mouth,
I think my hair is falling out.
My elbow's bent, my spine ain't straight,
My temperature is one-o-eight,
My brain is shrunk, I cannot hear,
There is a hole inside my ear.
I have a hangnail, and my heart is - what?
What's that? What's that you say?
You say today is...Saturday?
G'bye, I'm going out to play!

(Appendix A, Poem 16)

Henry King by Hilaire Belloc and *Daddy fell into the Pond* by Alfred Noyes are expressive narratives to use in the elementary classroom. Both narratives relate the unusual and funny experiences of two different characters and are ideal for choral readings set to dramatization. Small groups of children can perform each stanza before freezing in a tableau mime scenario. Dramatization such as this gives the listener and the viewer the opportunity to pause and reflect on the story as it unfolds. When children experience poetry in this way they take ownership for their learning. They want to learn and expand their horizons.

Ballads, or story poems adapted for singing, are very popular with young children and also lend themselves well to choral speaking or choral reading. Choral speaking has many values. Children who normally shy away from reading aloud before an audience can, without pressure, become acquainted with the sound of their own voices and gradually build confidence in speaking aloud. Choral

speaking also develops a sense of rhythm and co-operation as children learn to speak in turn or collectively. Robert Louis Stevenson's poems possess a singing quality which instantly captivates the reader. Poems such as *The Wind* and *Where Go The Boats* emphasize rhyme and rhythm and sing to the reader with a melody which becomes embedded in the reader's mind:

The Wind

I saw you toss the kites on high
And blow the birds about the sky;
And all around I heard you pass,
Like ladies' skirts across the grass—
O wind, a-blowing all day long,
O wind, that sings so loud a song!

I saw the different things you did,
But always you yourself you hid.
I felt you push, I heard you call,
I could not see yourself at all—
O wind, a-blowing all day long,
O wind, that sings so loud a song!

O you that are so strong and cold,
O blower, are you young or old?
Are you a beast of field and tree,
Or just a stronger child than me?
O wind, a-blowing all day long,
O wind, that sings so loud a song!

(Appendix A, Poem 17)

So too in Stevenson's *The Swing*, the rhythm of the words elevate the reader high into the sky suddenly to drop with stomach churning sensation: How do you like to up on a swing/Up in the sky so blue...

The song-like quality of poetry is also recognizable in *lyrics*. The appeal of this

poetry form lies in the lilting words and strong rhythm. In Irene Rutherford McLeod's *The Lone Dog* the description of the unwanted dog is emphasized by the repetition of vowel sounds: ...lean dog, keen dog.../rough dog, tough dog.../bad dog, mad dog.../sleek dog, meek dog...

The strong rhythm is also apparent in David McCord's *Song of the Train*.

The appeal of the limerick lies in the prescribed method structure and the humour which makes up this popular type of nonsense verse. Limericks offer children the opportunity to think in a different way, to invent new words and distort meaning without adult objection:

A cat in despondency sighed
And resolved to commit suicide.
She passed under the wheels
Of eight automobiles,
And under the ninth one she died.

(Appendix A, Poem 18)

The greatest of known limerick writers was Edward Lear whose popularity influenced the work of contemporary poets such as David McCord, Myra Cohn Livingston, and Arnold Lobel. These poets continue to produce limericks which today are matched with appropriately outrageous illustrations.

Children require exposure to free verse if their minds are to be freed from the notion that all poetry must rhyme. When shared orally, free verse will sound very similar to other forms of poetry but looks different on the printed page.

Many of Valerie Worth's poems are written in free verse but are related so simply that they tend to deceive. She makes excellent use of figurative language giving life to inanimate objects as in "Magnet" and "Chairs":

Chairs
Seem
To
Sit
Down
On
Themselves, almost as if
They were people
Some fat, some thin;
Settled comfortably
On their own seats,
Some even stretch out their arms
To
Rest.

(Appendix A, Poem 19)

The increased use of concrete poems by poets helps the reader to visually. The meaning is transferred not only through the words selected by the poet but also in the way the words are arranged on the page. Lillian Morrison's poem "*The Sidewalk Racer*" takes the shape of a skateboard while her words describe the thrill of the rider. Eve Merriam's poem "Windshield Wipers" depicts the image of a windshield wiper while the words mimic the sound.

Children are motivated by concrete poetry and eagerly attempt to create their own. Sometimes they need shape, pattern, or form to assist them in their struggles to create original, inspiring poetry. They can become encouraged when they read poems with forms they find engaging, thus igniting the spark of enthusiasm. One drawback to this type of exercise is that children often focus solely on the picture-making process and lose sight of the task of projecting the meaning through the words and the arrangement of words. Swartz (1993) shares his reservations about

using poetry patterns: "The danger may be that children might see poetry as a paint-by-number exercise where they fill in the spaces according to the rules" (p.73). He continues with some practical advice for teachers, "children who work as poets should be able to use any colours they wish, any kind of paint they wish, and feel free to go outside the lines" (p.7).

Enjoyment of poetry is, or should be, the ultimate goal of the educator. Providing children with opportunities to create and express thought without the confines and restrictions of form, facilitates this end.

Successful Poetry Teaching

The use of stimulating, challenging, and enjoyable poetry selections is not sufficient in ensuring children will meet the required goals and reach the learning outcomes outlined by the classroom teacher. Good poetry must be accompanied by successful poetry teaching. Just as no one particular university course will teach the student teacher how to teach, there are no hard and fast rules which when adhered to will guarantee success in teaching poetry. Successful teaching is easily recognizable as that which is meaningful for both teacher and student. It is the growing together of two learners in unique ways. It is accepted that one or the other is not always right and those mistakes, when admitted, allow for the ultimate in growth. Successful teaching across all subject areas requires excellent preparation and an unlimited imagination. An ability to stand back and observe when to do so is hardest of all. Successful teaching accepts that well-prepared lessons will fail to touch every child, however, the teacher remains committed to finding unique ways of 'wowing' those who disbelieve. The most important factor in successful teaching is undoubtedly the manner in which the subject is taught.

This factor is especially true in the teaching of poetry. Teachers who are committed to inspiring their charges recognize this very important factor and use it to determine the success of a poetry lesson. Children are influenced by the manner in which poetry is taught. Attitudes towards poetry develop quickly and before long a fine line is drawn between those who like the subject and those who do not. Thus it is important that teachers convey to their charges a love of the subject matter.

According to Lucas (1959), the classroom teacher deepens the understanding, enhances the beauty, and increases the appreciation of a poem by following two steps. First, children are given opportunities to understand the poem and share the poet's experience. Second, children are made aware of the techniques poets use in the creation of their poems. This writer emphasizes that these are steps which may be followed after children have been exposed to the many poems which may bring enjoyment and pleasure just for the sake of it. Children need opportunities to discover for themselves that poetry is fun. This ultimately is the goal of successful poetry teaching. Selecting poems which children enjoy is not a difficult task. Given the wealth of beautiful anthologies, enticing poetry books, and attractive poetry selections available, today's classroom teachers and students are spoiled for choice. While specific poets such as Eleanor Farejon, Jack Prelutsky and Myra Cohn Livingston are renowned for writing poems for children, it is improper to exclude the work of poets who do not write expressly for children. Koch (1973) introduces children in the elementary grades to poems written by poets such as Blake, Donne, and Shakespeare. While children will not respond to every aspect of Blake's *The Tyger* or Donne's *Valediction*, this writer agrees strongly with Koch when he argues thus:

...to save the whole poems for later means that some important

things will be lost, permanently - the experience, for example, of responding to Blake's poem when one is ten years old and can still half believe that one's girlfriend was created by a magical transformation and that one can talk to a lion about its speed and its strength; or the experience of "Come Unto These Yellow Sands," when one can believe in the magic of dancing oneself into oneness with nature...these are good experiences to have (p.24).

Teachers should introduce children to poetry written by poets of the present as well as the past. Koch's method of teaching involves reading poetry and writing poetry together as one subject. This is a hugely successful strategy. Children are given the opportunity to listen to a poem being read. Discussion or 'brainstorming' of the poem follows and suggestions are made for writing a group poem, or individual poems modeled on the poem shared together. This strategy encourages children to attempt their own writing and dispels fears of not knowing what to write. Children who model their writing on poems they have heard or discovered allow the adult work to become part of their own writing.

Having read Judith Viorst's *If I were in Charge of the World* this writer's grade four class were asked to write a poem telling of the changes they would make if they were given the opportunity to rule the world. Mary O'Neill's Hailstones and Halibut Bones offers insight into seeing colours in uniquely different ways, and Frank Asch's *Sunflakes* entices the children to play with words and create poems such as *Rainstones*, *Snowbeams*, and *Sunclouds*. The children become comfortable with poetic language. They learn to recognize elements in poetry such as similes and metaphors. They become aware of poetic techniques such as rhythm, sound, and imagery. Most importantly when they hear their poems read aloud or published in class anthologies, they learn that their responses have value and hold meaning.

Summary

As both students of education and educators in the primary and elementary fields we must be aware that our charges are children with limited life experiences. It is perhaps unreasonable that we would expect them to analyze or dissect a particular piece of work without first ensuring that they can draw on their own experiences for interpretative purposes. With this in mind we must ensure that we play to our audience and select for them, unless of course they select for themselves, poetry which is in many ways within the breadth of their experience. We must not, nor should we, allow ourselves to forget that children are children and while they may at times need to be poked and prodded along, as teachers we must foster in them their inherent love of learning and their natural inquisitiveness.

Tremendous strides have been made in the area of children's poetry during the last two decades. Poetry selections are now challenging, stimulating, and enjoyable. By avoiding the formal dissections of poems, a teacher gives value to poetry as an art experience. It is the recognition that using poetry can enhance and embellish the learning that takes place inside the classroom and beyond. Poetry can be found not just in reading and writing, it is there too in our singing, chanting, debating, discussing, arguing, questioning, responding, interpreting, role-playing, dancing and painting. By allowing our children to explore and experience the scope of poetry in all its forms we are helping, guiding and encouraging today's generation to come to understand what poetry means to many people - joy, sadness, pleasure, remorse, solace, reflection, excitement, laughter - and what it can mean for them. Students will engage more readily in abstract thinking at the elementary level when they have been exposed to poetry that forges a response.

Poetry should not be reduced to a simple recreational level whereby enjoyment becomes the primary goal forsaking all other learning experiences. In the final analysis, the study of poetry and its inclusion in our language programs must have a solid intellectual, reflective, and critical level.

The following *All Purpose Children's Poem* by Roger McGough gives food for thought. We must continue to value poetry and award it an essential place in the Language Arts curriculum. In this way we are ensuring the children of the future have the opportunity to shine and be all that they can be.

The first verse contains a princess
Two witches (one evil, one good)
There is a castle in it somewhere
And a dark and tangled wood.

The second has ghosts and vampires
Monsters with foul-smelling breath
It sends shivers down the book spine
And scares everybody to death.

The third is one of my favourites
With rabbits and skirts and trousers
Who talk to each other like we do
And live in neat little houses.

The fourth verse is bang up to date
And in it anything goes.
Set in the city, it doesn't rhyme
(Although in a way it does).

The fifth is set in the future
(And as you can see, it's last)
When the Word was made Computer
And books are a thing of the past.
- Roger McGough

(Appendix A, Poem 20)

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PART TWO

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEACHER'S POETRY COMPANION

A review of the literature pertinent to poetry instruction indicates that educational materials must be developed to meet the needs and interests of children in the elementary grades. It is evident that despite the increase in children's poetry books to choose from, teachers still feel hesitant and uncomfortable introducing and using poetry in the classroom on a regular basis.

Poetry instruction is recommended for use with elementary children because of its ability to offer enjoyment, encourage creativity and develop affective and cognitive learning. The review of the literature on poetry instruction in the elementary grades strongly supports the use of poetry anthologies and thematic teaching as a means of introducing poetry to children. Children begin to enjoy poetry when they read and hear it read frequently, as part of the whole curriculum, across all subject areas. A review of the literature indicates that poetry has the ability to stimulate creativity, enhance linguistic expression, encourage individuality, and develop the writing process.

Based on the recommendations from the review of the literature a poetry companion was designed for use by teachers with children at the elementary level. A theme common to all elementary curricula was used to present poetry that is varied in form and poetic technique.

A selection of poetry anthologies and poetry books was used as the main resources for the teacher's poetry companion. All poems are highly recommended for use with children of elementary age and record the familiar life experiences to which children can easily relate. Poets from varying origins and whose works span many centuries have been chosen for inclusion in the companion.

The poetry companion is organized in a manner which will facilitate its use by the classroom teacher. The introduction indicates that while the companion is designed for use with elementary children in a regular classroom setting, it may also be used with groups of elementary students engaged in an extra-curricular activity. A rationale for the inclusion of poetry in the Language Arts curriculum is included to provide the teacher with the philosophical basis for using poetry on a regular basis with elementary students. Inclusion of poetry in the Language Arts curriculum is highly recommended because of its potential for aiding the development of cognitive and affective growth of children and in helping them to read more widely, make meaning out of their experiences and take their understanding beyond a collection of facts or ideas. General goals are incorporated in the poetry companion as well as student goals which outline potential cognitive and affective development. The poetry companion is divided into nine lessons, and each lesson represents a period of approximately one hour. The theme of *Back to School* was selected for completion during the month of September, however, the theme can also be used at the teacher's discretion after Christmas or Easter holidays.

Appendices A-F of the poetry companion contain poems and activity suggestions which may be used at the teacher's discretion. Appendix G completes the poetry companion and provides a bibliography of selected poetry resources for the classroom teacher.

A
POETRY
COMPANION
FOR TEACHERS

By

Bronac Gallagher

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Introduction

This poetry companion was prepared for use with students in elementary grades. It is recommended as an additional aid to instruction within the Language Arts curriculum or as an extension to the Language Arts curriculum with a group of elementary students engaged in an extra-curricular activity.

Children can write poetry, good poetry, however, not many are encouraged to try. Many adults are often bashful about writing poetry and unsure of how to begin teaching children. Sadly, poetry occupies a self-conscious place in literature.

Poetry can readily become an integral part of the reading lesson at the primary and elementary grade levels. It can tie quite naturally into writing programmes and can be used to complement Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. It can become part of Dance, Drama or Movement lessons. It can lend itself to Art, and musical interpretations can also be developed. Elementary school teachers can award children the opportunity to "have a go" at writing poetry. They teach the approach all the time during Art! Children are encouraged to experiment, mix and make up colours, try different textures, widths, thicknesses, and thin nesses, above all, to have a go, without fear of making mistakes.

It is basic elementary school practice to steep children in vocabulary. The Language Arts curriculum should therefore include poems regularly, just as it does stories. Poetry offers another view of the world. When children write poetry they can personalize and make a meaning out of the experience they are writing about. This takes their understanding beyond a collection of facts or ideas.

Exposure to poetry encourages children to read more widely, more creatively and more critically. Children will soon embrace their favourite poems and poets. Displays of poetry books in the classroom will enable them to share funny poems; sad poems; descriptive poems; weather poems; poems about people,

animals, colours, or school.

Reading other people's poetry provides opportunities to discover new ways of looking at and understanding a subject. Poetry adds a new dimension to the Language Arts programme which helps to deepen children's understanding.

Organization of Poetry Companion

The theme of *Back to School* was chosen for this poetry companion because of the adaptability of the subject area. The nature of this theme also lends itself well to the development of cognitive and affective growth of the children. To encourage interest and deepen children's understanding, a variety of methods and resources are used to bring poetry alive. The anthologies used are highly recommended for use with children in the elementary grade levels. The theme fits well within the Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies curricula for Grades 4-6. Instructional strategies and lesson plans have been developed to meet the goals and learning outcomes of the poetry companion.

General Goals

To focus on the enjoyment of poetry through exposure to poems of varying forms and uses of poetic techniques.

To develop and promote creativity and to help all children experience success in creating poems.

To focus on the pleasure of reading, writing and listening to, poetry.

Learning Outcomes

Cognitive:

a) Thinking

To develop high level thinking skills such as problem solving and creative, critical and logical thinking.

b) Study

To develop skills of observation and communication as well as language skills such as phonics, sentence structure, letter recognition, grammar, rhyme and structure.

Affective:

a) Personal

To provide opportunities for expressing both feelings and emotion. To acquire leadership skills appropriate to age and interests. To develop increased awareness of one's potential and limitations.

b) Social

To make language more enjoyable by developing an awareness of the enjoyment, fun, entertainment and amusement of poetry.

Lesson Plan Design

Children should have opportunities to read and respond to poetry. From the beginning of the school year, the daily routine should include poetry. This routine involves opportunities to share poems with a partner, read selections aloud to small groups or whole classes, and engage in responses to the poetry shared. The role of the teacher is multi-faceted and always open to change. The teacher encourages

spontaneity as well as reflection. The teacher facilitates and models responses which reflect higher level thinking.

This handbook is divided into ten lessons that can be completed in the first month of a new school year or during the first weeks after Christmas or Easter holidays. The order in which the poems and poetic elements are presented may be introduced at the discretion of the classroom teacher. The poems can be shared with children either as an introduction to poetry, a theme being studied or for purposes of reading and listening to poetry on a regular basis throughout the year. The suggested poems are intended to create a pleasant, relaxed environment, spark enthusiasm, stimulate thinking and creativity, and promote a positive response to poetry. The goal remains constant, namely to help children find enjoyment in the poems they read and listen to.

Suggested lesson outline for the theme: Back to School

- Lesson 1: *First Day Back* by June Crebbin
Quieter than Snow by Berlie Doherty
- Lesson 2: *Playgrounds* by Berlie Doherty
- Lesson 3: *Homework* by Russell Hoban
- Lesson 4: *The Performing Bag* by Stanley Cook
- Lesson 5: *Arithmetic* by Carl Sandburg
- Lesson 6: Getting to know me
- Lesson 7: Like What
- Lesson 8: *Self Portrait* by Jacqueline Sweeney
- Lesson 9: *If I were in Charge of the World* by Judith Viorst
- Lesson 10: Conclusion of Unit

The poetry lessons are organized as follows:

- Warm up activity:
Poetry Read Alert (sustained reading for approx. 15 minutes.)
Children share poems aloud (limit number to five or six each day)
Vote for poem of the day
- Teacher shares poems relating to theme or
Teacher introduces poetic element for the week
- Teacher led discussion
- Individual Activity
- Sharing of work

Lesson one begins with a survey on poetry attitudes. (Appendix D) The students are then invited to select a poetry book from the classroom library and encouraged to read and share a variety of poems of their choice. The teacher introduces the theme of *Back to School*. The students gather together in an informal setting to listen to the sharing of poems.

Introduction to Poetry

Lesson One: Back to School

Administer Poetry Attitude Survey (Appendix D)

Reading Poetry

Teacher reads aloud *First Day Back* by June Cribbon. Allow time for the students to respond orally to the poem. (Poem 1, Appendix E)

Teacher reads aloud *Quieter than Snow* by Berlie Doherty. Allow time for the students to respond orally to the poem. (Poem 2, Appendix E)

Activity #1 Poetry Folder

The students will design and construct a poetry folder to keep a record of poems shared throughout the month. The students may decide to incorporate the theme of *Back to School* into their art designs for their folders. The students are given copies of the poems shared in this lesson. Student Sheet Activity #1 (Appendix F).

Lesson Two: On the Playground

Reading Poetry

Teacher reads aloud *Playgrounds* by Berlie Doherty. Allow time for the students to respond orally to the poem. (Poem 3, Appendix E)

The theme of *Back to School* is continued in Lesson Two. The students gather together in an informal setting to listen to the sharing of poems.

Brainstorming

Brainstorm together a list of words which come to mind when you think of a playground during recess playtime.

For example: - friendly - lonely - chummy
 - happy - busy - relaxing
 - noisy - scary - exciting

Make a list of words which tell what you can see and hear.

For example: SOUNDS	SIGHT
shouting	groups huddling together
laughing	children holding hands
chanting	skipping ropes turning

Reread the poem entitled *Playgrounds*. Highlight the words which describe the type of place the playground can be. Highlight the words which tell what can be seen and heard on the playground.

Writing Poetry

Using the brainstormed list, encourage students to write about their own thoughts and experiences on a playground. Students may wish to model their own poems on the poem entitled *Playgrounds* by Berlie Doherty. A copy of Student Sheet Activity #2 (Appendix F) may be administered for this purpose.

The students are given a copy of the poem shared in this lesson. (Poem 3, Appendix E).

Lesson Three: Homework

Teacher reads aloud *Homework* by Jack Prelutsky. This poem offers the wonderful opportunity to introduce the students to the poetic element of personification. Personification is the assignment of human characteristics to things. In this lesson the students will have opportunities to extend their imaginations and see the world in a new and exciting way.

Reading Poetry

Teacher reads aloud *Homework* by Russell Hoban. Allow time for the students to respond orally to the poem. (Poem 4, Appendix E).

To demonstrate the use of personification further, the following selection of poems could be shared. (Poems 5-8, Appendix E).

Fog by Carl Sandburg

Winter by Judith Nicholls

Tractor by Valerie Worth

On a Snowy Day by Dorothy Aldis

Brainstorming

Create a list of nouns. Write the list on the chalkboard.

For example:

book

homework

pencil

window

book bag

chocolate

Create a list of actions a person does. Write these verbs on the chalkboard.

For example:

writes
sneezes
stares
dances
paints
counts

Writing Poetry

Use some of the verbs to describe the nouns.

For example:

Window stares.
Book bag sneezes.
Chocolate dances.

Make each sentence longer by answering: Who? What? Where? Why?
When? or How?

For example:

Window stares (Where?) at the empty, silent playground.
Book bag sneezes (Why?) because the ground is wet and cold.
Chocolate dances (Who?) with ice-cream in my dessert bowl.

To inspire imagination and focus thought, give each student a copy of ideas for personification. (Student Sheet Activity #3, Appendix F). Discuss the ideas and exchange examples and ideas. Encourage the students to use the ideas to

create personification.

Students use their favourite ideas in a poem or select a subject which they prefer to write more about.

Encourage students to share poems with each other.

Lesson Four: The Performing Bag

Reading Poetry

Teacher reads aloud *The Performing Bag* by Stanley Cook. Allow time for the students to respond orally to the poem. (Poem 10, Appendix E). Discuss the images, pictures, and thoughts the poem embraces. Review the technique of personification whereby an inanimate object (the paper bag) takes on human characteristics and is portrayed as living. Reread the poem.

Brainstorming

The students work together to devise a list of as many objects they have seen on a school playground. Encourage students to think beyond the traditional playground equipment.

Ask each student to select an object they might see on the playground. It may be helpful to brainstorm some ideas together:

For example: - a fallen leaf

- a shiny slide
- a rusty swing
- a plastic bag

Describe the object using short phrases or sentences.

For example: - a shriveled up leaf

- curls up in a ball to keep warm
- old and tired, bent double, throat crackling, veins dry

Pretend the object (leaf) is alive, has feelings, can speak, see, hear, or move.

Describe what it can do.

For example: leaf

- scurries alongside the playground wall...destination unknown!
- dances with friends around and around, darts here and there

Imagine a person or the weather helping the object to do something new.

For example: a leaf learns to fly

- two hands enveloping like ice-cream scoops,
- collecting, throwing, releasing, empowering
- breathing life into leaves, fuelling with energy, flying, gliding

Reread the poem entitled *The Performing Bag* by Stanley Cook. Ask students to listen for and see the images described in the poem. Highlight the poet's use of personification.

Encourage each student to select an object commonly seen on a playground and use the brainstormed ideas, jot notes, phrases, thoughts, and descriptions to create a poem of their own.

The students are given a copy of the poem shared in this lesson. (Poem 10, Appendix E). Praise and encourage all efforts as you circulate reading each poem. Draw attention to strong opening lines which pull the reader into the poem. Encourage students to read their work aloud so that they can hear their own voices and words speaking to the audience.

Lesson Five: Arithmetic

Reading Poetry

Teacher reads aloud *Arithmetic* by Carl Sandburg. Allow time for the students to respond orally to the poem. (Poem 11, Appendix E).

Brainstorming

The students work together to devise a list of as many school subjects they can think of. The list should include favourite subjects and not so popular subjects.

Ask each student to select a school subject. Tell in one sentence something about that subject. Make ideas fun to think about and interesting to imagine. Record ideas next to subject.

For example:

Science is unfamiliar stench stench tiptoeing like burglars in and out of your nose.

Art is shades of colour oozing from your mind to your arm to your hand to your brush to your paper to a rainbow.

Physical Education is a bottled tornado spinning and turning and running and jumping and crashing and falling and rising over and over and over.

Writing Poetry

Students select a subject and jot note ideas, phrases, thoughts, and descriptions about their chosen subject. A model Student Sheet Activity #4 (Appendix F) can be used to help students begin to create ideas and help thoughts flow.

Praise and encourage all efforts as you circulate reading each poem. Draw attention to strong opening lines which pull the reader into the poem. Read aloud and encourage students to read their work aloud so that they can hear their words speaking to their audience.

Illustrate final copies of poems and publish in a class book.

The students are given a copy of the poem shared in this lesson. (Poem 11, Appendix E).

Lesson Six: Getting to know Me

Brainstorming

Ask students to imagine it is the night before they have to take a school exam. Brainstorm the feelings this brings to mind.

Now imagine it is the night before Christmas Eve. Brainstorm the feelings this thought brings to mind.

Brainstorm together to create a list of feelings. Record the list on chart paper or the chalkboard:

For example:

- happiness	- excitement
- sadness	- anticipation
- boredom	- anxiety
- frustration	- loneliness
- peace	- worry
- anger	- fear

Write the following opening line on the chalkboard:

_____ is _____ like _____
(feeling) (colour)
and also like _____

Read some sample poems:

Jealousy is black like the pupil of an eye winking off and on...

Boredom is green like grass.

It makes me want to sit there and do nothing at all.

Anxiety is red like a fire, burning my insides, making me scream.

Using the brainstormed list of feelings, encourage students to write poems about their own thoughts and feelings. Students may wish to use the model on the chalkboard or change it to suit their own needs. A copy of Student Sheet Activity #5 (Appendix F) may be administered for this purpose.

Lesson Seven: Like What

This lesson offers the wonderful opportunity to introduce the students to the poetic element of a simile. A simile is the comparison between two nouns using 'like' or 'as' to make the comparison. In this lesson the students will have opportunities to think about and express their feelings in a new way.

Brainstorming

Write the 'Like What' list on the chalkboard:

Like What

colour like...

hot like...

cold like...

sounds like...

tastes like...

smells like...

looks like...(shape, size)

texture like...(rough, slimy)

moves like...

Students close their eyes and think of a colour. (Imagine the colour seeping into the room, colouring everything it touches before finally going straight through our skin and into our bodies. When this happens, it will make us feel hot or cold.)

Suggest a colour.

For example: -red

red - hot as if you are swimming in a volcano

blue - cold as if you are picking up a snowball without gloves on
and the cold water is dripping down your arm and into your sleeve.

Suggest the colour orange is coming into the room.

Ask students:

Does it feel hot or cold?

Orange makes you feel hot like what? (e.g. fire)

(Continue exploring the colour...help me to see the fire more clearly...is it gigantic like a forest fire, or small like a match? Help me to see what you see.)

Brainstorm and explore other colours and images.

Demonstrate how to sense-mix colours with sounds:

For example:

Red is the sound of a volcano erupting

Red is a scream echoing in a tunnel

Red is a jet taking off

Demonstrate how to mix a feeling with tastes:

For example:

Anger tastes like hot peppers on my tongue

Frustration tastes like burnt peas on the bottom of the pot

Jealousy tastes like bitter lemon juice

Return to the 'Like What' list and show how any feeling or object can be taken through the list:

For example: - a feeling of anger

Anger is red like tomato soup boiling over on the stove,

grey like a storm cloud,
and cold like icicles hanging from gutters.
Anger can smell like a skunk,
taste like rotten eggs,
slither like a cobra through my brain, poisoning my thoughts.
Anger feels rough as sandpaper
and sharp as porcupine quills

For example: - an object

Cloud.

White. Like the painted face of a clown.

Glides gracefully across the sky.

Whispers softly and gently inhales.

Writing Poetry

Using the 'Like What' list, encourage students to think about a feeling, or an object they might like to write about. A copy of Student Sheet Activity #6 (Appendix F) may be administered.

As the students write, circulate, commenting on work in progress, reading aloud a line or two.

Lesson Eight: Self-portrait

Writing 'portraits' is a wonderful way to introduce, reinforce, or review the use of similes. It is also a great activity to use when studying the human body in Science.

Brainstorming

Begin by introducing the term 'portrait' to the students. Explain the function and purpose of portraits before the invention of cameras. Brainstorm a list of the various body parts.

For example:

hair
head
neck
shoulder
arm

Ask students to touch their hair and describe what they feel.

For example:

My hair feels like tangled spaghetti.
My hair feels like long wiggly worms.

Using the 'Like What' list (see lesson 6), explain how colour, shape, and texture can help the descriptions. Brainstorm for ideas.

For example:

My hair is wavy like the ocean.
My hair is golden like stalks of corn drying in the sun.

Introduce the model for a self-portrait poem (Student Sheet Activity #7, Appendix F).

Discuss how the poem might end. Encourage students to use their imaginations to end their poems with an unusual, funny, unexpected line.

For example:

I live in the television and eat commercials.

I live in the air and eat loneliness.

I live in computers and eats bugs and chips.

Writing Poetry

Encourage students to write as many similes as they can to describe themselves. It may be helpful to list the body parts or areas of the body you wish the students to focus on. For example, a study of internal organs will warrant the use of the heart, kidney, lungs and so on. The skeletal system will concentrate on particular bones. Perhaps you want the students to explore parts of the hand, hence finger, thumb, nail, knuckle and so on would be included.

Ask students to write independently and conceal their identities. Collect the poems and have the students guess each poet's identity from the description given in the self- portrait.

Other writing ideas

Using the same model for self-portraits, create family portraits whereby a family member is chosen and their qualities are described using similes and details.

Create a Mother's Portrait or a Father's Portrait for special occasions such as Christmas, Birthdays or Mother's/Father's Day.

Portraits could be compiled for pets, friends, even teachers!

Lesson Nine: If I were in Charge of the world

Reading Poetry

Teacher reads aloud *If I were in Charge of the World* by Judith Viorst. Allow time for the students to respond orally to the poem. (Poem 12, Appendix E). Discuss the images, pictures, and thoughts the poem embraces. Reread the poem.

Brainstorming

Imagine you are in charge of the world. Every decision usually made by parents, teachers, school principals, politicians, and city councils world-wide now becomes your decision.

Write the following thoughts on the chalkboard and record some of the answers offered by the students.

List the things:

- a. you would have more of
- b. you wouldn't have/you'd cancel/you'd postpone
- c. there would be less of

List the foods:

- d. you would create/change

List the rules:

- e. you would change
- f. enhance to make better

Reread the poem. Ask the students to listen carefully to all the things that would be changed or cancelled. Do they agree with these decisions?

Writing Poetry

Using the list of brainstormed ideas create a poem which describes the world you would love to be in charge of.

Ask the students to read their poems aloud and share their thoughts and ideas. These poems look great when mounted on a wall next to the profile of each student. Use the overhead projector to project the image of each student's profile onto a wall covered with a sheet of black paper. Cut the images out and paste next to the poems.

The students are given a copy of the poem shared in this lesson. (Poem 12, Appendix E).

Lesson Ten: Conclusion of Unit

Reading Poetry

Review the work collected in folders. Allow time for the students to select a favourite poem for oral presentation before the group, or written publication such as the classroom wall, The Internet, a local newspaper/magazine.

Activity #1

The students will orally present their selections before the group. Students will be encouraged to offer feedback to one another.

The students will illustrate their poems for final publication.

Activity #2

The students will write a brief reflection outlining what they liked best/least about this poetry unit.

Appendix A

Poems

Poem 1

My Bed is a Boat

My bed is a little boat;
Nurse helps me in when I embark;
She girds me in my sailor's coat
And starts me in the dark.

At night I go on board and say
Good-night to all my friends on shore;
I shut my eyes and sail away
And see and hear no more.

And sometimes things to bed I take,
As prudent sailors have to do;
Perhaps a slice of wedding-cake,
Perhaps a toy or two.

All night across the dark we steer;
But when the day returns at last,
Safe in my room, beside the pier,
I find my vessel fast.

Robert Louis Stevenson

Stevenson, R. L. (1994). A child's garden of verses. Newmarket: Brimax.

Poem 2

Tractor

Tractor
The tractor rests
In the shed
Dead or asleep,

But with high
Hind wheels
Held so still

We know
It is only waiting
Ready to leap-

Like a heavy
Brown
Grasshopper

Valerie Worth

Worth, V. (1972). Small poems. London: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Poem 3

Sidewalk Measles

I saw the sidewalk catch the measles
When the rain came down today.
It started with a little blotching-
Quickly spread to heavy splotching,
Then as I continued watching
The rain-rash slowly dried away.

Barbara M. Hales

Hopkins. L.B. (Ed.). (1983). The Sky is Full of Song. New York: Harper & Row.

Poem 4

On a Snowy Day

Fence posts wear marshmallow hats
On a winter's day,

Bushes in their nightgowns
Are kneeling down to pray,

And trees spread out their snowy skirts
Before they dance away.

Aldis D. (1952). All together. (2nd ed.). London: Putnam.

Poem 5

What is Brown?

Brown is the color of a country road
Back of a turtle
Back of a toad.
Brown is cinnamon
And morning toast
And the good smell of
The Sunday roast.
Brown is the color of work
And the sound of a river,
Brown is bronze and a bow
And a quiver.
Brown is the house
On the edge of town
Where wind is tearing
The shingles down.
Brown is a freckle
Brown is a mole
Brown is the earth
When you dig a hole.
Brown is the hair
On many a head
Brown is chocolate
And gingerbread.
Brown is a feeling you get inside
When wondering makes
Your mind grow wide.
Brown is a leather shoe
And a good glove-
Brown is as comfortable
As love.

Mary O'Neill

O'Neill, M. (1989). Hailstones and halibut bones. (2nd ed.).New York: Doubleday.

Poem 6

The Swing

How do you like to go up in a swing,
Up in the air so blue?
Oh, I do think it is the pleasantest thing
Ever a child can do!

Up in the air and over the wall,
Till I can see so wide,
Rivers and trees and cattle and all
Over the countryside-

Till I look down on the garden green,
Down on the roof so brown-
Up in the air I go flying again,
Up in the air and down!

Robert Louis Stevenson

Betts Egan, L. (Ed.).(1990).The classic treasury of children's poetry. PA: Courage.

Poem 7

Song of the Train

Clickety-clack,
Wheels on the track,
This is the way
They begin the attack:
Click-ety clack,
Click-ety clack,
Click-ety, clack-ety,
Click-ety
Clack.

Clickety-clack,
Over the crack,
Faster and faster
The song of the track:
Click-ety clack,
Click-ety clack,
Click-ety, clack-ety,
Click-ety
Clack.

Riding in front,
Riding in back,
Everyone hears
The song of the track:
Click-ety clack,
Click-ety clack,
Clickety-clickety,
Clackety
Clack.

David McCord

McCord D. (1967). Every time I climb a tree. New York: Little, Brown.

Poem 8

Mrs. Peck-Pigeon

Mrs. Peck-Pigeon
Is pecking for bread,
Bob-bob-bob
Goes her little round head.
Tame as a pussy-cat
In the street,
Step-step-step
Go her little red feet.
With her little red feet
And her little round head,
Mrs. Peck-Pigeon
Goes picking for bread.

Eleanor Farjeon

Farjeon E. (1985). Eleanor Farjeon's poems for children. (2nd ed.). London:
Lippencott.

Poem 9

Where Go the Boats?

Dark brown is the river,
Golden is the sand.
It flows along for ever,
With trees on either hand.

Green leaves a-floating,
Castles of the foam,
Boats of mine a-boating-
Where will all come home?

On goes the river
And out past the mill,
Away down the valley
Away down the hill.

Away down the river,
A hundred miles or more,
Other little children
Shall bring my boats ashore.

Robert Louis Stevenson

Sage. A. (Ed.).(1998). The Hutchinson treasury of children's poetry. Random House: London.

Poem 10

The Man Who Wasn't There

Yesterday upon the stair
I met a man who wasn't there;
He wasn't there again today,
I wish, I wish, he'd go away.

I've seen his shapeless shadow-coat
Beneath the stairway, hanging about;
And outside, muffled in a cloak
The same colour as the dark;

I've seen him in a black, black suit
Shaking, under the broken light;
I've seen him swim across the floor
And disappear beneath the door;

And once, I almost heard his breath
Behind me, running up the path;
Inside he leant against the wall,
And turned and... was no one at all.

Yesterday upon the stair
I met the man who wasn't there;
He wasn't there again today.
I wish, I wish, he'd go away.

Brian Lee

Harrison, M., & Clark, C. S. (Eds.).(1991). A year full of poems. New York:
Oxford.

Poem 11

Adventures of Isabel

Isabel met an enormous bear,
Isabel, Isabel, didn't care.
The bear was hungry, the bear was ravenous,
The bear's big mouth was cruel and cavernous.
The bear said, Isabel, glad to meet you,
How do, Isabel, now I'll eat you!
Isabel, Isabel, didn't worry;
Isabel didn't scream or scurry.
She washed her hands and she straightened her hair up,
Then Isabel quietly ate the bear up.

Ogden Nash

Prelutsky, J. (Ed.).(1983).The Random House book of poetry for children. London:
Random House.

Poem 12

Working in winter

Silently the snow settles on the scaffolding,
The feathery flakes furry and flick their fragments,
The brown bricks piled on billowing polythene
Heap their heaviness to heavenly heights.
Workmen in woolly hats whistle into the wind
Or dance in donkey jackets to hold in heat,
Their toes tingle, the tips of their fingers freeze -
It's murder, mate, this job is, murder.
Roll on five o'clock!

John More

Dickinson, S. (Ed.). (1995). Poems to share. London: Penguin.

Poem 13

Chanson Innocente II

hist whist
little ghostthings
tip-toe
twinkle-toe
little twitchy
witches and tingling
goblins
hob-a-nob hob-a-nob
little hoppy happy
toad in tweeds
tweeds
little itchy mousies
with scuttling
eyes rustle and run and
hidehidehide
whisk
whisk look out for the old woman
with the wart on her nose
what she'll do to yer
nobody knows
for she knows the devil ooch
the devil ouch
the devil
ach the great
green
dancing
devil
devil
devil
devil

wheeEEE

e.e.cummings

Prelutsky, J. (Ed.).(1983).The Random House book of poetry for children. London:
Random House.

Poem 14

The Wind

Who has seen the wind?
Neither I nor you:
But when the leaves hang trembling,
The wind is passing through.

Who has seen the wind?
Neither you nor I:
But when the leaves bow down their heads,
The wind is passing by.

Christina Rossetti

Betts Egan, L. (Ed.).(1990). The classic treasury of children's poetry. PA: Courage.

Poem 15

Gathering Leaves

In autumn the falling leaves
Run races on the paths,
Tumble head over heels
And catch against the tufts of grass.

I gather them in a heap
With a stiff brush and a rake,
Though they are light as feathers
And do their best to escape.

Then I splash right into the heap
And the leaves wash over me
With a long swishing sound
Like a wave of the sea.

Stanley Cook

Harrison, M., & Clark, C. S. (Eds.).(1991). A year full of poems. New York:
Oxford.

Poem 16

Sick

'I cannot go to school today,'
Said little Peggy Ann McKay.
'I have the measles and the mumps,
A gash, a rash, and purple bumps
My mouth is wet, my throat is dry,
I'm going blind in my right eye.
My tonsils are as big as rocks
I've counted sixteen chicken pox
And there's one more - that's seventeen.
And don't you think my face looks green?
My leg is cut, my eyes are blue -
It might be instamatic flu.
I cough and sneeze and gasp and choke,
I'm sure that my left leg is broke -
My hip hurts when I move my chin,
My belly button's caving in,
My back is wrenched, my ankle's sprained,
My 'pendix pains each time it rains.
My nose is cold, my toes are numb,
I have a sliver in my thumb.
My neck is stiff, my voice is weak,
I hardly whisper when I speak.
My tongue is filling up my mouth,
I think my hair is falling out.
My elbow's bent, my spine ain't straight,
My temperature is one-o-eight,
My brain is shrunk, I cannot hear,
There is a hole inside my ear.
I have a hangnail, and my heart is - what?
What's that? What's that you say?
You say today is...Saturday?
G'bye, I'm going out to play!'

Shel Silverstein

Silverstein, S. (1974). Where the sidewalk ends. New York: Harper Collins.

Poem 17

The Wind

I saw you toss the kites on high
And blow the birds about the sky;
And all around I heard you pass,
Like ladies' skirts across the grass-
O wind, a-blowing all day long,
O wind, that sings so loud a song!

I saw the different things you did,
But always you yourself you hid.
I felt you push, I heard you call,
I could not see yourself at all-
O wind, a-blowing all day long,
O wind, that sings so loud a song!

O you that are so strong and cold,
O blower, are you young or old?
Are you a beast of field and tree,
Or just a stronger child than me?
O wind, a-blowing all day long,
O wind, that sings so loud a song!

Robert Louis Stevenson

Stevenson, R. L. (1994) A child's garden of verses. Newmarket: Brimax.

Poem 18

A cat in despondency sighed
And resolved to commit suicide.
She passed under the wheels
Of eight automobiles,
And under the ninth one she died.

Anonymous

Prelutsky, J. (Ed.).(1983).The Random House book of poetry for children. London:
Random House.

Poem 19

Chairs
Seem
To
Sit
Down
On
Themselves, almost as if
They were people
Some fat, some thin;
Settled comfortably
On their own seats,
Some even stretch out their arms
To
Rest.

Valerie Worth

Huck et al., C., Hepler, S., & Hickman, J. (1993). Children's literature in the elementary school. (5th ed.). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Poem 20

The All-Purpose Children's Poem

The first verse contains a princess
Two witches (one evil, one good)
There is a castle in it somewhere
And a dark and tangled wood.

The second has ghosts and vampires
Monsters with foul-smelling breath
It sends shivers down the book spine
And scares everybody to death.

The third is one of my favourites
With rabbits and skirts and trousers
Who talk to each other like we do
And live in neat little houses.

The fourth verse is bang up to date
And in it anything goes.
Set in the city, it doesn't rhyme
(Although in a way it does).

The fifth is set in the future
(And as you can see, it's last)
When the Word was made Computer
And books are a thing of the past.

Roger McGough

Harrison, M., & Clark, C. S. (Eds.).(1995). The new oxford treasury of children's poems. New York: Oxford.

Appendix B

Annotated Bibliography of Recommended Picture Book Editions of Single Poems

An Annotated Bibliography Of Selected Poetry For Children

The selection of quality material is the responsibility of those who are involved in bringing children and poetry together. New material accumulates annually and vastly increases the quantity of material available. As Hiscock (1982) posits, however, "this proliferation of materials, ranging from mediocre to excellent, requires of the prospective user a high degree of selectivity" (p.83). She proposes a variety of ways by which quality material can be selected for children. Naturally first hand examination of the material is an obvious method of ensuring quality choice. There is the need, however, to recognize that time constraints and limited access to the materials often mitigate against such a practice.

Hiscock refers to a variety of selection tools which can assist in the selection process. She acknowledges the advantages of referring to publishers' catalogues which provide bibliographic data that would be useful when selecting particular poetry books. She also draws attention to the reviews and evaluations provided by the critical literature which can serve as an excellent informational tool by which the learner can grow in knowledge and appreciation.

The following annotated bibliography of selected poems for children has been chosen from a variety of poetry anthologies, specialized collections and picture book editions of single poems. The list is by no means exhaustive but the writer has attempted to include selections which have been highly recommended and positively evaluated by the critical literature and are, in the writer's opinion, indispensable to poetry collections. The writer has selected books that are visually attractive and combine clear layout with memorable illustrations. It is through the combination of these two elements that a poem can trigger the imagination of even the most hesitant readers and hopefully foster in them a love of literature.

Picture Book Editions of Single Poems

Browning, R. (1889). The pied piper of Hamelin. New York: Warne.

The tale of the Pied Piper has long been a favourite with children. In this picture book, Robert Browning's poem is recreated with Kate Greenaway's superbly crafted illustrations. She captures the people "flocking to the Town Hall", the children "tripping and skipping" to the Piper's tune, and the Mayor and his council standing like "blocks of wood" watching the Piper lead the children away. A wonderful blend of charming costumes and superb text.

Carroll, L. (1989). Jabberwocky. New York: Abrams.

The breathtaking illustrations, fastidious detail and exquisite colour adorn the pages of this classic. Readers encounter the Jubjub bird and the Bandersnatch as the young prince journeys on his white horse to slay the Jabberwocky with his "vorpal sword". The use of nonsensical words and futuristic/medieval artwork combine to make this truly a book to stimulate young imaginations.

Field, E. (1982). Wyken, Blynken and Nod. New York: Dutton.

A skilful combination of text and illustration captures the serenity of family life in this awe-inspiring poem. Children will engage in the magical night time adventure of Wyken, Blynken and Nod, who "fish with nets of silver and gold" and capture "the stars in the twinkling foam". This enchanting book is perfect family reading for bedtime poetry - or for any time!

Frost, F.(1978). Stopping by woods on a snowy evening. New York: Dutton.

Robert Frost's popular text highlighted by breathtaking illustrations creates a sense of atmosphere that will be recognized by readers of all ages. The double-page spreads with enlarged text will appeal especially to younger readers. The talents of poet and illustrator span the years and unite to give today's children a book of distinction.

Lear, E. (1979). The owl and the pussycat and other nonsense. New York: Viking.

The owl and the pussycat is perhaps the best-known and best-loved poem by Edward Lear. Children will marvel at the rhythmic lilt and relax in the reassuring repetition of the eccentric vocabulary. Fascinating illustrations capture the imagery of Lear's words on detailed double-page spreads. Children will return to this book time and time again, unraveling the intricacies of the pictures which supplement this excellent work.

Longfellow, H. W. (1983). Hiawatha. New York: Dial.

The text of this magnificent picture book is a short passage from The Song of Hiawatha, Longfellow's poem based on the traditions of the Native Americans. The riveting double-page spread illustrations will enthrall young readers as they bask in the rich detail of scenes depicting fireflies, owls, birds and beasts, and share in the lyrical verses portraying Hiawatha's boyhood.

Jeffers offers an explanation for the illustrations on front-end paper,

dedication page, and back-end paper. The explanations are particularly useful as they provide the reader with the necessary information about Hiawatha's childhood without detracting from the preceding verses.

Longfellow, H. W.(1985). Paul Revere's ride. New York: Greenwillow.

Paul Revere's midnight ride in 1775 to warn the people that the British were attacking is wonderfully recreated in this narrative poem. The illustrations by Nancy Winslow Parker complement the text for young readers and help build to an exciting climax. This poem will be read over and over again.

Moore, C. C. (1976). The night before Christmas (2nd ed.). New York: Rand McNally.

Clement Clarke Moore in this classic poem captures the magic of Christmas Eve. Tasha Tudor's breathtaking pictures alternate soothing colours with black and white textures and draw the reader into the story line with each passing stanza which frames each illustration. This classic picture book brims with life and movement and will appeal to children of every age.

Prelutsky, J. (1974). Circus. New York: MacMillan.

Jack Prelutsky captures the magical sights and carnival sounds in this enchanting verse. Readers will meet acrobats who "flop-flippy-floppity-flippity-flop", and enjoy the antics of the "four funny fat seals", only to later marvel at the "mid-air magician with nerves made of steel". Arnold Lobel wonderfully portrays the greatest show on earth in the illustrations.

Walden, K. C. (1986). A winter's yarn. Alberta: Red Deer College Press.

This delightful poem takes the reader on a visit to the zoo. Text and water-colour illustrations combine to create an exciting adventure that will long be remembered by readers of all ages. Meet the eccentric zoo keeper who describes the special way the animals keep warm in cold weather. This heart-warming poem of friendship, kindness and helping will captivate the imagination of every child.

Willard, N. (1981). A visit to William Blake's inn: Poems for the innocent and experienced travelers. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Nancy Willard introduces the reader to a series of unusual characters who staff an imaginary inn by William Blake. In this John Newbery Medal winner we meet two patient angels washing and shaking beds, a rabbit who shows visitors to their rooms including a man in a marmalade hat and two sun flowers who ask for a room with a view! Alice and Martin Provenson received the Caldecott Honor for their "flawlessly crafted illustrations".

Appendix C

Annotated Bibliography of Poetry Anthologies

Poetry Anthologies

Bennett, J.(Ed.) (1980).Roger was a razor fish and other poems. Toronto: Breakwater.

Young children will return again and again to the twenty-two poems in this lively collection. "The Tickle Rhyme" by Jan Serailier, Charles Causley's "Quack! said the Billy-Goat" and "Tree Houses" by Shel Silverstein are just a few of the poems enchantingly illustrated by Maureen Raffey.

Blake, Q.(Ed.) (1994).The Quentin Blake book of nonsense verse. London: Penguin.

Quentin Blake brings together the classic verses of nonsense greats such as Belloc, Carroll and Lear with those of an astonishing smorgasbord of other talents who include Spike Milligan and Roger McGough, Shel Silverstein, John Updike, Ogden Nash and Roald Dahl. The plethora of lunacy is ordered into fifteen enjoyable sections including Distracting Creatures, Portraits from Life, Chortling and Galumphing, An Area of Uncertainty and even A Gamut of Achievements. The thought-provoking cheeky fun is sheer entertainment for nonsense-lovers of all ages.

Booth, D. (Ed.) (1989). Till all the stars have fallen. London: Penguin.

Middle-graders will delight in this sparkling collection of Canadian poems by well-known poets such as Dennis Lee and Jean Little, as well as newcomers A. M. Klein and Lois Simmie. Their work is magnificently encased by the expressive

water-colour and collage illustrations of Kady Denton.

Cole, J. (Ed.) (1984). A new treasury of children's poetry: Old favourites and new discoveries. New York: Doubleday.

Joanna Cole has selected over two hundred poems which address traditional and modern verse, riddle rhymes, limericks and nonsense verse. This very fine and comprehensive selection ranges from the simpler poems to the more complex making this a treasure-chest for all the family. The subtitle "Old Favourites and New Discoveries" is particularly apt as the reader becomes acquainted with old favourites such as "Wynken, Blynken and Nod" and the humorous contemporary verse of Shel Silverstein and Ogden Nash. The illustrations by Judith Gwyn Brown are wonderfully created and will add to children's enjoyment of this very fine book.

De Paola. T. (Ed.) (1988). Tomie de Paola's book of poems. New York: Putman.

Tomie de Paola has successfully combined the classic works of Lewis Carroll, Robert Frost and Robert Louis Stevenson with selections from much acclaimed modern poets such as X. J. Kennedy, Jack Prelutsky and Eve Merriam. His trademark of large cheery paintings bring to life nonsense poems, humorous poems and poems about animals, parents, friends and night-time. Children and adults alike will delight in this wonderful collection and return to read over and over again.

De Regniers, BS et al., (Eds.).(1988). Sing a song of popcorn: Every child's book of poems. New York: Scholastic.

In this large yet elegant compilation of one hundred and thirty-eight read-aloud poems, there is a poem for everyone. Nine Caldecott medal-winning artists brilliantly illustrate the stunning collection selected by Beatrice Schenk de Regniers and others. Poems are classified under nine headings from "Fun with Rhymes" and "Spooky Poems" to "Story Poems" and "Mostly Nonsense". The classic works of Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost are successfully combined with selections from contemporary poets such as Ogden Nash and Eve Merriam. This sumptuous, inviting volume should adorn the bookshelf of every home either with or without children!

Dickinson, S. (Ed.). (1995).Poems to share. London: Penguin.

This richly varied anthology of poetry will appeal to elementary children. Children can share magical poems, nature poems, people poems, and nonsense poems, from poets as wide-ranging as Hilaire Belloc, Ted Hughes, Grace Nichols and Walter de la Mare.

Harrison, M.,& Clark, C. S. (1991). A year full of poems. New York: Oxford.

A fine collection of funny, fresh and famous poems arranged month by month for the whole year. Classic and modern poets from William Wordsworth to Ted Hughes grace the pages of this alluring book. Superb illustrations by various artists using medium including charcoal, tissue paper and water-colour make this a delightful anthology.

Harrison, M., & Clark, C. S. (Eds.).(1995). The new oxford treasury of children's poems. New York: Oxford.

This anthology is a perfect introduction to the magical world of poetry. Children will easily identify with the world of school, family, and make-believe. Familiar, well-loved poems, and many new surprises, are brought together in a beautifully illustrated collection. Colourful double-page spreads depict the movements, actions, feelings, and expressions of interesting, exciting characters. A superb book which offers poems to please everyone.

Hopkins, L. B. (Ed.). (1984). Surprises. New York: Harper and Row.

Young children will love this anthology of short, lively poems in "I can read" format. Hopkins has compiled poems celebrating the fun things which capture the hearts of children. Megan Lloyd charmingly illustrates poems about wasps and bees, trains and planes, weather and pets.

Hopkins, L. B. (Ed.). (1991). On the farm. Boston: Little, Brown.

Young readers will delight in this fine collection of poems about farms and farm animals. Full size soothing water-colours by Laurel Molk bring to life the cows, pigs, horses and hens. The collection includes all time favourites such as David McCord's "The Pickety Fence" and Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Cow". Illuminating poems by Valerie Worth and Aileen Fisher make this a book to savour.

Kennedy, X. J., & Kennedy, D. (Eds.). (1982). Knock at a star: A child's introduction to poetry. Boston: Little, Brown.

This anthology consists mostly of very short poems by traditional, contemporary and anonymous poets. The poems are divided under three section headings: What do poems do?; What's inside a poem?; and Special kinds of poems. The selection is intended to stimulate interest in reading as well as in writing poetry.

Koch, L. & Farrell, K. (Eds.). (1985). Talking to the sun: An illustrated anthology of poems for young people. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

This is a very different poetry collection. The poems, selected from various time periods and across many countries, are organized by theme and illustrated with reproduction of art works from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The anthology includes modern and traditional poems spanning Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky" to Carl Sandburg's "Fog". The different kinds and forms of poetry include lullabies, haiku, magic incantations and love songs which are found on pages filled with lavish prints, paintings, sculptures and other magnificent works of art from New York's famous museum.

Larrick, N. (Ed.). (1968). Piping down the valleys wild. New York: Dell.

This fine collection of favourite poems includes a selection written especially for adults. Larrick has successfully combined the works of older poets such as Robert Louis Stevenson and W. B. Yeats, with contemporary works by Carl Sandburg, David McCord and John Ciardi. This anthology will set children's

hearts dancing and is, as the cover suggests, "a merry mix of verse for all ages".

Larrick, N. (Ed.).(1988). Cats are cats. New York: Philomer.

The superb double-page spreads by Ed Young pulsate with each of the forty-two grand poems depicting sleeping, playing, growling, prowling alley-cats and their more fortunate siblings. The charcoal and pastel illustrations capture the confidence of the cat, the playfulness of the kitten and the purring characteristic of a cat nap. A truly wonderful book which holds special attraction to cat lovers of every age.

Livingston, M. C. (Ed.).(1989). Halloween poems. New York: Holiday House.

Images of Halloween abound as we go trick-or-treating at "The Magic House". The reader meets ghouls and ghosts, dines at "Wicked Witch's Kitchen" before joining an array of clinking-clanking skeletons at the "Halloween Concert". The intricate detail of Stephen Grammel's stunning black and white illustrations brings to life spooks, trolls and pumpkin people. Children will love being scared by this Halloween book.

Moore, L. (Ed.).(1979). Go with the poem; New York: McGraw-Hill.

More than fifty twentieth century poets present their rich introspective verse to comprise an unforgettable collection of mostly non-rhyming poems. Middle-graders will marvel at this wonderfully varied poetry collection which celebrates the joy of sport, the turning of the seasons, and the worlds of people and animals.

Prelutsky, J. (Ed.).(1983). The Random House book of poetry for children. New York: Random House.

This exuberant compilation of humorous verse interspersed with fine poems for children is divided into general sections such as nature, seasons, living things, children and cities. Arnold Lobel illustrates this treasury of five hundred and seventy-two poems. Journey to the "Land of Potpourris" through Lobel's full-colour paintings and meet "children, children everywhere" in his adorable pencil drawings. The world of poetry at its best is revealed in this splendid anthology.

Prelutsky, J, (Ed.).(1986).Read-aloud rhymes for the very young. New York: Random House.

Jack Prelutsky has gathered together more than two hundred short assorted poems for young children. The oversized formal and lively, cheery illustrations by Marc Brown will engage young imaginations and highlight the fun and nonsense of some of these poems. The familiarity of mealtimes, the wonder of insects, the magic of snow, and the fun of bath time are just some of the many themes explored throughout this wonderful anthology which children will return to time after time.

Richardson, P.(Ed.).(1992). Animal poems. New York: Barron.

A delightful kangaroo, agile squirrels, dozing rabbits, playful kittens and sleepy bears are just some of the animal characters which appear in the poems making this beautiful anthology well-suited to young children. The soft textures and soothing colours in Meg Rutherford's illustrations will reach straight to the heart of every child.

Rosen, M. (Ed.).(1998). Classic poetry: an illustrated collection. London: Walker.

This collection of poetry contains over eighty of the most memorable poems written by nearly forty classic poets from William Shakespeare to Carl Sandburg, Edward Lear to Emily Dickinson, W.B. Yeats to Hilaire Belloc. Each poet's contribution is accompanied by a brief biographical profile, outlining some of the main qualities of his or her writing. Useful information on the poems themselves and on some of the forms and styles of poetry is provided in a section at the back of the book. Portraits of the featured poets accompany their poems throughout allowing the reader to put a face to a name and a poem.

Whipple, L. (Ed.).(1989). Eric Carle's animals animals. New York: Philomel.

This anthology of well-selected poems ranges in subject from birds and fish, to animals and insects, and in form from haiku to lyrical verse. Children will recognize the magnificent coloured tissue paper illustrations by Eric Carle. In this, his first anthology of poetry, breathtaking double-page spreads of the peacock, pelican, rooster and giraffe complement the work of poets such as Edward Lear, Mary Ann Hoberman, Benjamin Franklin and X. J. Kennedy. A distinguished collection that exudes artistic excellence.

Whipple, L. (Ed.).(1991). Eric Carle's dragons, dragons and other creatures that never were. New York: Philomel.

In Eric Carle's second illustrated anthology of poetry, the colourful rainbow crow, playful centaurs, fiery Chinese dragon and the mystic manticore are among

the many creatures children will encounter. Laura Whipple includes a glossary which explains to children the origin of each cultural hero. Illustrations unique to Carle will make this anthology a favourite of both student and teacher.

Appendix D

Poetry Attitude Survey

Poetry Attitude Survey

Name: _____

What is poetry? _____

Who is your favourite poet? _____

Are the best poems funny or silly? What other kinds of poems can you think of?

What do you dislike most of all about poetry? _____

In what ways are poems similar to stories? _____

Can poems be about anything? List some things you might like to write poems about. _____

Should poetry always rhyme? _____

Appendix E

Poems used in Lesson Plans

Poem 1

First Day Back

It seems to me since time began,
It seems to be the rule,
That every teacher has to say,
First day back at school:

'What did you do in the holidays?
Write as much as you can,
Did you travel abroad this year
Or stay in a caravan?

Did you visit a stately home
Or walk in the countryside?
Remember to put in the details
So that I know you've tried.

Perhaps you went to the seaside,
Perhaps you stayed with Gran,
We'll call it "Holiday Memories" - now
Write as much as you can.'

Same old thing, year in year out,
And everybody knows
We'll have to write at least a page
Oh well, eyes down, here goes...

June Crebbin

Harrison, M., & Clark, C. S. (Eds.).(1995). The new oxford treasury of children's poems. New York: Oxford.

Poem 2

Quieter than Snow

I went to school a day too soon
And couldn't understand
Why silence hung in the yard like sheets
Nothing to flap or spin, no creaks
Or shocks of voices, only air.

And the car-park empty of teachers' cars
Only the first September leaves
Dropping like paper. No racks of bikes
No kicking legs, no fights,
No voices, laughter, anything.

Yet the door was open. My feet
Sucked down the corridor. My reflection
Walked with me past the hall.
My classroom smelt of nothing. And the silence
Rolled like thunder in ears.

At every desk a still child stared at me
Teachers walked through walls and back again
Cupboard doors swung open, and out crept
More silent children, and still more.

They tiptoed round me
Touched me with ice-cold hands
And opened up their mouths with laughter
That was

Quieter than snow.

Berlie Doherty

Harrison, M., & Clark, C. S. (Eds.).(1995). The new oxford treasury of children's poems. New York: Oxford.

Poem 3

Playgrounds

Playgrounds are such gobby places.
Know what I mean?
Everyone seems to have something to
Talk about, giggle, whisper, scream and shout about,
I mean, it's like being in a parrot cage.

And playgrounds are such pushy places.
Know what I mean?
Everyone seems to have to
Run about, jump, kick, do cartwheels, handstands, fly around,
I mean, it's like being inside a whirlwind.

And playgrounds are such patchy places.
Know what I mean?
Everyone seems to
Go around in circles, lines and triangles, coloured shapes,
I mean it's like being in a kaleidoscope.

And playgrounds are such pally places.
Know what I mean?
Everyone seems to
Have best friends, secrets, link arms, be in gangs.
Everyone, except me.

Know what I mean?

Berlie Doherty

Harrison, M., & Clark, C. S. (Eds.).(1995). The new oxford treasury of children's poems. New York: Oxford.

Poem 4

Homework

Homework sits on top of Sunday, squashing Sunday flat.
Homework has the smell of Monday, homework's very fat.
Heavy books and piles of paper, answers I don't know.
Sunday evening's almost finished, now I'm going to go
Do my homework in the kitchen. Maybe just a snack,
Then I'll sit right down and start as soon as I run back
For some chocolate sandwich cookies. Then I'll really do
All that homework in a minute. First I'll see what new
Show they've got on television in the living room.
Everybody's laughing there, but misery and gloom
And a full refrigerator are where I am at.
I'll just have another sandwich. Homework's very fat.

Russell Hoban

Prelutsky, J. (Ed.).(1983). The Random House book of poetry for children. New York: Random House.

Poem 5

Fog

The fog comes
on little cat feet.

It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.

Carl Sandburg

Sage, A. (Ed.).(1998). The Hutchinson treasury of children's poetry. Random House: London.

Poem 6

Winter

Winter crept
Through the whispering wood,
Hushing fir and oak;
Crushed each leaf and froze each web-
But never a word he spoke.

Winter prowled
By the shivering sea,
Lifting sand and stone;
Nipped each limpet silently-
And then moved on.

Winter raced
Down the frozen stream,
Catching at his breath;
On his lips were icicles,
At his back was death.

Judith Nicholls

Harrison, M., & Clark, C. S. (Eds.).(1991). A year full of poems. New York:
Oxford.

Poem 7

Tractor

Tractor
The tractor rests
In the shed
Dead or asleep,

But with high
Hind wheels
Held so still

We know
It is only waiting
Ready to leap-

Like a heavy
Brown
Grasshopper

Valerie Worth

Worth, V. (1972). Small Poems. London: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Poem 8

Sidewalk Measles

I saw the sidewalk catch the measles
When the rain came down today.
It started with a little blotching-
Quickly spread to heavy splotching,
Then as I continued watching
The rain-rash slowly dried away.

Barbara M. Hales

Hopkins. L.B. (Ed.). (1983). The sky is full of song. New York: Harper & Row.

Poem 9

On a Snowy Day

Fence posts wear marshmallow hats
On a winter's day,
Bushes in their nightgowns
Are kneeling down to pray,
And trees spread out their snowy skirts
Before they dance away.

Dorothy Aldis

Aldis D. (1952). All together. (2nd ed.). London: Putnam.

Poem 10

The Performing Bag

The plastic bag that once was full
Of coloured sweets was empty and lost
And lay against the playground wall,
Flat and still among the dust.

But a wind came up the road,
Brushing back the hair of the grass,
Trying to unbutton people's coats
And teasing the leaves as it passed.

It felt its way inside the bag
Like a hand inside a glove
And like a puppet waking up
The plastic bag began to move.

As the air inside it puffed it out,
The bag that was lying sad and flat
Began to waggle its corners about
And nodded its head this way and that.

It dodged its way between the children
Who watched it carried high in the sky
And disappear on the hand of the wind,
Waving them goodbye.

Stanley Cook

Harrison, M., & Clark, C. S. (Eds.).(1995). The new oxford treasury of children's poems. New York: Oxford.

Poem 11

Arithmetic

Arithmetic is where numbers fly
like pigeons and out of your head.

Arithmetic tells you how many you lose
or win if you know how many
you had before you lost or won.

Arithmetic is numbers seven eleven
all good children go to heaven -
or five six bundle of sticks.

Arithmetic is numbers you squeeze from
your head to your hand to your pencil
to your paper till you get the answer.

Arithmetic is where the answer is right
and everything is nice and you can look
out of the window and see the blue sky -
or the answer is wrong and
you have to start all over again and
see how it comes out this time.

If you take a number and double it and
double it again and then double it a few more
times, the number gets bigger and bigger and
goes higher and higher and only arithmetic
can tell you what the number is when you
decide to quit doubling.

Arithmetic is where you have to multiply -
and you carry the multiplication table
in your head and hope you won't lose it.

If you have two animal crackers, one god and one bad,
and you eat one and a striped zebra
with streaks all over him eats the other,

how many animal crackers will you have
if somebody offers you five six seven and
you say No no no and you say Nay nay nay and
you say Nix nix nix?

If you ask your mother for one fried egg for breakfast
and she gives you two fried eggs and
you eat both of them, who is better in arithmetic,
you or your mother?

Carl Sandburg

Rosen, M. (Ed.).(1998). Classic poetry: an illustrated collection. London: Walker.

Poem 12

If I were in Charge of the World

If I were in charge of the world
I'd cancel oatmeal,
Monday mornings,
Allergy shots, and also
Sara Steinberg.

If I were in charge of the world
There'd be brighter night lights,
Healthier hamsters, and
Basketball baskets forty-eight inches lower.

If I were in charge of the world
You wouldn't have lonely.
You wouldn't have clean.
You wouldn't have bedtimes.
Or "Don't punch your sister."
You wouldn't even have sisters.

If I were in charge of the world
A chocolate sundae with whipped cream and nuts
would be a vegetable.
All 007 movies would be G.
And a person who sometimes forgot to brush,
And sometimes forgot to flush,
Would still be allowed to be
In charge of the world.

Judith Viorst

Viorst, J. (1981). If I were in charge of the world and other worries. New York: MacMillan

Appendix F
Student Activity Sheets

Student Activity Sheet #1

Poetry Folder

You will be listening to, reading, writing, and sharing poems by various poets. Design and construct an interesting, colourful poetry folder to hold the materials you gather throughout the month.

Student Activity Sheet #2

Playgrounds

Using the list we have brainstormed together, write about your own thoughts and experiences on a playground. Remember this is just a model to help your thoughts begin to flow. You may change the model at any time and in any way you decide. You are the poet!

Playgrounds are such _____ places.

_____ (question?)

Everyone seems to have something to

_____, _____ and _____ about,

I mean, it's like being _____.

And playgrounds are such _____ places.

_____ (question?)

Everyone seems to have to

_____.

I mean, it's like being _____.

And playgrounds are such _____ places.

_____ (question?)

Everyone seems to

_____.

I mean it's like being _____.

And playgrounds are such _____ places.

_____ (question?)

Everyone seems to

_____.

Everyone, except me.

Know what I mean?

Name: _____

Student Activity Sheet #3

Personification

Personification is the assignment of human characteristics to things. Try to imagine an inanimate object, a colour, or a feeling suddenly coming to life. Write a poem which expresses your thoughts. Make your idea come to life!

Name an object, colour, idea, or emotion. _____

Use some of the ideas below to help you. Give your idea some of the following traits:

Human actions - cars *hiccup*
 hope *smiles*

Human descriptions - *lazy* brush
 friendly couch

Human body parts - tree's *arms*
 car's *eyes*

Human jobs, friends, foods, hobbies, feelings -
 Laughter works in a school.
 Her *friends* are *respect* and *curiosity*.
 Together they *eat* books and *swallow* knowledge.

Personal pronouns - use *she, he, his, her, they, or them* instead of *it*
 when referring to the object

Student Activity Sheet #4

Arithmetic

Select a school subject. Jot note ideas, phrases, thoughts, and descriptions about your chosen subject. Make your sentences longer by asking Who? What? Why? Where? When? and How? You may decide to use the following model to create your ideas and express your thoughts.

_____ is where _____

_____ tells you how _____

_____ is _____ and _____

Student Activity Sheet #5

My Feelings

Write a poem expressing the colour of your feelings. You may wish to use this model to help you to begin. Remember it is a model and you may change the words at any time.

_____ is _____ like _____
(feeling) (colour)

and also like _____

It _____ through my _____
(verb) into (room, mind)

It reminds me of the time _____

It makes me feel _____ like _____

It makes me want to _____

Student Activity Sheet #6

Similes

Think of any object. Use the Like What list below to describe your chosen object in a poem. You do not have to use all the suggestions on the list or keep to the order in which the suggestions appear.

Like What

colour like...

hot like...

cold like...

sounds like...

tastes like...

smells like...

looks like...(shape, size)

texture like...(rough, slimy)

moves like...

Student Activity Sheet #7

Choose a part of your body. Write as many similes as you can to describe this body part. Put your favourite similes together to make a poem. Think of an original, unexpected ending to your poem. The following model may be helpful.

Self-portrait

My _____ is like _____

My _____ are like _____

My _____ are _____

My _____ is _____

My heart holds _____

that is _____ as _____

I live in _____

and eat _____

Appendix G

Bibliography of Selected
Poetry Resources for Teachers

Bibliography of Selected Poetry Resources for Teachers

This selected bibliography is included for further ideas on the teaching of poetry to children in the elementary grades. The authors are recognized as experts in their field.

Beech, L. (Ed.). (1997). Instant activities for poetry. New York: Scholastic.

Fisk, S. (1996). Poetry plus. Michigan: Instructional Fair.

Frank, M. (1979). If you're trying to teach kids how to write, you've gotta have this book. Tennessee: Incentive.

Huck, C., Hepler, S., Hickman, J., & Kiefer, B. (1997). Children's literature in the elementary school. (7th ed.). Chicago: Brown & Benchmark.

Koch, K. (1990). Rose, where did you get that red? Vintage Books.

Sweeney, J. (1993). Teaching poetry. New York: Scholastic.

Sweeney, J. (1994). Quick poetry activities. New York: Scholastic.

Tucker, S. (1995). Painting the sky. Illinois: Good Year Books.



