

NATIONAL POETRY DAY

25th
anniversary

3RD OCTOBER 2019

Nanny Neverley

A National Poetry Day
resource created by
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The Poetry Archive

Key stage 2/3

The Poetry
Archive

The Poetry Archive is a not-for-profit organisation that makes and acquires recordings of poets from around the English-speaking world and makes substantial excerpts from them freely available online.

www.poetryarchive.org

Nanny Neverly

Old Nanny Neverley
came from Back There.
She sat in the sunshine
with frost in her hair.
I'm going home soon, she said.
Never said where.

Sweet crumbly biscuits,
ghostly-grey tea
and a smile would be waiting.
She listened to me
and sometimes to someone else
I couldn't see

and when we fell silent
and couldn't say why
she glanced at the window.
She smiled at the sky.
Look, there, you missed it.
An angel went by.

It was one of her stories,
like: *I'm growing too;*
you grow up, I grow down . . .
She told lies, I knew.
Only, now that she's gone
nothing else seems quite true.

© Philip Gross

from **Off Road to Everywhere** (Salt 2010)

The Poetry Archive is an audio collection, believing in the profound benefits to be had from listening to the sound a poem makes. To gain the most from this resource please first listen to Philip Gross reading his poem *Nanny Neverley* on the Poetry Archive website www.poetryarchive.org/poet/philip-gross-childrens-poems

www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk

Spoken Language

Begin by hearing and enjoying the sound of the poem read aloud. What do the children make of it on first hearing? Do they know of older people who say funny things / make stories up? The last two lines mention truth and lies – does Nanny Neverley tell lies or tall stories? Is there a difference?

Activity:

READING

Look at other Granny poems. Some Granny poems come from a Caribbean perspective, written in Creole or standard English. Some are easy to learn by heart.

- John Agard wrote a book of Caribbean proverbs called, *Say it Again, Granny*.
- When Valerie Bloom's Granny laughs, 'den a thunderclap o merriment'.
- Grace Nichols', 'Granny Granny please comb my hair', is in the voice of a granddaughter.
- James Berry's Granny 'stuffs you/ with boiled pudding and lemonade.'

WRITING

Here are a few ideas:

- You can approach this by taking a Granny poem such as *Nanny Neverley* as a model and asking children to compose their own lines.
- James Berry's Granny stuffs him with boiled pudding. Ask the children to make a list poem by citing the lovely (or not so lovely!) things Granny makes for them to eat.

This would work well as a group poem with each person contributing a few lines, each verse beginning,

'Granny stuffs me / with...

- Granny poems are often funny, but some can be sad. Mervyn Morris wrote about his dead Granny:

..remembering
banana porridge, fumbling
her dog-eared bible,
faded bedspread,
musty cushions, hugging
memories of her love...'

POETRY

Nanny Neverley contains characteristics of traditional poetry with a regular metre and 4 verses of 6 lines, rhyming b,d,f. Ask the children to find the rhymes and show them how to attach letters to lines ('a' first line, 'b' second etc).

The examples in verses 2 and 4 all use different spellings for same sounds – e.g. tea/me/see, whereas in verse 3 they all follow the same pattern – why, sky, by.

FURTHER READING

White Ones is another poem in **Off Road to Everywhere** that deals with truth, suitable for Years 5, 6 & 7. It would make a good contrast to *Nanny Neverley*.

So what kind of truth is it that poetry offers?

Visit www.poetryarchive.org

