

a Poem *in Your Pocket

By Margaret McNamara
Illustrated by G. Brian Karas
From the creators of
HOW MANY SEEDS IN A PUMPKIN?

Grades:
Preschool–3
Ages:
4–8 years

Elinor studies all sorts of poems in preparation for poet Emmy Crane’s visit to her school. She writes dozens of poems, but none are worthy of sharing. Her classmates expect her poems to be perfect, and Elinor knows they are not. The day of Ms. Crane’s visit arrives, and Elinor’s classmates have lined their pockets with poems. Elinor’s single, lonely pocket is empty. Ms. Crane gently helps Elinor understand the magic of poetry—especially those heartfelt poems that are not yet written down.

Through Margaret McNamara’s reflective text and G. Brian Karas’s complementary art, young readers will discover many different poetic forms and techniques. More importantly, they will see that our best work comes when we write from our hearts.



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Key Ideas and Details:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1
Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2
Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3
Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4
Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.5
Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6
Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7
Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.8
Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9
Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10
Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

This guide is aligned with the Common Core Curriculum standards. Educators can easily find grade-specific standards at www.corestandards.org, which is where the following anchor standards are found.

Pre-Reading

- *A Poem in Your Pocket* is a work of fiction. All of the typical opportunities to analyze character, setting, problem, and resolution are here to find and use. This book, however, will also allow you to introduce poetry! Throughout the text are lines like “Sadness is a cracked sidewalk” that show young poets how to invent similes and metaphors. Have students find objects or details in the classroom that lend themselves to this sort of wordplay.



Discussion/Activity Guide

- Young students often are liberated by poetry and its emphasis on speaking emotional truths. The freedom to unshackle words from the story map of fiction and the main idea/supporting details of nonfiction often inspires enthusiasm unmatched in other genres of much classroom writing. The good news is that students who practice writing poetry can be more easily guided toward other writing genres and forms!
- Play a guessing game with young students before reading the text:



“Close your eyes and think of how you feel right now.” With very young students, it is helpful to name a number of emotions before starting. “Once you have decided how you feel, think of an object or a place. Maybe this place is at home, on the playground, at your grandmother’s house. . . . Every time you see this object or go to this place, it reminds you of how you feel now. Open your eyes and write down ‘I feel like . . .’ and name the object or place and where it is. You may *not* use the emotion word to tell how you feel. We are going to see if your classmates can guess how you feel by hearing what your object is and where it is located.”

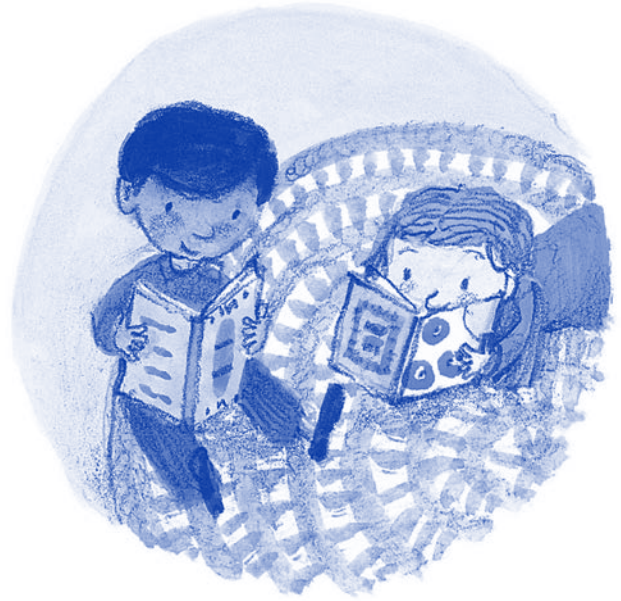
This activity is successful with first graders in introducing figurative language, and it can be easily adapted for older students.

- Reviewing poetic forms with students, as well as vocabulary and techniques, such as alliteration, simile, metaphor, etc., will help students feel at home with the text before reading. Practice clapping out word syllables. Having young students clap out the syllables in their names is a surefire technique for student engagement.
- Perhaps the most important advice for working with young poets is to stress how much fun it is to have writing that only asks readers to think and feel. Inject a high degree of rigor by asking students to predict whether the feelings they describe while reading poetry would still be there if we:
 - changed the form
 - changed the vocabulary
 - changed the subject



Discussion/ Activity Guide

- Read Beatrice Schenk de Regniers' poem "Keep a Poem in Your Pocket," which can be found online or in the *Random House Book of Poetry for Children*. Have students draw pictures of what they think Elinor is thinking on various pages, such as the page when Elinor says she is going to wear her jeans with six pockets . . . or the page in which Mr. Tiffin asks her if she has a metaphor . . . or when Mr. Tiffin asks Elinor what her poet's eye sees. Or when Ms. Crane asks Elinor what she has been thinking about. What kind of dances and dreams do these pictures suggest?
- The text says that Elinor even works on her poem during science. Have students write a poem about your current science unit. (Younger students might try acrostic poems using various key vocabulary, if they are struggling with writing a poem.)
- Elinor has words she says aloud to others and she has words that she says only in her head. Make two lists of things Elinor says. On one include only words that she says to others, even if she whispers. On the other, include all the words she says to herself. Can the class create poems out of them? Which list is easier to turn into poems?
- Create a poem that focuses on the emotions involved in a celebration that includes a party. Have each student add a line that includes a simile or a metaphor similar to those Elinor and her classmates compose. Pick other objects, emotions, time periods, or science investigations about which to write additional metaphor and similes.
- Ms. Crane tells Elinor that good poems begin in our hearts. Write a bad poem that comes from your elbow or the bottom of your foot.
- Have students draw and write about how they feel when they do not think their words are good enough to share.
- Have students do an improvisational play in which the blank white page is the bad guy or agent of doom.
- Have students think of times in which they say things only inside their own heads. Can they speak of them yet or write any of them down? Will any of these thoughts turn into a poem?



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- Haiku is an excellent form for both younger and older students. For younger students, the exercise of breaking words into syllables and counting them serves both language and math objectives. Older students have the same task, but the connections between the lines become increasingly more important. Ask students whether the haiku compares or contrasts various elements. Ask if the haiku depicts a relationship between objects. Look at various descriptions of good haiku online.
- Show various shapes to students—circles, squares, rhombuses, diamonds, ovals, rectangles, triangles, etc. Ask students what emotions or ideas come to mind when they look at any given shape. Then have them compose a shape poem.
- Create various poetry pockets around the classroom or a poetry box in which students may write anonymous poems to share (which they may claim when the teacher reads them to the class).
- Purchase a set or two of magnetic words. Create an area on your whiteboard (or other surface) on which different students are in charge of creating the daily poem.
- Purchase sidewalk chalk and create a sidewalk poetry area. Review the rules for using the chalk first!
- Set aside a day (or an hour, or twenty minutes—whatever works) for rhyming or for alliteration or other poetic techniques. On rhyming day, make as many words as you possibly can rhyme. Rhyme students' names. Create phrases that rhyme: "Get clickin', chicken!" "Good thinkin', Lincoln!"

Name: _____

My Poetry Checklist



Type of poem	I read one.	I wrote or created one!
Alliterative		
Acrostic		
Cinquain		
Concrete		
Couplet		
Found		
Free Verse		
Haiku		
Limerick		
List		
Rhyming		
Add your own!		

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EDUCATORS: Reproduce this sheet for your students.

