

# Poetry Prompts

**Grades 1-3**

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## What is Poetry ?

Poetry is a form of literature in which the sound and meaning of language are combined to create ideas and feelings. In today's society poetry is everywhere. It is found in the lyrics of songs, heard in television commercials, radio jingles, written in greeting cards, and said in jump rope chants.

**See the cat  
On the mat.  
It is fat  
Said the rat.**

People are attracted by the sound and rhythm of a poem's words. Poetry comes in all shapes and sizes. Poems are filled with feelings, ideas, moods, topics and stories. Children enjoy the pleasing rhythms found in nursery rhymes. They will clap their hands and move their bodies to the rhythm of the language.

Poetry began in prehistoric times. Poetic language was used by early people in songs, prayers and magic spells. The pattern of rhyme and rhythm helped people to remember and preserve oral poetry from generation to generation.

## Listening to Poetry

In order for children to develop a "poetic ear", they should hear poetry often. Poetry can be integrated throughout many subject areas in your school's curriculum. Poems should be visible. They should be printed on chart paper and posted on the chalkboard, bulletin boards, walls and doors. The poems should be read by the teacher and the topic discussed with the students. Clap its rhythm, look for interesting words and rhyming words. Please do not overdo the discussion. Listening to and reading poetry should be pleasurable.

## How to Read a Poem

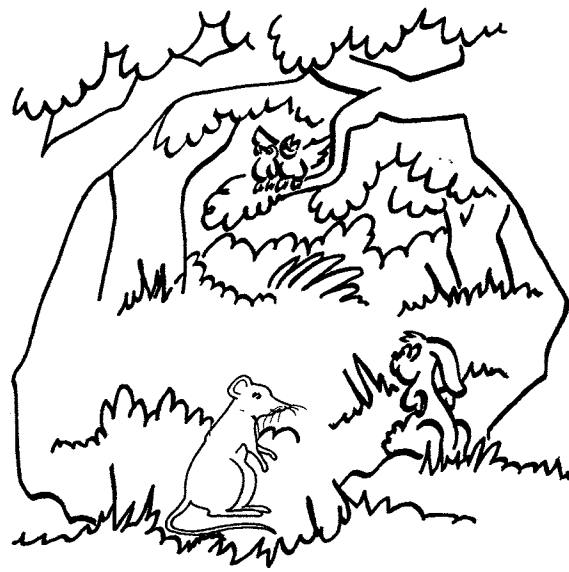
When students first read a poem it should be read carefully all the way through silently. Then it should be read aloud by the class. Draw the students attention to the punctuation mark at the end of each line or the absence of one. If there is punctuation there should be a slight pause. When there is no punctuation at the end of the line, instruct your students to continue on to the next line. Practice reading poems with your students to improve and strengthen reading skills, oral expression and to further their appreciation for this literary art form.



Write the following poem on a chart.

## A Tale About A Cottontail.....

A pink-eared bunny  
 With a white, white tail,  
 Was hopping along  
 On a woodland trail,  
 When a wee little mouse  
 With bright, bright eyes,  
 Called out to him, "Bunny,  
 Take care! Be wise!  
 Look out for the fox  
 By the still, still brook!"  
 But the foolish young bunny  
 Didn't listen or look;  
 He just wrinkled up  
 His pink, pink nose,  
 The way bunnies do,  
 As everyone knows,  
 And said as he waved  
 His long, long ears,  
 "Run away, little man,  
 With your mousey fears."  
 And he hopped right along  
 To his sad, sad end.  
 Don't you wish he had listened  
 To his wise little friend?



## Choral Reading

Choral reading is as old as poetry itself. It was one of the earliest forms of artistic expression used during festivals and religious rites of primitive people before it was used in the presentation of dramatic ideas in the theater. It is still used today for ritualistic purposes in congregational reading of psalms and other liturgical literature in church worship.

Choral reading is a delightful way for children to read aloud poetry in school. At the same time it will develop an appreciation of different forms of poetry as well as promote and strengthen reading with expression. This type of group reading provides a unique social experience shared by all students.



## Classroom Choral Reading

1. Select a poem that your students will be able to read and memorize easily. For the early grades I suggest you begin with a nursery rhyme or an easy four line poem.
2. Record the poem on a chart. Mark the lines to be spoken by one person or a group with a different color.
3. Read the poem aloud to the students with good expression and clear enunciation. Use your pointer or hand to demonstrate the flow and rhythm as you read.
4. Discuss the topic, mood, descriptive vocabulary and the rhyming words in the poem.
5. Underline the rhyming words. Brainstorm for other words that rhyme with the ones in the poem.
6. Read the poem again and have the children hand clap, tap one foot, and move their bodies to the rhythm of the piece.
7. Over a period of time have the students practice saying the poem. Cover up one line of the poem at a time until everyone is able to recite it from memory.
8. Actions could be added to facilitate memorization. They could be dropped later.
9. Once the students have mastered one poem, lead them on to the next one. Try to implement one or two poems per month into your program. Always review the ones previously learned.
10. Memorization is a lost art but is a very necessary skill for students to have in order to recall addition, subtraction and multiplication facts; historical and scientific facts; spelling words. It is a sense of great satisfaction in one's later years to recite poetry and tell stories that one has learned as a child.

## Choral Reading

Choral reading is a great art form that can be used for class presentations at school concerts and for special events. It promotes team work in a performance atmosphere.

## Special Devices

In a piece chosen for choral speaking, students may be chosen to perform solos, duets, trios, quartets, quintets, by rows and alternate reading by boys and girls.