

Linguistic Development through

# **POETRY MEMORIZATION**

Teacher's Manual

*by Andrew Pudewa*

Second Edition, February 2016  
Institute for Excellence in Writing, L.L.C.

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# Introduction

Sample

# Prerequisites for Effective Communication

As I have traveled the country during the past ten years, working with homeschool students and their parents as well as with teachers and administrators in public and private schools, it has been most gratifying to be able to share an approach to teaching writing that has significantly helped raise the written and oral communication skills of countless children of all ages. The many effective methods and techniques of the *Blended Structure and Style* syllabus, which we use to teach composition, have made a huge difference in the lives of thousands of students, parents, and teachers.

However, no matter how brilliant and effective at teaching writing one may become, a frighteningly true and significant fact keeps raising its ugly head. It's simple; it's obvious; it's terribly important, and that is this:

You can't get something out of a child's brain that isn't in there to begin with.

*You can't get something out of a child's brain that isn't in there to begin with.*

If you have no Chinese in your brain, you can't get any Chinese out of your brain; if you don't have any music in your brain, you can't get any music out; if you don't have any geometry in, you won't get it out. This is just as true for one's native language as it is for less familiar subject matter. Getting something into the brain is clearly a prerequisite to getting it out. Now, to be a competent writer or speaker of English, a student need not be well equipped with an extensive knowledge of grammar, nor is it necessary for him to do great loads of worksheets and exercises designed to teach usage and mechanics. It is not necessarily even true that the more time spent writing, the better a writer he becomes.

If he is a native speaker of English, he needs one thing above all else, and that is this: **a large database in his brain of reliably correct and sophisticated language patterns.**

## Building the vocabulary database

Reliably correct and sophisticated language patterns are the core of linguistic competence, especially in English, where the "rules" of grammar are less than perfectly consistent, and usages vary greatly because of the uniquely rich multi-lingual origins of the English language. Vocabulary, of course, is critical—but even more vital than knowing a lot of words is knowing how those words naturally, correctly, even artistically fit together in phrases and clauses.

The students who write well are always the ones who possess an extensive repertoire of words, an intuitive understanding of when and how those words can be used in idioms and combinations, and an automatic sense of when they

have been used correctly or awkwardly. What enables this type of sophisticated linguistic talent is not a conscious knowledge of “rules,” but the database of language information that has been stored in the brain.

This brings us to the next question—where do students acquire their database of linguistic patterns? What is the main source of language in children’s lives?

Although it certainly varies from family to family, for most of the children in this country today the top two sources of linguistic input would likely be the media (TV, radio, Internet, billboards, magazines, and newspapers), and peers (children of approximately the same age). Sadly, as is obvious to any intelligent observer of our culture, neither media nor peers are likely to be a consistent source of what children most need: reliably correct and sophisticated language patterns. Other sources of language in children’s lives would be adults—primarily parents and teachers (most of whom are very busy and find that even their communication with children often leans more toward the expedient than toward the sophisticated), and lastly the books that children read or that adults read out loud to them.

Much can be said about why children need to be read to aloud—in much larger quantity than they usually get, even—or especially after they reach an age of being able to read by themselves. However, there is another vital but oft-neglected source of powerful and sophisticated linguistic patterning available to children: memorized language, especially memorized poetry.

For more on language development, watch or listen to “Nurturing Competent Communicators.” The DVD is included with the audio CDs, and the MP3 is available as a download with this book. See the blue page at the front of this book for download instructions.

“ Last weekend my husband watched “Nurturing Competent Communicators” with me. After watching the DVD, he said to me. “I missed so much when I was a kid, but our children won’t.”

Garrell in Texas

“ We started the new poetry program this week and have covered the first two poems. Since Celery was written by Ogden Nash, I decided to read some other poems by Nash.

Now my children (ages 5-17) are running around repeating those poems over and over. The next thing I know they will be demonstrating reliably correct and sophisticated language patterns! What’s a mother to do?!?

Suzanne in Oklahoma

# Why Memorization?

Memorized (or “by heart”) language was a mainstay of education for almost all of recorded history until about sixty years ago, when misguided educationists began to promulgate the idea that memorization, along with other types of “rote” learning, was harmful to children’s creativity, understanding, and enjoyment of learning. Perhaps one of the most damaging doctrines ever to invade teachers’ colleges, the concept that memorization was at best unnecessary and at worst downright harmful is now handicapping a third generation of students, who, because of the sad state of the popular media, are most in need of the linguistic foundation that memorization provides.

It is not uncommon to meet a young teacher or parent who has never even heard of the idea of having children memorize poems or speeches. If they didn’t do it as a child, and no one has taught them it would be possible (let alone beneficial), it wouldn’t necessarily occur to them. And yet the cultural, neurological, and linguistic value of memorized language is indisputable.

Young children will naturally memorize language patterns from their cultural environment. If teachers and parents don’t provide high quality models, kids will automatically internalize and memorize random stuff from their environment—mainly TV advertisements and songs on the radio, most of which we would not find to be “reliably correct and sophisticated.” A child’s instinctive desire to memorize is intrinsic to language acquisition, yet for the most part we ignore it or allow it to happen so haphazardly that we miss out on one of the greatest opportunities to build sophisticated language patterns.

Poetry has long served a critical role in the transmission of culture, as it tends to convey the “rhyme and reason” of life in a concentrated and memorable form. But if we don’t provide the content and opportunity for organized memorization, kids will let popular culture be their teacher. In other words, if we don’t provide them with Belloc, Stevenson, and Rossetti, they’ll memorize McDonald’s commercials and Justin Bieber lyrics. Memorization is not only natural for young children; it is culturally powerful and educationally essential.

*The concept that memorization was at best unnecessary and at worst downright harmful is now handicapping a third generation of students.*

## The science of memorization

Neurologically, memorization develops the brain in a way nothing else can. Neurons make connections through frequency, intensity, and duration of stimulation.\* When children memorize (and maintain the ability to recite) interesting poems, all three of these variables are involved in a powerful way, strengthening the network of neural connections that build the foundation of raw intelligence. In short, the more neurons we have connected to other neurons, the more “RAM” we have in the CPU of our brains, and the rigor of memorization

\* *How To Multiply Your Baby's Intelligence* by Glenn and Janet Doman (Philadelphia: Gentle Revolution Press, 2001)



is a powerful tool in this process.\* Not only is organized memorization important for neurological growth, it also builds a mental discipline that will carry over into other academic areas.

Many of us may know one or more poems, rhymes, or songs from childhood, and we often take some measure of pride or pleasure in being able to recite them to this day. Frequently, the sense of accomplishment that accompanies the memorization of poetry builds linguistic and even academic confidence and spills over into other areas. Like performing a piece of music, memorization and artistic recitation of poetry requires a certain level of perfection, which only conscientious effort and consistency can bring. If a student memorizes a long poem and can recite it flawlessly, he will believe that he can learn anything, be it math processes or facts from history. “By heart” learning not only strengthens the mind; it also strengthens the heart and spirit of the child.

Like any skill, memorization gets easier with practice. Again, as with music, one’s first efforts to exactly remember every word in a poem may seem labored and difficult, but as the number of memorized poems increases, so does the ease of mastering new ones. The neural network that stores language grows, and as it does, so does the speed with which new networks of brain cells can be developed and integrated. Retention is also critical. If memorized material is not regularly reviewed and strengthened, it will be lost, and the original neural connections will begin to dissipate.

Therefore, critical to the development of any skill, especially memorization, is the all-important maintenance plan to assure that what one has worked so hard to attain is not lost by attrition. The more you have learned, the easier it is to learn more. The implications of this fact stretch far beyond the value of just knowing a few dozen poems, but indicate that memory in general can be improved from exercise—just like muscles.

It is sad but true: Memorization in schools has for the most part been left by the wayside, thought to be at best unnecessary and at worst harmful. So we now see a third generation of children who will likely be deprived of the many advantages of memorization—not just the neurological ones, but the benefits to heart and mind as well. Whereas students of yesteryear had the common experience of committing to memory a wide range of sophisticated poetry, prose, scripture, and great speeches, children of today often lack exposure to the most common nursery rhymes. Society will not likely notice the serious consequences of this omission until it is too late. Popular culture will continue to dictate the drivel that provides the linguistic and intellectual patterning for a generation, and we will wonder why the schools failed to produce a majority of people who can think and communicate well enough to sustain a free republic.

\* It is notable that of those who score highest on standardized tests like the SAT, a large number are music and drama students. Although this may be because smart kids are attracted to music and drama, it is much more likely due to the fact that music and drama help to create intelligence; both disciplines require large quantities of memorized repertoire.

## Why Poetry?

Acknowledging that memorization in general—and memorization of sophisticated language in particular—is a good thing, we must next ask: What should be memorized?

Rote learning and recitation of sacred texts has always been a fundamental part of religious education in all major religions from ancient times to the present day, and certainly parents and teachers who raise children to learn large chunks of scripture by heart are persuaded of its spiritual value. Clearly, memorization of classics served as the educational backbone for such thinkers as Aristotle, Saul of Tarsus, Augustine, Thomas Paine, and even more modern authors such as Gene Stratton-Porter and J.R.R. Tolkien. However, poetry has always held a unique position within scripture, classics, and literature for several reasons. Poetry is generally enjoyable, poetry can usually be remembered easily, and good poetry is concentrated—rich in meaning, sophisticated in vocabulary, and solid in structure.

Young children are naturally drawn to humorous, silly, interesting, or unusual things, and many wonderful poems have been written specifically to appeal to children—for good reason. Poets like Hilaire Belloc and Robert Louis Stevenson in the past, or Shel Silverstein and Jack Prelutsky in the present time, have all known how important it is to capture the child’s interest in poetry at a young age, thereby preparing them to appreciate more serious and meaningful poems in later years. If children grow up laughing and loving poems, they are much more likely to mature into adults who can pursue and enjoy the classics. When exposure to poetry is limited, or early experience of poetry tedious, students will be unlikely to later benefit from the deeper historical, philosophical, or religious works. The *Psalms*, *The Bhagavad-Gita*, *The Odyssey*, and the sonnets of Shakespeare are all poetry in their own right (and even more so in their respective languages), but people won’t appreciate their richness without appropriate orientation and experience. John Senior explained how children must read the “thousand good books” so that as adults they can appreciate the hundred Great Books.\* Similarly children need broad experience with funny, enjoyable, and dramatic poems so that they can later plumb the minds and hearts of the masters.

*If children grow up laughing and loving poems, they are much more likely to mature into adults who can pursue and enjoy the classics.*

\* *The Restoration of Christian Culture* by John Senior (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983)

## Rhyme and rhythm

Poems by their very nature are easier to remember than prose. This is fortunate. Like songs, the rhyming and rhythmic patterns intrinsic to English poetry create a “predictable-ness” that aids and speeds memorization. Nursery rhymes exist for a reason. As children internalize those simple patterns, they are preparing for the next level of sophistication. Additionally, rhyming words help build phonetic awareness which strengthens spelling and pronunciation: *Jill/hill* and *down/crown*

are simple examples. English rhymes, possible in part because of the vastness of our vocabulary, are pleasant to the ear and to the heart. Alliteration or assonance will accentuate a statement. A solid meter is musical and engaging. Generally, we respond with joy to poetic technique simply because it is artistic, reflecting a higher intelligence, and we are drawn naturally and easily to remember it. Poems are perfect for memorization.

Because poets need to conform to their chosen rhythm and rhyme, they often need to use sophisticated words and grammatical patterns above our normal exposure or conversational usage. This is linguistic gold. By hearing—and better still by memorizing—a variety of poems, we have access to a richness of vocabulary and syntax we might never master in any other way. Again, think of the simple nursery rhyme:

*Jack and Jill went up the hill  
to fetch a pail of water.  
Jack fell down and broke his crown,  
and Jill came tumbling after.*

The language here, although seemingly simple, gives a young child some very sophisticated elements to work with. While the first sentence contains two prepositional phrases, the second is not only a compound sentence, but also contains dual verbs. The words *fetch*, *crown*, and *tumbling* are probably beyond the normal conversational level of the young children who would learn the rhyme, but by learning it they would acquire at least familiarity—if not fluency—with those words. They will also learn (long before they'll hear it) that the rule “never end a sentence in a preposition” isn't really true.

*Poems are almost always high quality language—even the simple, fun ones.*

Find any good poem and evaluate it for vocabulary and grammatical structure; you'll quickly see that poems are almost always high quality language—even the simple, fun ones. When selecting poems for students to memorize, try to choose those that will provide correct and sophisticated linguistic patterns for the child. (But don't be overly picky about it—kids are flexible enough to survive the occasional run-on, fragment, or made-up word.) Memorizing poetry builds effective linguistic aptitude.

## Concentrated thought

Finally, most poems have richness of meaning; they are concentrated thought. Even simple limericks can give opportunity for questions and reflections. Quality humor requires intelligence. Poems that tell a story often have an unexpected twist or embedded moral, while poems that play with words also play with ideas. Emotional poems can help us understand our own complexity of feelings.

We have an English idiom: It has no rhyme or reason. The two are intertwined towards truth; we trust the beauty of the rhyme as we trust the logic of the reason. As old as language itself, poetry is a powerful tool for communication. Many teachers who value poetry get excited about giving youngsters the opportunity to write poems, yet the children often lack the breadth of experience needed to do much with it. However, by memorizing poetry children build up a repertoire not only of vocabulary and grammar, but also of poetical ideas—the stuff from which future poems will be crafted. To focus on writing poetry without memorizing it as well is the equivalent of trying to teach musical composition without having the students learn to perform any classic pieces. The results simply won't be as good.

Memorization is the most complete form of internalization, and the best way to intimately know something is to know it so well you can communicate it effectively, fluently, even artistically to another. For depth of feeling, meaning, and beauty, poetry is powerful.

Although memorizing scripture and other forms of prose is certainly admirable, poetry holds a few distinct advantages. Not only is it fun, poetry is easy to learn and leads children to a greater depth of thought and word. Most significantly, it promotes fluency with a wide variety of vocabulary and grammatical patterns, something that cannot easily be extracted from daily conversations, from exposure to popular media, or even from books that children read by themselves. Poetry has always been a civilizing influence in society—from Ancient Greece and Israel, to Feudal Japan, to Victorian England. Poetry is the apex of literature and thus the crystallized thought of the human race. By internalizing the best of poetry, we preserve and nurture the best of ourselves.

“*The poetry has been such a blessing to us! My boys are 8 and 10. The morning I announced that we were going to memorize poetry their eyes rolled back in their heads. Then I read “Ooey Gooyey” with all the emotion I could muster. They pealed with laughter, memorized the poem, and made parodies of it ALL day, e.g., “Ooey Gooyey was a bug ... the windshield he did not see.”*

*We find times that the perfect poem comes to us in some other context. I'll never forget the day we were in a hardware store. There was a display of stuffed (realistic) birds. My eight-year-old picked up a California Condor, flapped its wings as he walked about the store, and in his best gravelly voice recited “The Vulture” by Hilaire Belloc.*

*I am so glad I discovered this while my boys are young. They will grow into better men with this education. Everyday I am more convinced that Andrew is so right about reading out loud and mastery memorization.*

*What an incredible blessing.*

*Kathleen in Illinois*

The arts of language are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Learn more about each one in the following talks:

- On Listening
- On Speaking
- On Reading
- On Writing

See the blue page in front of this book for download instructions.

# Mastery Learning—What is it?

Mastery learning means just that—learning for complete mastery. In the case of memorization, it means knowing every word and its correct place, and being able to recite it with excellent fluency, speed, pronunciation, and inflection. How then does one coach a child toward such perfection? The best example of how this has been done in the past can be seen in the phenomenal results of the Suzuki Method™.

Also known as Talent Education or Ability Development, Dr. Shinichi Suzuki’s original method was called the “Mother Tongue Method of Education” and was based on his observations about how children learn their native language. Suzuki realized that children as young as six or seven years were able to learn to speak a language easily and fluently, but that adults studying a foreign language could seldom reach such a high level of ability even after ten or twenty years of study.

He concluded that not only do children have an amazing aptitude for learning anything, but also that the way they best learn is very different than what takes place in traditional education. By observing how children acquire fluency in their mother tongue, he identified the following four principles, or pillars:

## Pillar 1: The Earliest Period

Suzuki noted that children begin learning their native language from the earliest possible age; before birth they begin hearing their mother speak. From birth onward they are hearing, trying to understand, and attempting to imitate the language in their environment. He proposed that the young child absorbs language most easily, which concurs with the observations of Maria Montessori,\* Glen Doman, and many others. Additionally, Suzuki noticed that young children are able to acquire a nuance of expression in dialect that adults are never able to achieve—no matter how many decades of study and practice. He therefore proposed that whatever you want to teach—be it language, music, art, or mathematics—the younger the child is when instruction begins, the more effective the instruction will be.

Until Suzuki began demonstrating his amazing results with children as young as three and four years old, music educators generally held that it was best to wait until the child was mature enough to show some potential talent before investing time and money in music lessons. Suzuki claimed and later proved that “talent” is not only inborn, but that every child has a sprout of talent which can be nurtured from the youngest possible age if the proper methods are used.

## Pillar 2: The Best Teacher

Who teaches children to speak? They don’t go to school (and certainly don’t have to take any multiple-choice tests) to learn their native tongue; they learn it

### Talent Education Pillars

1. the earliest period
2. the best teacher
3. the best environment
4. the best method of learning

*Nurtured by Love* by Shinichi Suzuki (Tokyo: Suzuki Method International, 1986)

\* *The Absorbent Mind* by Maria Montessori (NY: Owl Books, 1995)

one-on-one, most often from their mother. Mothers are superbly well qualified to teach their children to speak their language, as they know what they are teaching, and they have time, patience, and love. Dr. Suzuki realized that when mothers are involved, education is at its best, even going so far as to state, “A nation’s prosperity depends on women’s strength.”\*

The Suzuki Method of music instruction requires a parent to learn all about playing the violin (or cello or piano, etc.) and become the “home teacher,” guiding the child’s practice each day according to the instructions of the music teacher. Educators today still know that results are better when parents are involved, and homeschooling families have found that in most cases they can easily teach children the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic in a fraction of the time required in a typical classroom setting.

\* *Young Children’s Talent Education & Its Method* by Shinichi Suzuki (New York: Birch Tree Group, 1999)

### **Pillar 3: The Best Environment**

Environment is critical. Anyone who has tried to learn a foreign language as an adult is well aware how much easier it is to gain fluency when living in the country or with people who speak it. The classroom/textbook approach to learning a foreign language is notably ineffective, as can be seen by the millions of adults who have “taken” Spanish or French in high school but couldn’t carry on a conversation with a five-year-old native speaker. Suzuki saw how the environment of children was saturated with language—auditory, visual, even kinesthetic—and determined that creating an intensely musical environment was requisite for effective music education. Thus he promoted the use of recordings, so that children could listen every day to the music they were going to be learning to play.

Although some traditional music educators considered this to be “cheating” (claiming that students shouldn’t hear the melody before figuring it out from the printed notes), Suzuki knew that young children of three or four years old wouldn’t be able to read notes for some time, and that to reach a high level of ability, starting young and saturating the environment with music by way of recordings was essential. Now the results are in—Suzuki’s methods have produced all the top musicians in the world; the traditionalists are light-years behind. True ability development requires an environment where the student can be deeply immersed in what he is learning.

### **Pillar 4: The Best Method of Learning**

The fourth pillar of Talent Education, and perhaps most significant for us, is a correct understanding of the method of skill acquisition since it is so very different from what most of us experienced in our schooling. Suzuki modeled his pedagogy after the way children gain their language ability—one word at a

time, while never ceasing to practice and use the words they've learned so far. When children begin to talk, they will begin with one word—usually “mama,” and then use that word constantly, even incessantly for everything they want, until using that word has become very easy. That may take days or weeks, but when using that one word has become easy, they will add another word and then use those two words—constantly—until using two words has become easy. That may take days or weeks, but when both of those words can be used easily, fluently, effortlessly, the child will add another, and when using three words is easy they add a fourth, etc., but never stopping the use of the words they have acquired so far. This process continues naturally until by the age of six or seven, an average child has a vocabulary of many thousands of words, which can be combined into phrases, clauses, and sentences, and they do so effortlessly, easily, fluently—to a degree that no one else can do it.

Suzuki applied this system to music education, and it is particularly needed in the arts, but the truth of the basic concept is what allows mastery learning in any area of study. We don't, however, truly realize the brilliance of the method until we juxtapose it against our standard textbook-style approach, or what one might call the “non-ability development” method of education.

## How modern learning fails to teach

In a typical school setting, subjects such as history, science, and grammar are generally divided into units and chapters, sections and lists, presented to the students by way of text and lecture/discussion, possibly enhanced with an occasional written paper or project, and finally testing. Once the unit is complete, the curriculum moves on, seldom addressing that chapter's content again (although in high school and college courses, there may be a midterm or final exam) and it is sooner or later forgotten, until it comes again with the next round of history or science or grammar years later. You probably remember the “chapter test” and how you could cram for that quiz by holding a few dozen miscellaneous facts in your head for a short time—long enough to pass the test—and then safely forget most of it. Overall, retention was poor; lasting benefit was minimal. Unless those bits of information were amazingly interesting to you, there simply wasn't enough frequency, intensity, or duration to allow for permanent retention.

This can be painfully apparent to parents on a daily basis, as evidenced by a child's response to the question, “What did you do in school today?” to which they answer, “Nothing” or “I don't know.” This also becomes very clear at the end of the year when the only thing they remember from seventh grade is the very last chapter of the textbook or the last unit done in science. Typical spelling tests as we may have experienced them are another stunning example of non-ability development education; you get the list on Monday, the pre-test on Wednesday

To learn more about mastery education, listen to “Mastery Learning” and “Ten Thousand Times and Then Begins Understanding.” See the blue page in front of this book for download instructions.

or Thursday, the final test on Friday, and whether a student gets 100, 80, or 60 percent on the final, they get a new list on Monday. Repeat.

## Mastery learning

Mastery learning would require the student to score 100 percent, probably twice in a row, before moving on to a new list, but that would require individualized instruction, which is so very difficult in a classroom setting. Certainly there are exceptions—students who learn and remember more easily, and teachers who cleverly engage students in more effective ways of learning—but they are uncommon. Sad but true: This “non-ability development” method of education is so prevalent today that we have essentially institutionalized it in universities where courses are taken mainly for requirements, credits, and grades, and students don’t really expect to remember much after the final is passed and the semester is over.

Shinichi Suzuki proved through music education that every child can learn, and that how well they learn can be accelerated by starting at a young age, having the best environment, being coached by the best teacher, and most significantly, using the best method of skills acquisition.

When children are taught by good Suzuki Method teachers, they don’t stop playing a piece of music just because they’ve memorized it and are now learning a new piece; no, they play every piece they’ve learned every day until playing it is easy, effortless, and pretty much perfect. Even then they continue to review regularly, so that they never forget a piece they’ve learned. That’s how—at the age of five or six or seven—a properly trained Suzuki student can perform—nonstop and probably without error—a dozen or more pieces for a Book One graduation recital, making it look simple, easy, and fun—an achievement few adults could even imagine. This is true ability development. This is Talent Education. This is mastery learning.

*This “non-ability development” method of education is so prevalent today that we have essentially institutionalized it in universities where courses are taken mainly for requirements, credits, and grades, and students don’t really expect to remember much after the final is passed and the semester is over.*

“*My children have been memorizing poetry for years. I cannot express how enjoyable this practice has been. We started out with poetry that I could find recorded, but finding a well-read piece can be difficult. The audio recordings that come with this program are invaluable!*

*Doreen*



## How This Program Is Set Up

By now, you should be convinced that memorization helps to grow the brain, build mental discipline, and strengthen the spirit; that poetry is enjoyable, easy to memorize and linguistically rich; and that a high level of ability can be developed by using the Talent Education methodology. If so, you are ready to begin a long-term program to have your students memorize many dozens of poems, be able to recite them with confidence and artistry, and retain that ability for life. The primary benefits will include giving the student not only a rich database of vocabulary and sophisticated English language patterns, but also enhanced memory and intelligence, a greater appreciation for poetry, and even an increased aptitude for writing poems.

Completing this program will likely take several years, but dramatic results should become apparent in just a few months. The method is very similar to Dr. Suzuki's plan for music instruction, with poems divided into four books, or levels. Audio recordings of the poems are included to provide easy opportunity for abundant repetition, which will also allow young children to memorize poems long before they can read them. Level One begins with very short, enjoyable verses. Gradually the length and sophistication of the poems increases. Interspersed throughout all the levels are occasional short selections, so as to give the students a break from too many long ones in a row.

It is recommended that all students, regardless of age, begin with Level One and proceed through the levels in order. If older students balk at learning some of the simpler or sillier poems, point out to them that such poems will be very handy for entertaining young children they may come across when babysitting, at family gatherings, community events, etc. They may already be teaching younger kids in some capacity, and certainly many will become parents.

Poems in this program were chosen with several criteria: humor and enjoyment, vocabulary and linguistic quality, classic and cultural literacy, character and message. However, if you disapprove of one or more of these selections, you are certainly welcome to replace them with other poems of your own choosing.

Although this compilation contains no distinctly religious content (and is therefore acceptable for purchase and use by public school programs), individual parents or teachers may wish to supplement this compendium with poetry or prose from scriptural or sacred sources of their choice. To that end, we have included space for a few Personal Selections at the end of each level. This personal selection requirement will also encourage children in the same family or classroom to individualize the program by choosing a few poems that they especially like.

### Talent Education Pillars

1. the earliest period
2. the best teacher
3. the best environment
4. the best method of learning

*Nurtured by Love* by Shinichi Suzuki (Tokyo: Suzuki Method International, 1986)

*It is recommended that all students, regardless of age, begin with Level One and proceed through the levels in order.*

# How to Teach the Program

The basic principle is this: Teacher and students recite together one poem several times a day.

- Begin with Level One.
- Download the Student Book and provide a copy of the poem for the student to follow.
- Use the audio CDs to recite the poem together.
- Recite the title and author followed by the poem.
- Practice the poem every day.
- Multi-stanza poems may be learned in sections, with one stanza solidly learned before adding another.
- Repeat the recitation every school day until the poem can be recited correctly, easily, and without hesitation.

Instructions to download the Student Book are located on the blue page in the front of this book.

All students should begin in Level One. Older students will likely find the poems easy to memorize, and the practice will prepare them for the longer and more difficult poems in the levels to come.

Students may move through this program at their own individual pace, or a teacher may decide to work on one new poem each week, providing additional time for longer poems. The key is to practice memorizing the poem several times each day until the poem is memorized.

When beginning with older students, you might need to gain their trust by letting them choose their first poem or two. Once they are hooked, you can systematically work through the levels.

The twentieth poem in each level is meant to be a personal choice of the student or the teacher. Several suggestions are offered, but the choice ensures that students may add to their repertoire poems that are meaningful to them. As students progress through the level, invite them to choose what poem they will work on at the end of the level.

## Discussion and teaching moments

Some of the poems in this collection may contain words or idiomatic expressions unfamiliar to students. A good teacher will seize the opportunity to explore these words and meanings. Don't assume students have a certain level of understanding; constantly check for comprehension, and take whatever time is necessary to ensure that students get full value and benefit from the words they are memorizing.

Additionally, you may find terms or statements of social, scientific, or historical significance. Use the poem as a starting point for additional study. For your convenience, lesson enhancement suggestions to integrate other subjects into the

poetry are provided in Appendix 3 which begins on page 167. These suggestions are optional, so do not feel obligated to use them.

Since it is also beneficial for students to have some information about the poets whose names they hear and recite, short biographical statements about the authors have been included in Appendix 1 on pages 151-161. Share this information with them as is appropriate to their age and interest, and do more research together as opportunities arise.

### **Practice makes permanent.**

When the first poem in Level One is mastered, the second poem is introduced and practiced together several times each day. However, the first poem should not be forgotten; it should also be said at least once each day.

When the first two can be easily recited, a third is introduced and practiced, while the first two continue to be recited, and so on. This is the Every Poem Every Day method of practice so that by the end of Level One, the student is reciting every poem they've learned, every day.

### **Level One graduation party**

When the student has learned all the poems and is prepared, a Level One graduation party can be scheduled, where family and close friends gather and listen as the student recites, clearly and correctly, all twenty poems of Level One. This event should be accompanied by the presentation of a certificate (and a small party of sorts—perhaps with popcorn and a movie).

It is very possible that when children memorize and recite poems on a regular basis, they may from time to time fall into a “mechanical” or seemingly inappropriate attitude about recitation—either by speaking very fast, getting silly, or simply trying to rush through the poems. This is really not a problem. The goal is to maintain the memorized repertoire; a dramatic recitation each time is not expected. During a graduation event, however, the poems should be “performed” with sufficient volume, clarity, locution, and feeling as possible, and students will likely be inclined to practice in preparation for this.

To manage the poetry in a classroom, the entire class can move through the poetry at the strongest student's pace, but the practice and recitation can be individualized using the checklists. Thus, each student can master the list at an attainable pace.

### **Levels Two through Four**

After completing Level One, the student progresses to Level Two and begins to learn the next twenty poems. However, the Level One poems learned must not be forgotten, so the student continues to recite them according to the Every Other Poem Every Other Day schedule while using the Every Poem Every Day schedule for the Level Two poems as they are learned.

When ready, the student may do a Level Two graduation recitation and party, at which point he begins to learn the poems in Level Three. Level One poems are then reviewed less often while the Level Two poems go on the Every Poem Every Other Day schedule. This sounds more confusing than it is, but recitation lists are provided to help you and your students stay organized.

By following this method and regularly reciting all the poems in Levels One through Four, students will very likely have achieved a level of frequency, intensity, and duration that will give them lifelong retention of all eighty poems—a gift for which they will always be grateful. At some point in the sequence, you may determine to cut back on the review, but you should be certain to provide enough opportunity for recitation of learned poems to maintain the repertoire.

## Level Five speeches

When students have mastered the eighty poems in this book, they may move onto the Level Five speeches. The stamina that students have developed memorizing poetry should make the memorization of prose much easier.

Because the speeches are longer, plan to spend more time in their memorization, working on portions at a time. Studying the context and author of each speech will add to its value.

## Won't all this practice take too long?

Although memorizing and reciting daily so many poems may at first seem like a daunting project that will require large amounts of time, consider a few points:

- Given the huge benefits of memorizing poetry, it may well be one of the best uses of your available school hours.
- Recitation of memorized poems can easily be done away from a desk—perhaps in the car, while cooking or folding clothes, or during a walk.
- Memorizing new poems gets easier in direct proportion to the number of poems already memorized; in other words the more you have learned, the faster you can learn more.
- The CD recordings will help you use repetition, so students can memorize poems more quickly and accurately; you don't have to do it all yourself.

## You can do this!

Although it may seem like a huge undertaking, give this system a try, and read the introduction to this book as often as needed to be reminded of the importance of memorizing poetry.

I firmly believe that our task of raising leaders, competent communicators who are empowered to speak the truth and speak it well, is an undertaking of monumental importance. Doing our best as parents and teachers, we can perhaps raise up such a generation; let us work together.

Keep in touch. Let us know how it is going—any joys, frustrations, confusions, or problems you may have with this program. To assist you as you strive to prepare your children to write and speak powerfully, our forums are provided, so you can connect with like-minded parents and teachers along with our staff. May your efforts be blessed and multiplied.

Join the IEW forums at [IEW.com/forum](http://IEW.com/forum).

“ *When I purchased the poetry memorization program for my fourteen year old son, I knew I would have to sell him on the idea. I handed him the book and suggested that he choose any poem in the volume to memorize. He chose “The Charge of the Light Brigade.” After learning that poem he was hooked.*

*After learning most of the poems in Level One, my son had the task of entertaining a group of children in our 4-H Club. He recited all the funny poems that he knew, and the kids loved it. All this poetry was really paying off!*

*He is now an adult and still references the poems that he learned so long ago. In addition to developing strong linguistic patterns, the poems have given him insight into human nature.*

*Now I recommend this program to all of my friends. It is one of the best investments you can make for your kids.*


*Denise in Virginia*

# Level One

Sample


1. **Ooey Goosey**  
*an unrhymed poem*

Ooey Goosey was a worm,  
 A mightiest worm he be,  
 He wriggled upon the railroad tracks,  
 The rails he'd roll over with!  
 Ooey Goosey




2. **Celery**  
*an unrhymed poem*

Celery, celery,  
 Through the pig,  
 But celery, celery,  
 Is more quickly served.




3. **The Little Man Who Wasn't There**  
*an unrhymed poem*

As I was going up the stairs,  
 And then the mouse was there,  
 He very, very noisy that!  
 He said to me, "I  
 He was a bit. He had a hat,  
 He was a pretty fellow,  
 Oh, what a fellow for an elf!  
 He only sat at dinner!




4. **The Vulture**  
*an unrhymed poem*

The vulture came between his hands,  
 And then the mouse was there,  
 He very, very noisy that!  
 He said to me, "I  
 He was a bit. He had a hat,  
 He was a pretty fellow,  
 Oh, what a fellow for an elf!  
 He only sat at dinner!




5. **After the Party**  
*an unrhymed poem*

Jonathan Blake  
 He was much older,  
 He was kind today,  
 He had a hat,  
 With a drink in hand,  
 And he drank much more to go!




6. **Singing Time**  
*an unrhymed poem*

I made for the morning early  
 And along, the very first thing,  
 I made my bed and I got up and  
 And I sang and I sang and I sang!




7. **The Yak**  
*an unrhymed poem*

As I stand in the kitchen, covered in the Yak,  
 You will find it exactly the thing,  
 It will cry and bark, you can take me to back,  
 It will be done with singing.




8. **The Ingenious Little Old Man**  
*an unrhymed poem*

A little old man of the sea  
 Who was a man for a sea!  
 He was a very old man,  
 And he had a hat with which to sail.




9. **My Shadow**  
*an unrhymed poem*

I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,  
 And when can be the use of him is more than I can see,  
 He is very, very like me and he does up the back,  
 And he has a top of his own, which I jump up to see!




10. **There Was an Old Person Whose Habits**  
*an unrhymed poem*

There was an Old Person whose habits  
 Had been to find people called,  
 He had some habits,  
 He had some habits,  
 Upon which he had collected these habits.




11. **Jonathan King**  
*an unrhymed poem*

Jonathan King  
 He was a man for a sea!  
 He was a very old man,  
 And he had a hat with which to sail.



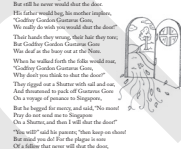
12. **Whole Duty of Children**  
*an unrhymed poem*

As I stand in the kitchen, covered in the Yak,  
 You will find it exactly the thing,  
 It will cry and bark, you can take me to back,  
 It will be done with singing.




13. **Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore**  
*an unrhymed poem*

Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore  
 He was a man for a sea!  
 He was a very old man,  
 And he had a hat with which to sail.




14. **My Gift**  
*an unrhymed poem*

What was it I gave Him  
 For an old man,  
 I found a gift for him,  
 If I give, you receive,  
 I found a gift for you,  
 You shall give Him,  
 Give my gift!




15. **The Swing**  
*an unrhymed poem*

How do you like to go up in a swing,  
 Up in the air like that,  
 Oh to sit in the hammock with  
 Your feet up!




16. **Persevere**  
*an unrhymed poem*

The fish who lives in the sea and swims,  
 Who has a tail to swim,  
 The fish who swims in the sea,  
 Who has a tail to swim.




17. **Who Has Seen the Wind?**  
*an unrhymed poem*

Who has seen the wind?  
 Neither I nor you,  
 Neither the trees nor the wind,  
 The wind is passing through.




18. **The Eagle**  
*an unrhymed poem*

He flaps the wings with streaked hands,  
 Claps in the air to his hands,  
 Flaps with the air to his hands,  
 The wind is passing through.



19. **The Swan and the Goose**  
*an unrhymed poem*

A fish was brought to the sea and Gore  
 That for long and his for me,  
 It showed his wings and his hands,  
 One night the Swan for Gore took.



20. **Personal selection**  
*an unrhymed poem*

Copy or write your personal selection from the page

LEVEL ONE

## Getting Started with Level One

1. Begin with the first poem, "Ooey Gooley."
2. Highlight the poem in the list below.
3. Practice daily. Use the audio recording to help you.
4. Continue to memorize the poetry in the list, poem by poem. Work at your own pace.
5. Every day, recite all the poems you have learned. That is what the highlighting is for: Recite the highlighted poems daily. Use the recording to help you.
6. Record your progress on the chart below. A check for the day means that you recited all the poems that you have highlighted.

Practice all the poems learned every day.  
 Recite the name and author with the poem.  
 Break longer poems into sections and memorize one section at a time.  
 If you miss a day, do not try to do double the work. Just pick it up where you left off, and determine to be faithful to the task.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 <b>Ooey Gooley</b> author unknown                           | 13 <b>Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore</b> by William Brighty Rands |
| 2 <b>Celery</b> by Ogden Nash                                 | 14 <b>My Gift</b> by Christina Rossetti                         |
| 3 <b>The Little Man Who Wasn't There</b> by Hughes Mearns     | 15 <b>The Swing</b> by Robert Louis Stevenson                   |
| 4 <b>The Vulture</b> by Hilaire Belloc                        | 16 <b>Persevere</b> author unknown                              |
| 5 <b>After the Party</b> by William Wise                      | 17 <b>Who Has Seen the Wind?</b> by Christina Rossetti          |
| 6 <b>Singing Time</b> by Rose Fyleman                         | 18 <b>The Eagle</b> by Alfred, Lord Tennyson                    |
| 7 <b>The Yak</b> by Hilaire Belloc                            | 19 <b>The Swan and the Goose</b> by William Ellery Leonard      |
| 8 <b>The Ingenious Little Old Man</b> by John Bennett         | 20 <b>Personal selection</b> (8 lines or shorter):              |
| 9 <b>My Shadow</b> by Robert Louis Stevenson                  |   |
| 10 <b>There Was an Old Person Whose Habits</b> by Edward Lear |   |
| 11 <b>Jonathan Bing</b> by Beatrice Curtis Brown              |   |
| 12 <b>Whole Duty of Children</b> by Robert Louis Stevenson    |   |

Below, check off the day when you have recited all of the poems you have learned to date.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
Aug																																
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Dec																																
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Jun																																
Jul																																

This page is included in the Student Book. Have students use the list and the calendar to chart their progress through Level One.

To help students remember which poems to practice, have them highlight each poem they are working on. Each day they should practice all of the highlighted poems.

Using the audio CDs is helpful since students can recite along with the audio and also listen to the poems while in the car or eating lunch.

Whatever you do, keep the program light and fun. If your students are struggling to keep up, then modify how you are using the program so that it will continue to be a joy.



1.

## Ooey Gooley

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Ooey Gooley was a worm,  
A mighty worm was he.  
He stepped upon the railroad tracks,  
The train he did not see!  
Oooey Gooley!

See Appendix 3 for optional lesson enhancements for each of the poems.

Several versions of “Ooey Gooley” seem to be floating around, and even the spelling of the title is in question. I have chosen the one I like most, but don’t be surprised if you come across variations.

2.

## Celery

BY OGDEN NASH

Celery, raw,  
Develops the jaw,  
But celery, stewed,  
Is more quietly chewed.

For your convenience, poet biographies are located in Appendix 1.

20.

## Personal selection

For the last poem in this level, students are given the opportunity to make their own selection. Guide them to choose a poem eight lines or shorter, but if they prefer a longer one, that is fine.

You may enjoy looking into the work of more modern poets such as Shel Silverstein and Jack Prelutsky, who both wrote many books of delightful (and often silly) poems for children. A bibliography of anthologies is provided for you in Appendix 2.

Once the poem is selected, have students copy it onto the personal selection page in the Student Book.

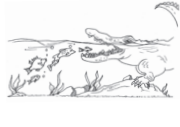
If you are having a hard time choosing a poem, here are a few suggestions. Some are old, and some are more modern.

- “Dora Diller” by Jack Prelutsky
- “The Little Boy and the Old Man” by Shel Silverstein
- “Anteater” by Shel Silverstein
- “Grizzly Bear” by Mary Austin
- “I’m Nobody! Who Are You?” by Emily Dickinson


# Level Two

Sample


LEVEL: Year 2  
**1. How Doth the Little Crocodile**  
An easy exercise.  
How doth the little crocodile  
Amour for himself beg,  
Of the green grass of the field,  
To eat the grass which he eat?  
How doth the little crocodile  
His body to himself begone,  
And with a smile his face,  
With gentle words to say?




LEVEL: Year 2  
**2. At the Seaside**  
An easy exercise.  
When I was down beside the sea  
I could see the waves so free,  
The sun was shining on the sky,  
And the wind was in my eye,  
I saw a boat upon the water,  
And a man upon the shore,  
I saw a child upon the sand,  
And a dog upon the strand,  
I saw a man upon the beach,  
And a woman upon the sea,  
I saw a child upon the sand,  
And a dog upon the strand,  
I saw a man upon the beach,  
And a woman upon the sea,




LEVEL: Year 2  
**3. Rebecca, Who Slammed Doors for Fun and Perished Miserably**  
An easy exercise.  
Rebecca never talked nor sang,  
But she would slam her doors so bang,  
And she would slam her doors so bang,  
And she would slam her doors so bang,  
And she would slam her doors so bang,  
And she would slam her doors so bang,  
And she would slam her doors so bang,  
And she would slam her doors so bang,  
And she would slam her doors so bang,  
And she would slam her doors so bang,  
And she would slam her doors so bang,  
And she would slam her doors so bang,



LEVEL: Year 2  
**4. Fog**  
An easy exercise.  
The fog came on so thick and fast,  
That great grey foggy masses  
Swirled and puff'd and blew about in wads,  
And eddied about and down the road,  
And eddied about and down the road,  
And eddied about and down the road,  
And eddied about and down the road,  
And eddied about and down the road,  
And eddied about and down the road,  
And eddied about and down the road,  
And eddied about and down the road,




LEVEL: Year 2  
**5. Some One**  
An easy exercise.  
Some one came knocking  
At my chamber door,  
Some one came knocking  
At my chamber door,  
Some one came knocking  
At my chamber door,  
Some one came knocking  
At my chamber door,  
Some one came knocking  
At my chamber door,  
Some one came knocking  
At my chamber door,  
Some one came knocking  
At my chamber door,  
Some one came knocking  
At my chamber door,




LEVEL: Year 2  
**6. The Duke of Plaza-Toro**  
An easy exercise.  
The duke of Plaza-Toro  
Was a very handsome fellow,  
Who rode a Spanish steed,  
A big one with a golden head,  
And he was very rich and grand,<  
And he was very rich and grand,  
And he was very rich and grand,  
And he was very rich and grand,  
And he was very rich and grand,  
And he was very rich and grand,  
And he was very rich and grand,  
And he was very rich and grand,




LEVEL: Year 2  
**7. God and the Soldier**  
An easy exercise.  
God and the soldier  
Were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,




LEVEL: Year 2  
**8. Jabberwocky**  
An easy exercise.  
'Twas brillig and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the woves,  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.  
'Beware Jabberwock, my son!  
For those who'd buy you eat!  
Be sure you prove your elox  
Against the borogoves!  
And that's all the story that's true,<  
That one day, just like you and I,  
I ate a wabbling double-decker!  
And his jaws were like a hammer,  
And his jaws were like a hammer,  
And his jaws were like a hammer,  
And his jaws were like a hammer,




LEVEL: Year 2  
**9. The Height of the Ridiculous**  
An easy exercise.  
I never remember once to show  
The height of the ridiculous,  
And though it would be good to see,  
The height of the ridiculous,  
The height of the ridiculous,  
The height of the ridiculous,  
The height of the ridiculous,  
The height of the ridiculous,  
The height of the ridiculous,  
The height of the ridiculous,  
The height of the ridiculous,  
The height of the ridiculous,  
The height of the ridiculous,




LEVEL: Year 2  
**10. The Spider and the Fly**  
An easy exercise.  
'Twas on a sunny day in June,  
That the spider and the fly  
Were seen together,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,




LEVEL: Year 2  
**11. Trees**  
An easy exercise.  
I think that I shall never see  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,




LEVEL: Year 2  
**12. Ballad of the Tempest**  
An easy exercise.  
We were walking in the rain,  
And the wind was in our hair,  
And the wind was in our hair,  
And the wind was in our hair,  
And the wind was in our hair,  
And the wind was in our hair,  
And the wind was in our hair,  
And the wind was in our hair,  
And the wind was in our hair,  
And the wind was in our hair,  
And the wind was in our hair,  
And the wind was in our hair,




LEVEL: Year 2  
**13. The Charge of the Light Brigade**  
An easy exercise.  
'Rodeo! 'Rodeo! 'Rodeo!  
The Charge of the Light Brigade,  
The Charge of the Light Brigade,  
The Charge of the Light Brigade,  
The Charge of the Light Brigade,  
The Charge of the Light Brigade,  
The Charge of the Light Brigade,  
The Charge of the Light Brigade,  
The Charge of the Light Brigade,  
The Charge of the Light Brigade,  
The Charge of the Light Brigade,  
The Charge of the Light Brigade,




LEVEL: Year 2  
**14. Sea Fever**  
An easy exercise.  
I want to see the waves  
And feel the wind in my hair,  
And feel the wind in my hair,  
And feel the wind in my hair,  
And feel the wind in my hair,  
And feel the wind in my hair,  
And feel the wind in my hair,  
And feel the wind in my hair,  
And feel the wind in my hair,  
And feel the wind in my hair,  
And feel the wind in my hair,  
And feel the wind in my hair,




LEVEL: Year 2  
**15. Shoes**  
An easy exercise.  
I think that I shall never see  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,




LEVEL: Year 2  
**16. The Grove and the Lions**  
An easy exercise.  
King Herod once had a garden  
And in it he had a lion,  
And in it he had a lion,  
And in it he had a lion,  
And in it he had a lion,  
And in it he had a lion,  
And in it he had a lion,  
And in it he had a lion,  
And in it he had a lion,  
And in it he had a lion,  
And in it he had a lion,  
And in it he had a lion,




LEVEL: Year 2  
**17. Conscience and Remorse**  
An easy exercise.  
Conscience and remorse  
Were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,  
And they were very good friends,




LEVEL: Year 2  
**18. Stopping Woods on a Snowy Evening**  
An easy exercise.  
Whispering woods so silent,  
I have promised to keep,  
I have promised to keep,  
I have promised to keep,  
I have promised to keep,  
I have promised to keep,  
I have promised to keep,  
I have promised to keep,  
I have promised to keep,  
I have promised to keep,  
I have promised to keep,  
I have promised to keep,



LEVEL: Year 2  
**19. Project**  
An easy exercise.  
The project was very good,  
And it was very good,  
And it was very good,  
And it was very good,  
And it was very good,  
And it was very good,  
And it was very good,  
And it was very good,  
And it was very good,  
And it was very good,  
And it was very good,  
And it was very good,



LEVEL: Year 2  
**20. Personal selection**  
An easy exercise.  
I think that I shall never see  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,  
A poem like the old one,



## 8.

**Jabberwocky**

BY LEWIS CARROLL

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
 Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:  
 All mimsy were the borogoves,  
 And the mome raths outgrabe.

“Beware the Jabberwock, my son!  
 The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!  
 Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun  
 The frumious Bandersnatch!”

He took his vorpal sword in hand:  
 Long time the manxome foe he sought—  
 So rested he by the Tumtum tree,  
 And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,  
 The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,  
 Came whiffing through the tulgey wood,  
 And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through  
 The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!  
 He left it dead, and with its head  
 He went galumphing back.


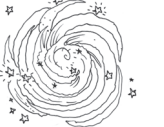

“And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?  
 Come to my arms, my beamish boy!  
 O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!”  
 He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
 Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:  
 All mimsy were the borogoves,  
 And the mome raths outgrabe.

This poem is included in Carroll's 1871 novel *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*, which is a sequel to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

# Level Three

Sample

<p>1. <b>A Young Lady Named Bright</b> © 2010 W&amp;A</p> 	<p>2. <b>A Psalm of Life</b> © 2010 W&amp;A</p>	<p>3. <b>The Road Not Taken</b> © 2010 W&amp;A</p>	<p>4. <b>O Captain! My Captain!</b> © 2010 W&amp;A</p>	<p>5. <b>Matilda, Who Told Lies, and Was Burned to Death</b> © 2010 W&amp;A</p>
<p>6. <b>Scintillate, Scintillate, Glibbete Wificc!</b> © 2010 W&amp;A</p> 	<p>7. <b>What I Live For</b> © 2010 W&amp;A</p>	<p>8. <b>Courage</b> © 2010 W&amp;A</p> 	<p>9. <b>Grandfather's Clock</b> © 2010 W&amp;A</p>	<p>10. <b>The Touch of the Master's Hand</b> © 2010 W&amp;A</p>
<p>11. <b>The Unknown Soldier</b> © 2010 W&amp;A</p>	<p>12. <b>The Pessimist      The Optimist</b> © 2010 W&amp;A</p>	<p>13. <b>The Fool's Prayer</b> © 2010 W&amp;A</p>	<p>14. <b>Casey at the Bat</b> © 1891 W&amp;A 1947 W&amp;A</p>	<p>15. <b>He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven</b> © 2010 W&amp;A</p> 
<p>16. <b>The Destruction of Sennacherib</b> © 1819 W&amp;A</p>	<p>17. <b>The Village Blacksmith</b> © 1819 W&amp;A</p>	<p>18. <b>When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer</b> © 1893 W&amp;A</p> 	<p>19. <b>Casey's Revenge</b> © 1891 W&amp;A 1947 W&amp;A</p>	<p>20. <b>Personal selection</b> © 2010 W&amp;A</p>

# 11. The Unknown Soldier

BY BILLY ROSE

There's a graveyard near the White House  
Where the Unknown Soldier lies,  
And the flowers there are sprinkled  
With the tears from mother's eyes.

I stood there not so long ago  
With roses for the brave,  
And suddenly I heard a voice  
Speak from out the grave:

"I am the Unknown Soldier,"  
The spirit voice began,  
"And I think I have the right  
To ask some questions man to man.

Are my buddies taken care of?  
Was their victory so sweet?  
Is that big reward you offered  
Selling pencils on the street?

Did they really win the freedom  
They battled to achieve?  
Do you still respect that *Croix de Guerre*  
Above that empty sleeve?

Does a gold star in the window  
Now mean anything at all?  
I wonder how my old girl feels  
When she hears a bugle call.

And that baby who sang  
'Hello, Central, give me no man's land'—  
Can they replace her daddy  
With a military band?

I wonder if the profiteers  
Have satisfied their greed?  
I wonder if a soldier's mother  
Ever is in need?

I wonder if the kings, who planned it all  
Are really satisfied?  
They played their game of checkers  
And eleven million died.

I am the Unknown Soldier  
And maybe I died in vain,  
But if I were alive and my country called,  
I'd do it all over again."

The Tomb of the **Unknown Soldier** lies in Arlington Cemetery on a hill overlooking Washington, D.C. An unidentified soldier from World War I, "the war to end all wars," lies there. On the sarcophagus is inscribed, "Here rests in honored glory an American soldier known but to God."

**Selling pencils on the street** is an allusion to poverty. The poor are not looking for a handout, but the earnings from their sales would be meager indeed.

The **Croix de Guerre**, or Cross of War, is a French military decoration awarded to soldiers who distinguish themselves by acts of heroism during combat with the enemy.

A **gold star in the window** represents a military family member who was killed in action.

"**Hello, Central**" is a song released in 1918 about a child who tries to call her father in no man's land, the area under dispute in WWI. She cannot reach him because he was killed fighting on the Western Front.



# Level Four

Sample



## 4. Lochinvar

BY SIR WALTER SCOTT

O, young Lochinvar is come out of the west,  
Through all the wide Border his steed was the best,  
And save his good broadsword he weapons had none;  
He rode all unarmed, and he rode all alone.  
So faithful in love, and so dauntless in war,  
There never was knight like the young Lochinvar.

He stayed not for brake, and he stopped not for stone,  
He swam the Eske river where ford there was none;  
But, ere he alighted at Netherby gate,  
The bride had consented, the gallant came late:  
For a laggard in love, and a dastard in war,  
Was to wed the fair Ellen of brave Lochinvar.

So boldly he entered the Netherby hall,  
Among bride's-men and kinsmen, and brothers and all;  
Then spoke the bride's father, his hand on his sword  
(For the poor craven bridegroom said never a word),  
"O come ye in peace here, or come ye in war,  
Or to dance at our bridal, young Lord Lochinvar?"

"I long wooed your daughter, my suit you denied;—  
Love swells like the Solway, but ebbs like its tide—  
And now I am come, with this lost love of mine,  
To lead but one measure, drink one cup of wine.  
There are maidens in Scotland more lovely by far,  
That would gladly be bride to the young Lochinvar."

The bride kissed the goblet; the knight took it up,  
He quaffed off the wine, and he threw down the cup,  
She looked down to blush, and she looked up to sigh,  
With a smile on her lips and a tear in her eye.  
He took her soft hand, ere her mother could bar,—  
"Now tread we a measure!" said young Lochinvar.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE >

Narrative poems like "Lochinvar" can be studied and rewritten according to the Story Sequence Chart, which is part of the IEW Structure and Style syllabus. Such rewriting will greatly enhance understanding of the poem itself.

### STORY SEQUENCE CHART

- I. Characters and Setting
  - Who is in the story?
  - What are they like?
  - When does it happen?
  - Where do they live/go?
- II. Plot or Problem
  - What do they need/want?
  - What do they think?
  - What do they say and do?
- III. Climax and Resolution
  - How is the problem/need resolved?
  - What happens after?
  - What is learned? (message, moral, epilog)
  - Story clincher → Title

**quaff:** to drink a beverage heartily

So stately his form, and so lovely her face,  
 That never a hall such a galliard did grace;  
 While her mother did fret, and her father did fume,  
 And the bridegroom stood dangling his bonnet and plume;  
 And the bride-maidens whispered, "Twere better by far  
 To have matched our fair cousin with young Lochinvar."

One touch to her hand, and one word in her ear,  
 When they reached the hall door, and the charger stood near;  
 So light to the croupe the fair lady he swung,  
 So light to the saddle before her he sprung!  
 "She is won! We are gone, over bank, bush, and scaur;  
 They'll have fleet steeds that follow," quoth young Lochinvar.

There was mounting 'mong Graemes of the Netherby clan;  
 Forsters, Fenwicks, and Musgraves, they rode and they ran;  
 There was racing, and chasing, on Cannobie Lee,  
 But the lost bride of Netherby ne'er did they see.  
 So daring in love, and so dauntless in war,  
 Have ye e'er heard of gallant like young Lochinvar?

**galliard:** a spirited dance popular during the Renaissance. The dance involves rapid, intricate steps, permitting the gentlemen to show off their athletic prowess. The dance also involves a wooing pantomime with the men pursuing their coyly retreating partners.

# Level Five

Sample

## 4. St. Crispin's Day Speech from *Henry V*

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564–1616)

*In addition to comedies and tragedies, William Shakespeare wrote historical plays.*

*The play leads up to the famous Battle of Agincourt between England and France, fought on St. Crispin's Day in 1415. The English were hopelessly outnumbered, five to one. As King Henry enters, the Earl of Westmoreland laments, "Oh that we now had here but one ten thousand of those men in England that do no work today!" This speech below is part of Henry's reply, made not only to Westmoreland, but to all his men. Despite the odds, England won the battle.*

Written in 1599, *Henry V* is the fourth play in a four-part series following the rise of the House of Lancaster. For more about the play, visit [sparknotes.com](http://sparknotes.com) or [shmoop.com](http://shmoop.com).

### From Shakespeare's *Henry V*

No, my fair cousin; If we are mark'd to die, we are  
enow

To do our country loss; and if to live,  
The fewer men, the greater share of honour.  
God's will! I pray thee, wish not one man more.  
By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,  
Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost;  
It yearns me not if men my garments wear;  
Such outward things dwell not in my desires.  
But if it be a sin to covet honour,  
I am the most offending soul alive.

This day is call'd the feast of Crispian.  
He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,  
Will stand a tip-toe when this day is nam'd,  
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.  
He that shall live this day, and see old age,  
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,  
And say "To-morrow is Saint Crispian."  
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars,  
And say "These wounds I had on Crispian's day."

Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot,  
But he'll remember, with advantages,  
What feats he did that day. Then shall our names,  
Familiar in his mouth as household words—  
Harry the King, Bedford and Exeter,  
Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester—  
Be in their flowing cups freshly rememb'ed.  
This story shall the good man teach his son;  
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,  
From this day to the ending of the world,  
But we in it shall be remembered—  
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;  
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,  
This day shall gentle his condition;  
And gentlemen in England now-a-bed  
Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here,  
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks  
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

**Henry V** is pronounced "Henry the Fifth."

**enow**: enough

**Feast of Crispian**: St. Crispin's Day, October 25, is the feast day of Saints Crispin and Crispinian, twins who were

martyred in 286. Interestingly, other famous battles were fought on this date, most notably the Battle of Balaclava, made famous in Tennyson's "The Charge of the Light Brigade."

**Bedford and Gloucester** were two of Henry's three younger brothers. Exeter, Westmoreland, Salisbury, and Warwick were trusted advisors to the king. Exeter was also Henry's uncle. Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury was a famous commander serving Henry IV, V, and VI.

# Appendix 1

## BIOGRAPHIES

Sample

## A

Growing up in New England surrounded by her father's peers—among whom were Hawthorne, Emerson, and Thoreau—the prodigious author **Louisa May Alcott** (1832–1888) wrote books, plays, poems, and short stories. Her outstanding novels wove charming tales about families like her own. Her greatest books, *Little Women*, *Little Men*, and *Jo's Boys*, are considered classics of American Literature.

- ▶ *A Song from the Suds*, page 105

**Dave Arns** is achieving literary notoriety with his amusing thesaurus poetry. His recent collection *Mother Goose, Ph.D.*, was imagined in 1987. Thesaurus poetry challenges the reader to translate intellectual, technical verbiage into what are actually familiar rhymes that have been cleverly obscured through the use of synonyms.

- ▶ *Scintillate, Scintillate, Globule Vivific*, page 69

## B

**George Linnaeus Banks** (1821–1881) was a British journalist, editor, poet, and playwright. His wife, Isabella, was also a published poet and novelist. His father was a horticulturalist, which may explain his middle name.

- ▶ *What I Live For*, page 70

**Hilaire Belloc** (1870–1953) was a prolific writer of novels, poetry, and essays; a captivating speaker, he toured the United States. Belloc, usually embroiled in controversy, held a seat in Parliament. Along with his contemporary G.K. Chesterton, he espoused moral and economic theories that denounced Socialism and favored both small farmers and businesses.

- ▶ *The Vulture*, page 26
- ▶ *The Yak*, page 28
- ▶ *Rebecca, Who Slammed Doors for Fun and Perished Miserably*, page 42
- ▶ *Matilda, Who Told Lies, and Was Burned to Death*, page 68

**William John Bennett** was born in 1943 of a middle-class family. He grew up in Brooklyn, New York, and became a scholar and a teacher, stating that heroic American men such as Abraham Lincoln and Roy Campanella were his role models.

- ▶ *The Ingenious Little Old Man*, page 29

**William Blake** (1757–1827) was artistically gifted in writing, engraving, drawing, and painting. He was born and raised in England, and he reported that his mystical writings and spiritual works of art followed from the visions he received of the angels and saints. “The Tiger” is his most famous poem.

- ▶ *The Tiger*, page 94



# Appendix 2

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Sample

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# Appendix 3

## OPTIONAL LESSON ENHANCEMENTS

Sample

# Level One Lesson Enhancements

These optional lesson enhancements offer suggested activities that can be used to study the elements of poetry as well as integrate other subjects into the poetry memorization. The suggestions are completely optional; do not feel obligated to do them.

## 1. Ooey Gooley

**SCIENCE.** Study kinds of worms.

**WRITING.** Use the poem as a pattern. Change the worm to another animal, and substitute other verbs and adjectives. “Ooey Gooley was a fly ... the windshield wiper he did not see.” Note: Several versions of “Ooey Gooley” seem to be floating around, and even the spelling of the title is in question. I have chosen the one I like most, but don’t be surprised if you come across variations.

**CHARACTER.** Discuss how the mighty can fall.

**IRONY.** Enjoy the irony: What happened to the mighty worm? Also, ask: Can worms step? Can worms see?

## 2. Celery

**LITERATURE.** Read the story “Stone Soup” and make a batch using a stone. Find one version of the story on the poetry help page: [IEW.com/LDP-info](http://IEW.com/LDP-info).

**SCIENCE.** Compare the vegetables before and after cooking.

**NUTRITION.** Study how fiber is important to diet.

## 3. The Little Man

**POETIC ELEMENTS.** Find the rhyming words in the poem: *stair/there, today/away*. Notice the phonograms that sound the same but are spelled differently: *air/ere*.

**VOCABULARY.** Discuss imaginary friends.

**SCIENCE.** Study the architecture of stairs. There are many different kinds.

# Level Two Lesson Enhancements

These optional lesson enhancements offer suggested activities that can be used to study the elements of poetry as well as integrate other subjects into the poetry memorization. The suggestions are completely optional; do not feel obligated to do them.

## 1. How Doth the Little Crocodile

**LITERARY DEVICES.** Note the **personification** by which the crocodile is given human characteristics: *cheerfully he seems to grin, neatly spreads his jaws.*

Also note the **imagery**: *And pour the waters of the Nile on every golden scale.* Imagery is the use of descriptive language that helps the reader imagine a vivid picture. It usually enhances the mood, or feeling, of the poem.

Notice also the use of a **triple extension** in the second stanza: *cheerfully, neatly, gently.*

**SCIENCE.** Study the crocodile and contrast with alligators.

**GEOGRAPHY.** Find the Nile River on the map and study that river.

**LITERATURE.** With young children, enjoy *Lyle the Crocodile* books.

## 2. At the Seaside

**LITERARY DEVICES.** This poem includes a **simile**: *like a cup*. Discuss how the simile adds to the meaning of the poem.

Another device is **allusion**: An author hints at another piece of literature or historical event to add meaning to the poem. In this poem there are allusions connecting the empty cup to common phrases: *my cup overflows, my cup is empty, take this cup from me*. Discuss those allusions and how understanding them adds meaning to the poem.

**SCIENCE.** Study tide pools, seashores, and estuaries. Discover what kinds of plants and animals live there.

**ART.** Make things out of sand, such as sand candles. Explore pictures of sand castles online. Some people have been very creative in their construction!

# Level Three Lesson Enhancements

These optional lesson enhancements offer suggested activities that can be used to study the elements of poetry as well as integrate other subjects into the poetry memorization. The suggestions are completely optional; do not feel obligated to do them.

## 1. A Young Lady Named Bright

**LITERARY DEVICES.** A trope is any literary device in which words are used in something other than their literal meaning. This limerick displays the trope of **hyperbole** in its exaggeration of the speed of travel.

Another trope is **puns** in which there is a play on words. Here, her name was Bright; light is bright. *Relative* hints at Einstein's theory of relativity which explains laws of motion.

**POETRY.** Have your students try their hand at writing a limerick. Guidelines are available at [IEW.com/LDP-info](http://IEW.com/LDP-info).

## 2. A Psalm of Life

**LITERARY DEVICES.** Find the many literary devices used in this poem.

- › **Metaphor:** Life is an empty dream.
- › **Simile:** like dumb, driven cattle.
- › **Synecdoche:** The soul is representing one's being; footprints represent the evidence left behind after one's death.
- › **Onomatopoeia:** muffled drums.

**POETRY.** Longfellow wrote several other psalms of life: "The Light of Stars: A Second Psalm of Life" in 1838, "Voices of the Night: A Third Psalm of Life," and "The Reaper and the Flowers: A Psalm of Death." Some of these poems were written in response to the death of someone close to Longfellow.

Discuss how poetry can be a balm during times of sorrow.

**BIOGRAPHY.** Longfellow wrote this poem after studying the work of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Study one or both of these men.

## Level Four Lesson Enhancements

These optional lesson enhancements offer suggested activities that can be used to study the elements of poetry as well as integrate other subjects into the poetry memorization. The suggestions are completely optional; do not feel obligated to do them.

### 1. The Embarrassing Episode of Little Miss Muffet

**LITERARY DEVICES.** Carryl employed the use of **puns**, or wordplay, in the moral of this poem: *you're rude when you get in the whey*.

**LITERATURE.** Enjoy more of Carryl's parodies, available at [gutenberg.org](http://gutenberg.org):

- ▶ *Grimm Tales Made Gay*
- ▶ *Mother Goose for Grown-ups*
- ▶ *Fables for the Frivolous*

### 2. The Tiger

**LITERARY DEVICES.** This poem is full of **rhetorical questions** which are not intended to be answered but rather encourage the reader to remember things they already know.

Explore the use of **imagery** or description, and discuss how it adds to the tone of the poem.

**POETIC ELEMENTS.** Note the **slant rhyme**: eye/symmetry. Poets use slant rhyme intentionally to produce tension.

Notice the repetition of the first and last stanzas. In some ways, this works like a topic-clincher. The first stanza invites the reader to consider something. The body of the poem explores the topic, and the clincher restates the topic, which can now be read with better understanding.

**POETRY.** Blake wrote a counterpart to "The Tiger" entitled "The Lamb." Find it online and compare the poems.