

Simply Charlotte Mason presents

Enjoy the Poems

Robert Louis Stevenson



Robert Louis Stevenson

Compiled by Ruth Smith

With additional material by Sonya Shafer

A couplet such as this, though it appear to carry no moral weight, instructs our conscience more effectually than many wise saws. As we inwardly digest, reverence comes to us, and a wistful tenderness towards the past, a sense of continuance, and of a part to play in the world.

Make poetry study simple and enjoyable!

- Get to know a poet and his style through 26 complete poems and a living biography.
- Encourage imagination with helpful tips for Setting the Imaginary Stage.
- Nourish a love for poetic expression by allowing the poems to speak for themselves.
- Enjoy powerful use of language with occasional definitions.
- Gain confidence with practical and inspiring Poetry Notes from Charlotte Mason and others.
- Cultivate good character through beautiful words well put.

Spenser, Wordsworth, Browning, for example; but, whether it be for a year or a life, let us mark as we read, let us learn and inwardly digest.

"The line that strikes us as we read, that recurs, that we murmur over at odd moments—this is the line that influences our living."

—Charlotte Mason

Note how good this last word is. What we digest we assimilate, take into ourselves, so that it is part and parcel of us, and no longer separable for ourselves.

Give your children the gift of poetry with the
Many have a favourite poet for a year or two, to be discarded for another and another.
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Enjoy the Poems series!

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Suggested Schedule

To linger with this poet for a year, you might follow a schedule something like this. Also try to memorize and recite one poem each 12-week term.

- Week 1: Read a new poem.
- Week 2: Read a new poem.
- Week 3: Read the poet's biography and narrate it.
- Week 4: Read a new poem.
- Week 5: Read a new poem.
- Week 6: Enter the poet in your Book of Centuries.
- Week 7: Read a new poem.
- Week 8: Read a new poem.
- Week 9: Choose one of the previous poems and illustrate it.
- Week 10: Read a new poem.
- Week 11: Read a new poem.
- Week 12: Tell what you know about this poet.

- Week 13: Read a new poem.
- Week 14: Read a new poem.
- Week 15: Read a new poem.
- Week 16: Read a new poem.
- Week 17: Children read aloud favorite poems so far.
- Week 18: Read a new poem.
- Week 19: Read a new poem.
- Week 20: Read a new poem.
- Week 21: Choose one of the previous poems and illustrate it.
- Week 22: Read a new poem.
- Week 23: Read a new poem.
- Week 24: Revisit favorite poems.

- Week 25: Read a new poem.
- Week 26: Read a new poem.
- Week 27: Read a new poem.
- Week 28: Read a new poem.
- Week 29: Children read aloud favorite poems so far.
- Week 30: Read a new poem.
- Week 31: Read a new poem.
- Week 32: Read a new poem.
- Week 33: Choose one of the previous poems and illustrate it.
- Week 34: Read a new poem.
- Week 35: Read a new poem.
- Week 36: Revisit favorite poems.

How to Enjoy the Poems

1. Gather the children and read a poem aloud at least once a week. Focus on one poet's work for many months. Linger and get to know his or her ideas.
“ ‘Collections’ of poems are to be eschewed; but some one poet should have at least a year to himself, that he may have time to do what is in him towards cultivating the seeing eye, the hearing ear, the generous heart” (Vol. 5, p. 224).
2. Read complete poems, not just portions or snippets. We have included only complete poems in this book.
“Selections should be avoided; children should read the whole book or the whole poem to which they are introduced” (Vol. 6, p. 340).
3. Share poems that are suitable for your children during each season of life.
“What can we do to ensure that the poetry our children learn shall open their eyes to beauty, shall increase their joy? In all humility I would offer one suggestion on this point to-day, this: The poetry must be such as to delight them, (1) by being in itself delightful; and (2) by being suitable to their years” (“An Address on the Teaching of Poetry” by Rev. H. C. Beeching, *The Parents’ Review*, Vol. 3 (1892–93), edited by Charlotte Mason, pp. 893–898).
4. Understand that the purpose of poetry is to cultivate the imagination, right emotions, and the power of vivid expression.
“The purpose of poetry is to communicate or extend the joy of life by quickening our emotions. . . . It teaches us how to feel, by expressing for us, in the most perfect way, right human emotions, which we recognise as right, and come ourselves to share. It is good for all of us to be taught how to feel; to be taught how to feel in the presence of Nature; how to feel to one’s country, to one’s lover, or wife, or child; to be taught to feel the mystery of life, the glory of it, the pathos of it; good for us to be shaken out of our lethargic absorption in ourselves, and to have our eyes anointed with salve, that we may look round us and rejoice, and lift up our hearts. . . .
“It will be readily seen that if the poems become real and vivid to them, the children gain, besides the immediate joy in the life represented, and the right training of the emotions by their right exercise thus administered (which I maintain is the true function of poetry), they gain, I say, besides this, exercise to their own powers of imagination; the wings of their own fancy become fledged, and they can fly at will. And, secondly, they gain skill in the use of language” (“An Address on the Teaching of Poetry” by Rev. H. C. Beeching, *The Parents’ Review*, Vol. 3 (1892–93), edited by Charlotte Mason, pp. 893–898).
5. Don’t turn the poetry readings into lessons. Give only enough explanation necessary to help your children realize the situation of the poem. We have included occasional notes to help you do this.
“Poetry must not on any pretence be made into a poetry lesson; all that is at enmity with joy must be banished from this ideal province. What one wants, of course, is that the poem shall become to the reader what it was to the writer; a few words may need explaining, but the ex-

planation must not be elaborate . . . ; the chief thing will be to make sure that the child realises the facts, the situation” (“An Address on the Teaching of Poetry” by Rev. H. C. Beeching, *The Parents’ Review*, Vol. 3 (1892–93), edited by Charlotte Mason, pp. 893–898).

6. Allow your children time and space to feel the force and beauty of words.

“The thing is, to keep your eye upon words and wait to feel their force and beauty; and, when words are so fit that no other words can be put in their places, so few that none can be left out without spoiling the sense, and so fresh and musical that they delight you, then you may be sure that you are reading Literature, whether in prose or poetry” (Vol. 4, Book 1, p. 41).

7. Encourage your children to make the poetry their own.

Let them

- Read it aloud, being careful to say beautiful words in a beautiful way.
- Act it, presenting the dramatic poems in their own style.
- Draw it, portraying a favorite scene in art.
- Copy it, transcribing a favorite stanza in their best handwriting.
- Memorize and recite it, conveying their own interpretation of the ideas.
- Treasure it, entering favorite passages or phrases in a personal journal for years to come.

Getting to Know Robert Louis Stevenson

As a child Louis was very delicate and often ill. For years hardly a winter passed that he did not spend many days in bed. Edinburgh, Scotland, is extremely damp in winter and he tells us: “Many winters I never crossed the threshold, but used to lie on my face on the nursery floor, chalking or painting in water-colors the pictures in the illustrated newspapers; or sit up in bed with a little shawl pinned about my shoulders, to play with bricks or what not.”

Those who have read the *Child's Garden of Verses* already know the doings of his childish days; for although those rhymes were not written until he was a grown man, he was “one of the few who do not forget their own lives” and “through the windows of this book” gives us a vivid and living picture of the boy who dwelt so much in a world of his own with his quaint thoughts.

If his body was frail, his spirit was strong and his power of imagination so great that he cheered himself through many a weary day by playing he was “captain of a tidy little ship,” a soldier, a fierce pirate, an Indian chief, or an explorer in foreign lands. Miles he travelled in his little bed.

(Complete biography is included with the full book.)

SUMMER SUN

Great is the sun, and wide he goes
Through empty heaven without repose;
And in the blue and glowing days
More thick than rain he showers his rays.

Though closer still the blinds we pull
To keep the shady parlour cool,
Yet he will find a chink or two
To slip his golden fingers through.

The dusty attic spider-clad
He, through the keyhole, maketh glad;
And through the broken edge of tiles
Into the laddered hay-loft smiles.

Meantime his golden face around
He bares to all the garden ground,
And sheds a warm and glittering look
Among the ivy's inmost nook.

Above the hills, along the blue,
Round the bright air with footing true,
To please the child, to paint the rose,
The gardener of the World, he goes.

*Setting the
Imaginary Stage: It's
a good idea to read
the title of the poem
and prepare a mental
canvas for the picture
the poet is going to
describe.*

Pages for Poem Illustrations

An Illustration of _____