



For schools and groups celebrating National Poetry Day

National Poetry Day is an annual celebration of poetry and all things poetical. It's about everybody sharing poetry, reading poetry, writing poetry and enjoying poetry.

National Poetry Day is on 3rd October and the theme is Truth.

2019 is the 25th anniversary of **National Poetry Day** - you can expect the celebrations to be bigger than ever. National Poetry Day can be a day for celebrating poetry already enjoyed and experienced, or a launch pad for that experience and enjoyment.

"Children don't have many chances to talk about what matters to them, how they feel about things, or what they feel is true. Poetry gives them an opportunity to do these things."

Michael Rosen, National Poetry Day Ambassador

By joining in this celebration you can give children opportunities to find their own connections with poetry, and inspiration for their imaginations and creativity.

On National Poetry Day - and every day - make sure that poems are everywhere for everyone. Read them, read them aloud, illustrate them, perform them, write them, sing them!



Find even more information and inspiration
www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk



1. How to plan your celebration

Plan your National Poetry Day celebration all together.

If poetry is already a regular part of school life, National Poetry Day is a chance to celebrate it, and share it more widely.

You may want to use National Poetry Day to inspire and set activities in place for poetry to play a key part in children and young people's learning and reading pleasure.

Get every class talking about poetry - What do they know about poetry? How do they feel about poetry?

Decide together what you want the day to achieve - e.g:

- More people knowing about poetry
- More people enjoying poetry
- Knowing about more kinds of poetry
- Feeling that you could be poets
- Having fun!



What activities would you like to do to achieve this?

- Poetry displays around the school
- Have a poetry slam
- Have a whole school poetry party - or a poetry party with parents
- Meet a poet!

In the next sections you'll find more ideas for activities, and poetry to read.

How will you know what the day has achieved - and how will you tell people about it?

- Record it, write about it - photos, videos, podcasts; blogs and newsletters (share them using [#nationalpoetryday](https://twitter.com/nationalpoetryday))
- Make displays about activities and work from the day
- Ask everyone what they liked best, and what they got from the day
- Are students talking about poetry more? Reading it more? Writing it more? Enjoying it more?
- How will you keep the momentum going?
See **section 6** for ideas.





2. Things you can do – simple and fun

Here are ideas to choose from and enjoy on National Poetry Day, and every day! Don't forget, make sure you have lots of poetry books everywhere.

Things to talk about

What is poetry? What does it mean to you?

Ask people what they think poetry is – how would they describe it? What does poetry mean to them? Is it something that rhymes; or that doesn't have to rhyme? Is it funny, beautiful, boring? Does it help you feel or understand things?

Make a list and see how many different things poetry can be to different people.

You could have this discussion to start off your planning for National Poetry Day.

What kinds of poetry do you know?

Make a list of all the different kinds of poetry people know of – e.g. funny verse, limericks, rap, haikus, nursery rhymes, free verse, story poems. Put the list up on the wall for people to see, and add to it as they meet new kinds of poetry.

Talking about a poem

When you share a poem together read it through more than once, maybe a few times. Have copies of it for people to read; ask people if they would like to read it aloud to the class.

Then talk about it – start by asking people 'Why do you like – or not like – this poem?' Make it clear that everyone is right – there is no right or wrong answer. Everyone will find their own meanings, likes and dislikes, and that makes for great arguments and discussion! Here are some more questions you could ask:

- What do you think is the main thing being said in this poem?
- How does the poem make you feel? Why?
- Are there any lines or words which you specially like?

Things to do

Some thoughts about writing a poem...

The word 'poet' comes from the Greek word 'poietes', which means 'someone who makes or creates things.

In creating a poem think about:

- Crafting your poem – looking for the right words, and the best place for them
- Shaping your poem – will it rhyme or be in free verse? Will you use a particular form or device? – e.g. couplets, haiku, limerick, repetition
- Your poem's sound and rhythm

Create a poem from words in a newspaper

Cut out words and phrases that you like from newspapers and magazines. Spread them out to see what you've got, move them around and group them. What might you write a poem about? Arrange the cuttings to make a poem.

Reading aloud

Enjoy reading aloud your favourite poems, and listening to each other reading theirs. Look for story poems like 'The Highwayman' (Alfred Noyes), 'The Owl and the Pussycat' (Edward Lear) or 'The Lady of Shalott' (Alfred Lord Tennyson) – and how about picture books in rhyme, like **The Gruffalo** (Julia Donaldson) and **The Cat in the Hat** (Dr Seuss)?

Learning poetry off by heart

Learning to say or perform a poem aloud, on your own or as a group, can be a great confidence builder – and great fun. And it can indeed be 'by heart' – getting pleasure from the poetry, and a deeper understanding of the words – and being able to share that pleasure with others. Check out the CLiPPA Shadowing Scheme run by our partners at **CLPE** for inspiration www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/clippa

Watch poets 'live'

Watch poets reading and talking about their work on CD, video and the internet. Find and listen to your favourites, and get to know new ones, like the [National Poetry Day Ambassadors](http://www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk). Watch Michael Rosen, Karl Nova, Rachel Rooney, Joseph Coelho and Victoria Adukwei Bulley performing Truth poems on the National Poetry Day website

Fun with words – Alliteration!

Choosing words starting with the same letter gives wonderful sounds to poems.

Look at this description of a fox ...His fur was freaked. His foxy face was frantic as he flew. A few feathers fluttered out of his mouth... ('F for Fox'/Carol Ann Duffy) Have a go – you could make up your own sentences and phrases, describing different animals –e.g. 'the darting dog dived into the ditch'

Fun with words – Onomatopoeia!

Balloons pop. Water drips. Fierce dogs growl. Thunder roars. Think of some more phrases like this where the verb sounds like the thing it is describing – just as the word 'pop' sounds like the sound of a balloon bursting!

'List' poems

Making a list of things can turn into a poem. e.g. In Michael Rosen's poem 'The Greatest' each verse is a list of people and the things they are greatest at: *I'm the world's greatest at sport.... ...I'm the world's greatest inventor* Rupert Brooke, in his poem 'The Great Lover', lists the things he loves in life: *'White plates and cups, clean-gleaming...Wet roofs, beneath the lamplight; the strong crust Of friendly bread... Rainbows; and the blue bitter smoke of wood...'* Make a list of all your favourite things and shape it into a poem. You could start it with Brooke's phrase: *'These have I loved:...'*

Inspiration with a well-known poem

Here is a way of further enjoying a favourite poem or getting to know a new one – and then being inspired to write your own.

Choose a poem, and spend time reading it together and talking about it, including the context in which it was written. Hide the title – and ask people what title they would give it. When you feel you're getting to know the poem, have a go at giving it a new first or last line. Or take the first line and then follow on by writing your own poem. This can be a powerful way of being inspired by the feelings of the original to write about your own feelings.



3. Truth and Poetry

'The truth in most poetry lies in the language of trying to say something that matters in a way that feels true to you.'

Michael Rosen, National Poetry Day Ambassador

This year's National Poetry Day theme is **Truth** and it's celebrated in the new anthology **Tell Me the Truth About Life**, edited by Cerys Matthews. Here are some ideas based on the theme and inspired by the book to prompt some poetry activities.

Wild Things

Listening and looking to the natural world can help us tune into truth and sometime a new kind of language too. What poems could a walk round a park or the playground inspire?

'Poetry' by Eleanor Farjeon

What is Poetry? Who knows?
Not a rose, but the scent of a rose;
Not the sky, but the light of the sky;
Not the fly, but the gleam of the fly;
Not the sea, but the sound of the sea;
Not myself, but what makes me
See, hear, and feel something that prose
Cannot: and what it is, who knows?
And what it is, who knows?

From **Sing for Your Supper**, 1938

Tell All the Truth but Tell it Slant

'THE TRUTH is a great topic for poetry as poets often tells fibs, in the form of metaphors. Poets use metaphors to help us understand and explain and explore the world around us. Indeed, poetry tells lies to get to the truth of things.' **James Carter, National Poetry Day Ambassador.**



The Art of Deception by Rachel Rooney

Deception is an art I've come to learn.
Like webs that garden spiders carefully weave
it takes a little effort, and in turn
an unsuspecting fly that might believe.

The yarn you spin must always be secure.
The words rehearsed. If using alibis
it helps to fix them first. And do ensure
misleading truths are knotted with the lies.
The body language needs to be relaxed.

Uncross the legs, reveal an open palm.
Maintain unblinking eye-to-eye contact.
A reassuring hand upon an arm.

I know all this. Yet I identify
not with the artful spider, but the fly.

Poet as Witness

Poems can be active acts of witness, and quite often that comes with a sense of anger. Take this poem to a butterfly by Carrie Etter. What truths are children burning to make known?

'Karner Blue' by Carrie Etter

*"...a place called Karner, where in some pine barrens, on lupines,
a little blue butterfly I have described and named ought to be out."*
-Vladimir Nabokov

Because it used to be more populous in Illinois.
Because its wingspan is an inch.
Because it requires blue lupine.
Because to become blue, it has to ingest the leaves of a blue plant.
Because its scientific name, *Lycaeides melissa samuelis*, is mellifluous.
Because the female is not only blue but blue and orange and silver and black.
Because its beauty galvanizes collectors.
Because Nabokov named it.
Because its collection is criminal.
Because it lives in black oak savannahs and pine barrens.

Because it once produced landlocked seas.
Because it has declined ninety per cent in fifteen years.
Because it is.

From **The Weather in Normal** (Seren 2019)

Speakers of truth

Liz Brownlee has written this special Truth poem about climate activist, Greta Thunberg. Who else deserves to be honoured with a poem?

'Greta Thunberg' by Liz Brownlee

When the whole world is deaf
by greed and by choice,
how do you change things
with only your voice?
It's hard to be noticed,
harder to be heard
but she stood up and spoke,
could not be deterred.

What made them listen?
What cut through their lies?
Not the pollution
or the fast melting ice,
not the experts or science,
not hunger or flood,
not the extinctions
our hands red with blood,
it was her steady gaze,
on our planet, alight,
her desperate calm,
her demand, make it right,
it's what we'll recall
of her fight for our youth,
her luminous words
her courage, her truth.

Find lots more poems and resources on the theme of truth at www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk



Find even more information and inspiration
www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk



4. More things you can do

Here are some more ideas for poetry activities, including several involving the whole school and families. You'll also find some great ideas in the National Poetry Day special Education Resources www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk/education

Poetry aloud: Poetry slam

A poetry slam is a poetry competition where poems are judged by the audience who give each poem a mark.

- People read their favourite poems – or poems which they have written
- Take turns in reading out the poems
- After each poem the audience holds up score cards (1-5) – or gives a show of hands at the end of each round

Hold rounds, with one person going out in each round until you have a winner.

Poetry aloud: Choral poetry

With choral poetry everyone learns and recites a poem together in a group. It's an enjoyable way of experiencing poetry with everyone joining in together.

- Short, humorous narrative poems are good for this
- As well as unison, include solo voices, or children reciting in pairs or threes
- Think about variations in pace and volume – you can have good fun with this!
- And actions, gestures, body movements and finger plays

Poetry 'X Factor'!

You might want to do this individually, in pairs, or in small groups. It will work well in schools, or in libraries with reading groups.

Choose a poem and decide how you are going to 'perform' it – e.g. learn and recite it, read it aloud together, take turns in reading different parts, add noises and actions, beat out a rhythm. Then have a special poetry show – read and recite your chosen poems to your group/class/the school. You could have a 'judging panel' – e.g. teacher/some pupils – to give feedback. Make the feedback positive and helpful, with tips and ideas for how else you could present the poem.

Vote for the poem you think has the biggest X Factor!

Acting out poems

Many poems work well in performance. For some ideas have a look at Julia Donaldson's **Perform a Poem** – and choose a poem which everyone is keen to have a go with.

Read and talk about the poem together, and then divide it up so that children in twos or threes can work together on actions for their part of the poem. The groups then come together and each group acts out their part. Give feedback to each other – say which parts worked well and suggest ideas for how it might be better, so that together you can shape up the whole performance.

Poetry party

This would be a lovely event for National Poetry Day, especially with schools and reading groups!

Invite parents and friends to a special poetry party with poetry performances, music, slide shows of pupils' poetry. It could include any of the activities above – e.g. a poetry slam, 'X factor', or choral poetry.

Depending on the space and audience size, people could sit at tables with refreshments – even dance to the poetry!

This would also make a great **intergenerational activity** – older and younger people enjoying poetry together.

Tell us about your events

Anyone can hold an event for National Poetry Day. We invite everyone to list any public event on the events map on website. You are welcome to charge for your event. If you used our logos or posters, take pictures and put them on social media with the hashtag [#nationalpoetryday](https://twitter.com/nationalpoetryday).



Find even more information and inspiration www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk



5. Meeting a poet

Actually meeting a poet and hearing them read and talk about their work, can be a special experience, triggering fresh enthusiasm for poetry, or encouraging pupils to realise that they can be poets too. Here are practical tips for arranging a visit:

Where to book

- Direct with poets via their websites
- Through your school library service, or public library service
- Through your local bookshop
- The Poetry Society www.poetrysociety.org.uk
- Authors Aloud www.authorsaloud.co.uk
- Contact an Author www.contactanauthor.co.uk
- Speaking of Books www.speakingofbooks.studysupport.info

Schools

If funding is tight, consider joining up with other schools. Your poet could maybe visit two schools in the same day – or schools could come together, especially where a poet likes to do sessions with larger audiences.

It's great to get involved with local poets – and they might also then like to become a Patron of Reading at your school. www.patronofreading.co.uk
See **section 6**

Libraries and bookshops

A number of libraries and bookshops will be offering National Poetry Day events, including opportunities to meet with poets and listen to their poetry.

Planning

Book your poet well in advance!

Writers' diaries usually get well-booked up, often a whole year ahead for events like World Book Day – and National Poetry Day. An early booking will also give you plenty of time to make arrangements with them, and for your class to start to get to know their poetry. Sort out practical arrangements together about fee, invoicing etc.

Look after your poet

Make sure your poet knows how to find your school. Plan the day together, and any equipment needed. Make them welcome, have someone to take them round, and offer tea/coffee/lunch.

Think about what you hope will come out of the visit...

...and talk about this when you're arranging the day together – e.g.

- Children's increased enthusiasm for poetry
- Children more confident about reciting poetry
- Children more confident about writing poetry
- A special book or slide show of children's poetry written following the visit
- A really enjoyable day – with pictures and maybe a film of the day!

Link up with your school library and local library

They can suggest poets you might like to invite and they may be able to help in booking them. In addition they can lend copies of the poet's books, and, if needed, a venue for sessions.

Enjoy!

Other things you might think about:

Book sales: This depends on a school's policy. If you do offer books for sale you can arrange this via your poet or their publisher (usually as sale-or-return), or with your local bookshop.

Skype/live web-chat: If you can't afford or arrange a real-life visit, maybe a virtual one is possible! See www.virtualauthors.co.uk This could be especially exciting for making contact with a poet in another country.

Booktrust offers a useful checklist for planning an author visit: www.booktrust.org.uk/programmes/arranging-an-author-visit

It also has a funny but sometimes-true poem by children's author Philip Ardagh.





6. Keeping poetry on the programme

After all the excitement of the day, make sure that you keep up the momentum so that poetry is alive and well and enjoyed throughout your school. Build some of these poetry ideas into school life; enjoy them in library activities and reading groups.

Tell everyone about National Poetry Day

Make a display around the school's celebration of National Poetry Day, with photographs, quotes about the day, and poetry inspired by the day.

Write about the day for the school newsletter and website.

Poetry display boards

If you haven't already set these up for National Poetry Day, put them up now so that they are all around the school. Encourage classes and individual pupils to put up their own poems, and their favourite poems. Have fun too in illustrating the poems and decorating the boards.

Poem of the week

On your display boards have a special space for 'Poem of the week'. Teachers could take it in turn to choose this -

have lots of sticky notes available so that pupils can put up around the poem their thoughts and responses about it.

Make individual or class poetry anthologies

These could be anthologies of favourite poems or parts of poems, as well as pupils' own poems. Think of a title for the anthology and design and create a title page. Use a ring-binder to collect all the poems together - you could make several copies, and make them available in classrooms and in the school library.

Set up a blog about poetry

Another way for pupils to write and talk (podcasts) about their favourite - and not so favourite - poems, and share their own writing.

Invite a poet to be a Patron of Reading for your school

A Patron of Reading is a school's special children's author, poet, storyteller or illustrator. The school and their patron develop a relationship over a period of time, with the patron helping to encourage and develop a reading for pleasure culture in the school.

www.patronofreading.co.uk



Find even more information and inspiration
www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk





7. More reading ideas

Here are some suggestions for classroom and library poetry bookshelves! It includes books by National Poetry Day Ambassadors, plus suggestions from the many inspiring, and enjoyable poetry collections for children and young people.

National Poetry Day and Cerys Matthews, **Tell Me the Truth about Life**, Michael O'Mara Books, 978-1789290998

National Poetry Day, **Poetry For a Change** Otter-Barry Books, 978-1910959503

National Trust, **I Am the Seed that Grew the Tree** Nosy Crow, 978-0857637703

John Agard & Satoshi Kitamura, **The Rainmaker Danced**, Hodder, 978-1444932607

Valerie Bloom, **Hot Like Fire**, Bloomsbury, 978-0747599739

Liz Brownlee, Roger Stevens & Matt Goodfellow, **The Same Inside: Poems about Empathy & Friendship**, Macmillan, 978-1509854509

Joseph Coelho and Kelly Louise Judd **A Year of Nature Poems**, Wide Eyed Editions, 978-1786035820

Brian Moses and James Carter, **Spaced Out: Space Poems**, Bloomsbury, 978-1472961150

Paul Cookson, **The Works: Every poem you will ever need at school** (Anthology), Macmillan, 978-1447273493

Philip Gross, **Dark Sky Park**, Otter-Barry Books, 978-1910959886

Sarah Crossan, **Toffee** (a YA novel written in free verse), Bloomsbury, 978-1408868126

Kate Wakeling, **Moon Juice**, The Emma Press, 978-1910139493

Nicola Davies & Mark Hearld, **A First Book of Nature**, Walker Books, 978-1406349160

Jean Dean & Roger Stevens, **The Penguin in Lost Property**, Macmillan, 978-1447248583

Julia Donaldson & Clare Melinsky, **Poems to Perform**, Macmillan, 978-1447243397

Carol Ann Duffy (ed), **101 Poems for Children: A Laureate's Choice**, Macmillan, 978-1447220268

Chrissie Gittins, Adder, **Bluebell, Lobster**, Otter-Barry Books, 978-1910959558

Matt Goodfellow & Hannah Asen, **Chicken on the Roof**, Otter-Barry Books, 978-1910959909

Zaro Weil, **Cherry Moon**, Troika, 978-1909991941

A F Harrold illus by Chris Riddell, **Things You Find in a Poet's Beard**, Burning Eye Books, 978-1909136618

Ted Hughes, **Collected poems for children**, Faber, 978-0571215027

Roger McGough, M Rosen, K Paul, **You Tell Me!**, Frances Lincoln, 978-1847804440

Allie Esiri (ed.), **A Poem for Every Day of the Year**, Macmillan, 978-1509860548

Michaela Morgan, **Wonderland: Alice in Poetry**, Macmillan, 978-1509818846

Brian Moses, **Lost Magic: the very best of Brian Moses**, Macmillan, 978-1509838769

Karl Nova, **Rhythm and Poetry**, Caboodle Books, 978-0995488540

Rachel Rooney & Chris Riddell, **A Kid in My Class**, Otter-Barry Books, 978-1910959879

Joshua Seigal, **Little Lemur Laughing**, Bloomsbury, 978-1472930040

Roger Stevens, **Off By Heart**, A & C Black, 978-1408192948

Roger Stevens, Liz Brownlee & Matt Goodfellow, **Be the Change**, Macmillan, 978-1529018943

See also

Joseph Coelho, **How to Write Poems**, Bloomsbury, 978-1408889497

Michael Rosen & Jill Calder, **What is Poetry? The Essential Guide to Reading and Writing Poems**, Walker Books, 978-1844287



Find even more information and inspiration www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk

