



# NATIONAL POETRY DAY

25th  
anniversary

3RD OCTOBER 2019

## The Owl

A National Poetry Day  
resource created  
by the Betjeman  
Poetry Prize

## Key stage 2



Founded in 2006 to mark the centenary of the former Poet Laureate John Betjeman's birth, the **Betjeman Poetry Prize** aims to foster creativity in young people while discovering and encouraging the next generation of British poets.  
[www.betjemanpoetryprize.co.uk](http://www.betjemanpoetryprize.co.uk)

### The Owl Looked Out of the Ivy Bush

The owl looked out of the ivy bush  
And he solemnly said, said he,  
'If you want to live an owlish life  
Be sure you are not like me.

'When the sun goes down and the moon comes up  
And the sky turns navy blue,  
I'm certain to go tu-whoo tu-whit  
Instead of tu-whit tu-whoo.

'And even then nine times out of ten  
(And it's absolutely true)  
I somehow go out of my owlish mind  
With a whit-tu whoo-tu too.'

'There's nothing in water,' said the owl,  
'In air or on the ground  
With a kindly word for the sort of bird  
That sings the wrong way round.'

'I might,' wept the owl in the ivy bush,  
'Be just as well buried and dead.  
You can bet your boots no one gives two hoots!  
'Do I, friend my,' I said..

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## Activity:

### Step 1

Send the pupils home with the poem to read in their own time.

### Step 2

Point of View: In class, ask five pupils to stand up and read the poem together - a verse each. Is this poem in the first person or third person? Does the 'speaker' of the poem appear?

If so, where? (ANSWER: IN THE LAST LINE)

### Step 3

Content: What is the poem about? Discuss the idea of the owl not being able to say what it wants to say. Do pupils ever feel that their words get jumbled up and they don't say what they mean?

What do owls normally represent (ANSWER: WISDOM)

### Step 4

Genre and Meaning: *TEACHER* explains about genre. There are different types of poem but this is **a nonsense poem**. Sometimes there is truth lying behind the jumbled words of a nonsense poem. Where is the *TRUTH* in this poem? (ANSWER: Is it that even wise owls get tongue-tied? They want to show who they really are, but they can't find the right words.)

### Step 5

Purpose of the poem: What is the 'speaker' of the poem trying to say when he/she says "Do I, friend my,?" What is the speaker's attitude towards the owl? (ANSWER: EMPATHETIC)

How do you know this? (ANSWER: Because the speaker imitates the jumbled language of the despondent owl...)

**Nonsense poetry:** a form of light verse, usually for children, whimsical in tone and with a rhythmic appeal, often employing meaningless made-up words.

**Charles Causley** 1917-2003  
was a Cornish poet and schoolmaster.

