Dear Educator:

Recently, I met a second-grade teacher who floored me by telling me that he recites one of my poems to his students every day, and that he’s been doing it for 20 years. As flattering and impressive as that is, I certainly don’t expect you to emulate him. However, I think that the notion of sharing a poem daily with your own students is utterly wonderful.

There’s something about poetry that sinks into us and livens our minds and our senses. It can show us new ways of seeing the world, turn the mundane into the spectacular, and turn the ridiculous into the serious . . . and vice versa. With just a few well-chosen words, a poet can weave a tapestry of wonder, and create surprise and delight out of things as diverse as hiccups, robots, bugs, and baseball.

I hope that you enjoy sharing my poems, as well as the poems of my colleagues, with your students. Recite these poems to them with enthusiasm . . . you’ll discover that your students will be enthusiastic too.

~Jack Prelutsky

Celebrate Poetry Month with Random House Children’s Books

Preparation for Poetry Month

Make your classroom poetry-friendly. Hang poster boards with poems written on them from the ceiling, on the bulletin board, and off the side of your desk. Here’s a great one to start with:

A POEM IS A LITTLE PATH

A poem is a little path
That leads you through the trees.
It takes you to the cliffs and shores
To anywhere you please.

Follow it and trust your way
With mind and heart as one,
And when the journey’s over,
You’ll find you’ve just begun.

—Charles Ghigna from The 20th-Century Children’s Poetry Treasury

© 1992 by Charles Ghigna

Get ready to immerse your students in poetry! Work with the school librarian to gather as many poetry books as you can to share with your budding poets.

Sign up for the free Teachers @ Random e-mail newsletter and you will receive a poem a day for the month of April that you can share with students. Go to www.randomhouse.com/teachers to sign up.

Illustrations © 1997, 1999 Meilo So.

© 1992 by Charles Ghigna

Jack Prelutsky is our nation’s first-ever Children’s Poet Laureate!
Week 1: Meet Jack Prelutsky

DAY 1: Surround students with the genius of Jack Prelutsky. Make all of his books available for the class to browse. Have the class check out the poet's interactive Web site at www.jackprelutsky.com and get to know him as a friend.

DAY 2: In his newest book, Good Sports, Jack celebrates the joy of participating in sports boys and girls play. Have students read a few of the poems aloud. Discuss why the book's title is so appropriate. Do you have to be a good athlete to be a good sport?

DAY 3: Share with students the fabulous shape poems on pages 42–43 of The 20th-Century Children’s Poetry Treasury. Discuss how the physical layout of the poems works with the words. Challenge students to write and design their own shape poems. Create a bulletin board to display the creations.

DAY 4: Read aloud Jack's introduction to the “Nonsense!” section on page 168 of The Random House Book of Poetry for Children. Then read it along with the class at a slower pace. Talk about the fun of the rhymes and the lively language. Why is it so much fun to be silly? Have students try their hand at a poem that might fit into the “Nonsense!” category.

DAY 5: Have students write a poem congratulating Jack on being named our nation’s first-ever Children’s Poet Laureate.

Week 2: Poemstarts—Where Will Your Poem End Up Going?

DAY 1: Introduce Jack Prelutsky’s Read a Rhyme, Write a Rhyme to the class. Copy one of the poemstarts on the board and see how many directions it can go in.

DAY 2: Hand out the poetry journals inside this kit. There are original poemstarts by Jack Prelutsky that will get students’ creative energy flowing.

DAY 3: Have students write their own poemstarts, and then trade papers with a partner and finish each other's poems.

DAY 4: Have students bring home a poemstart and complete the poem with a family member.

DAY 5: Host a read-aloud hour where students can read their best poem from the classroom or from home that started with a poemstart.

My friend and I play Frisbee
In the summer in the park.
I flip the frisbee to her,
It describes a graceful arc.

She runs and tries to catch it,
And I watch her miss and fall—
We both like playing Frisbee,
Though we aren’t good at all.

—From Good Sports by Jack Prelutsky
© 2007 by Jack Prelutsky
Week 3: Budding Anthologists

DAY 1: Jack Prelutsky has selected poems for several acclaimed poetry anthologies. Lead a class discussion about the format of *The Random House Book of Poetry for Children*. The anthology is divided into 16 sections and it includes a table of contents, as well as an index by author, title, first line, and subject. Why is order so important in an anthology?

DAY 2: In his introductory letter in *The Random House Book of Poetry for Children*, Jack talks about his target audience of elementary school students and how he chose poems based on what he knew about them. Discuss the concept of a target audience. What type of poems would students select for an anthology for their parents, their younger siblings, their teachers, etc.?

DAY 3: Mello So is the illustrator of three anthologies selected by Jack: *Read a Rhyme, Write a Rhyme;* *The Beauty of the Beast;* and *The 20th-Century Children’s Poetry Treasury*. Have students take a look at her gorgeous art in the three books. How do the illustrations help the poems come to life?

DAYS 4–5: Now that students understand the concept of an anthology, put together a classroom poetry anthology. As a class decide on the target audience and a catchy title. Next have each student choose a poem that inspires him/her—the poems can be by published poets or by fellow students. Read the selected poems beforehand and decide on a list of categories for the anthology. Write the categories on the board, and as you read each poem aloud to the class ask for volunteers to come up and write the poem name in the category it best fits into.

Type up the anthology and ask for a few volunteers to illustrate the anthology. Depending on the age of your students, you may want to assign the table of contents and index to volunteers. Make copies for each student to bring home and share with their families.

Week 4: Just for Fun!

DAY 1: Have students send a poem-a-gram to a friend in another class.

DAY 2: Make a class recording of students reading their favorite poems or their original poems.

DAY 3: Host a poetry writing contest where the winner reads his or her poem over the loudspeaker for the whole school to hear.

DAY 4: Invite family members in for tea or punch and have the students read a poem for their guests of honor.

DAY 5: Set aside free time for the class to enjoy poetry. Students can write a poem, read a poem, share a poem with a friend, or illustrate a poem.
Build your classroom's poetry collection!

Selected by Jack Prelutsky

The 20th-Century Children's Poetry Treasury
Illustrated by Meilo So
Alfred A. Knopf
HC: 978-0-679-89314-1 (0-679-89314-8)

The Beauty of the Beast: Poems from the Animal Kingdom
Illustrated by Meilo So
Alfred A. Knopf
HC: 978-0-679-87058-6 (0-679-87058-X)
GLB: 978-0-679-97058-3 (0-679-97058-4)

For Laughing Out Loud: Poems to Tick your Funnybone
Illustrated by Marjorie Priceman
Alfred A. Knopf
HC: 978-0-394-82144-3 (0-394-82144-0)

Read a Rhyme, Write a Rhyme
Illustrated by Meilo So
Alfred A. Knopf
HC: 978-0-375-82286-5 (0-375-82286-0)
GLB: 978-0-375-92286-2 (0-375-92286-5)

The Camel's Lament
Illustrated by Charles Santore
Random House
HC: 978-0-375-81426-6 (0-375-81426-4)

Doggiegary Paulsen
Dragonfly
PB: 978-0-440-41330-7 (0-440-41330-0)

Good Dog
Maya Gottfried
Illustrated by Robert Rahway Zakanitch
Dragonfly
PB: 978-0-553-11383-9 (0-553-11383-6)

Hailstones and Halibut Bones
Mary O'Neill
Illustrated by John Wallner
Doubleday
PB: 978-0-385-41078-6 (0-385-41078-6)

Ready... Set... Read!
Joanna Cole and Stephanie Calmenson
Doubleday
HC: 978-0-385-41416-6 (0-385-41416-1)

More Poetry

For Younger Readers

Beastly Rhymes to Read After Dark
Judy Sierra
Illustrated by Brian Biggs
Alfred A. Knopf
HC: 978-0-375-83747-0 (0-375-83747-7)

The Dream Keeper and Other Poems
Langston Hughes
Alfred A. Knopf
PB: 978-0-679-88347-0 (0-679-88347-9)
HC: 978-0-679-84421-1 (0-679-84421-X)
GLB: 978-0-679-94421-8 (0-679-94421-4)

Roald Dahl's Revolting Rhymes
Roald Dahl
Alfred A. Knopf
HC: 978-0-375-81556-0 (0-375-81556-2)

For Middle-Grade Readers

Schoolyard Rhymes: Kids' Own Rhymes for Rope-Skipping, Hand Clapping, Ball Bouncing, and Just Plain Fun
Judy Sierra
Illustrated by Melissa Sweet
Alfred A. Knopf
HC: 978-0-375-82516-3 (0-375-82516-9)

Roald Dahl's Revolting Rhymes
Roald Dahl
Alfred A. Knopf
HC: 978-0-375-81094-7 (0-375-81094-3)

For Young Adult Readers

Girl Coming In for a Landing
April Halprin Wayland
Illustrated by Elaine Clayton
Yearling
PB: 978-0-440-41903-7 (0-440-41903-4)

How to Cross a Pond: Poems About Water
Alfred A. Knopf
GLB: 978-0-375-93799-6 (0-375-93799-4)

For All Readers

Favorite Poems: Old and New
Helen Ferris
Doubleday
HC: 978-0-385-07696-8 (0-385-07696-7)

A beautiful picture book about Emily Dickinson:

Emily
Michael Bedard
Illustrated by Barbara Cooney
Dragonfly
PB: 978-0-440-41470-8 (0-440-41470-6)
Doubleday
HC: 978-0-385-30697-3 (0-385-30697-0)

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Your Own, Sylvia: A Verse Portrait of Sylvia Plath
Stephanie Hemphill
Alfred A. Knopf
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GLB: 978-0-375-93799-4

For Middle-Grade Readers

The Random House Book of Poetry for Children
Illustrated by Arnold Lobel
Random House
HC: 978-0-394-97218-3 (0-394-97218-5)

Doggiegary Paulsen
Dragonfly
PB: 978-0-440-41330-7 (0-440-41330-0)

Good Dog
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