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TEN SECOND REVIEWS

Blanche O. Bush

Western Michigan University

A poem's not a puzzle
With hidden thoughts to find,
But is a work of beauty,
Born in the author's mind.

A poet paints his pictures
With words that are exact.
He colors all his concepts
Yet keeps his thoughts intact.

A poem has a rhythm
As music or a dance.
It has a lilt that lifts one up
To heights of greater chance.

A poem rhymes or has free verse.
The meter is oft varied.
But beauty, not mechanics,
Should in the mind be carried.

Quite often teachers squelch the joy
A child gains from a verse
And kills the innate love he has
For thoughts expressed so terse.

A teacher's love for poems,
Enthusiasm, too,
Will help to bring forth from the child
Creative beauty, true.

Adams, Bess Porter, "Butter To My Bread, Poetry By and For Children," *About Books and Children*, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1953.

Adams emphasizes that poetry is not a mysterious, difficult study far removed from daily life and average human understanding; it is the verbal expression of the thoughts and emotions common to all people. It is a recording in beautiful language of human joys, longings, and experiences. The author presents a classification of poetry and suggestions for presentation. Appendix B provides classified bibliographies of interest to parents, teachers, and children.

Abernathy, Helen, and Earlene Burgett, "Let's Write a Poem," *Elementary English* (February, 1962), 39:119-128.

Because little children are eager to express themselves, the authors have used poetry as a very satisfactory method of developing creativity while providing an opportunity for expression. As children need a definite reason for writing down their thoughts, it was suggested that printing a class newspaper might provide the need. Given the encouragement, vocabulary, direction to write about the things with which they are familiar, appreciation of work well done, and a reason for writing, Abernathy and Burgett conclude that teachers face unlimited horizons in creative poetry writing.

Arnold, Freida, "A Creative Writing Activity," *Elementary English* (May, 1961), 38:298-300.

The art of writing lies not only in having something to say, but in knowing how to say it. The author believes that, in addition to loosening tongues, it is necessary to develop conciseness. In a creative writing activity Arnold suggests that reading of compositions for discussion and evaluation evokes wonderful comments and invaluable observations.

Arnstein, Flora J., *Adventure Into Poetry*, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1951.

Any teacher can set the tone in the classroom. If his dis-

position is to search out the positive values in the poems and to build upon them, the class will take his cue. Much can be done by indirection to develop critical standards in the students. According to Arnstein, attention directed to the successful handling of a professional poet's material will help the student notice the means of achieving such effects.

Carlson, Ruth Kearney, "Stimulating Creativity in Children and Youth," *Elementary English* (March, 1961), 38:165-169.

Creativity in language implies originality, individuality, and an absence of stereotyped thinking. It implies a freshness of vision, a versatility, and a novel viewpoint. Furthermore, Carlson believes that creativity implies more than freedom and spontaneity; it means more than this exuberance; it needs skills and standards. Ways of stimulating creativity in children and youth are presented, and a definite technique for interpretation of poetry is suggested.

Duffy, Gerald G., "Children Do Enjoy Poetry," *Elementary English* (October, 1961) 38:422-424.

Children at the sixth grade level know very little about poetry other than hearsay gathered from older friends. When asked, children will say they don't like poetry because it means memorizing something. When pressed further, they will label poetry dull, with the boys emphatically declaring that poems are for sissies. The author states that both of these obstacles must be overcome, and suggestions for procedures are given. Duffy's philosophy is: "Any method is satisfactory as long as children are being encouraged to read poetry on their own."

Friend, Mimi, "Developing a Unit in Writing Poetry," *Elementary English* (February, 1960), 37:102-104.

Writing poetry presents to students a new dimension in the use of words. It awakens dormant senses, bringing to the writer new awareness of himself and his environment. Friend stresses that enthusiastic guidance and encouragement can lead students to new worlds of expression and new freedom of thought. Perhaps much of our failure in motivating children in this direction,

she suggests, is due to a misunderstanding on our part of the meaning of this art form. If you think of poetry as something to be enjoyed, a pleasant stretching of the imagination and sharpening of the senses, you are ready to start a poetry writing unit with your class. The author emphasizes that no one can be taught to write a poem, but as a teacher you can remove the blindfold of prejudice and misconceptions, and hope for the best.

Gould, Florence E., "Creative Expression Through Poetry," *Elementary English* (November, 1949), 26:391-393.

As a young teacher, the author was so driven with the necessity of teaching the fundamentals, the three R's, that she completely ignored the possibilities of poetry and creative writing. Nowhere in her training had this subject been given emphasis. Gould states that expression through music and art is recognized but the field of poetry which is the natural outlet for children's imaginative and creative powers is frequently neglected.

Groff, Patrick J., "Children's Poetry of Harry Behn," *Elementary English* (November, 1960), 37:411-446.

While children's poets disagree on the exact nature of their poetry, they seem to agree that it should contain certain identifiable elements such as rhythm, sound, sense and suggestion. Groff also believes that a poem's effect is a cumulative one, that is, the nature of the whole poem determines its parts, while at the same time allowance is made that to a degree the reverse is necessary. Children's poets as well as others attempt to make their readers and listeners see what they have seen, hear what they have heard, think what they have thought, and feel what they have felt. Harry Behn writes of the thoughts of young children, of nature, of fairies and other imaginary folk, and creates some entertaining nonsense verse. With one or two exceptions his poems are short enough to create a single impression. Behn gives some "sensible cautions" as to what to avoid in writing children's literature such as: "The cute and sentimental palmed off as childlike, words of one syllable . . . empty of magic or meaning, and writing that so stresses meaning as to be preachy."

Gunderson, Ethel, "All from One Poem," *Elementary English* (November, 1960), 37:449-450.

The teacher, Gunderson says, who enjoys poetry and who has seen how poetry can make a child's life fuller and richer is sure to provide time and place for it in her daily program. The writer gives the children much poetry mainly to provide the children with the pleasure derived from the poems and to give them a feeling of how to read poetry. Poetry helps children to "get going" artistically. The children should become familiar with 70 to 80 poems during the school year. Many children memorize parts of or entire poems, but no stress should be made on memorization. Each day the teacher should begin by reading a poem. They should not only read the poems, they should live them as well by acting them, illustrating them, singing them, making up their own tunes and by dancing. Each month the favorite poem for the month should be chosen, and the teacher should try to find the reasons for their choice. Realizing that a teacher's own feeling and attitude of joy toward poetry is "caught" by most children, she should herself delve deeply and widely into the field of poetry in order that poetry, to her pupils, may "sing its way into their hearts."

Hardy, Hilda, "The Child, A Creator," *Elementary English* (November, 1961), 38:491-493.

Every child is born with the power to create. Self expression can come from the child at any age, so says Hardy, if he is stimulated to feel the urge to give it utterance. If teachers can stimulate the child in some way to see the world about him—things, people, events—freshly and clearly, they will help to enrich every day in the child's life. The teacher needs only to be conscious of the fact that the creative abilities are within the child and that she must provide an atmosphere in which the child will have a chance to work.

Jacobs, Leland B., "Poetry Books for Poetry Reading," *The Reading Teacher* (October, 1959), 33:45-47.

Some general guide lines for selecting a book of poems are suggested by the author: (1) Is the book appealing in appear-

ance? (2) Are the illustrations appropriate in mood, style, in use of details for ideas and feelings as expressed in the poems? (3) Are poems arranged on the pages so that their uniqueness as creations is conveyed to the readers? (4) Are the poems presented in such an order and sequence that the book has about it a sense of rightness, continuity, and a flow of interrelated meaning? Jacobs reports that there are many poetry collections from which to choose and each collection has its own strengths and weaknesses. Every compiler is directed by his own values, preferences and tastes. A list of books suggested by the author includes anthologies, specialized collections, and individual poet works. Schools should supply enough poetry books so that every teacher and every child may find his way to those poems which hold for him treasures for the taking.

Kazlov, Gertrude, "Poetry to Teach By," *Elementary English* (January, 1962), 39:7-10.

By confining poetry to the language arts portion of the school day, Kazlov believes we do our young people a disservice. Language arts is its "home" in the curriculum; but it can be taken to arithmetic, science, and social studies. The student who has a conviction that poetry is not for him may be taken unaware when it is introduced in a new context and may find that it does have something to say. In the beginning the initiative must be the teacher's. The poems should be read casually, incidentally, and as personal favorites suggested by what is currently being studied.

Lachman, Florence, "Writing a Group Poem," *Elementary English* (May, 1957), 34:319.

"Let's write a poem and learn it as a choral recitation for an original assembly program" was suggested by the author to her class. A few themes were presented with "The Vikings" getting most approval mainly because the class had been hearing and reading about the Vikings as the earliest explorers. The class under the teacher's instruction outlined the points to be covered, and then the class wrote two stanzas a day. Suggestions for whole lines or phrases or individual words came from nearly

every child. Dictionaries were consulted, meter clapped out, lines read, changed and reread. The stanzas were then copied into notebooks. A chart of the whole poem was made when it was completed. Both the writing and presentation of the poem were rewarding experiences to the children. Facts about the Vikings were firmly impressed on even the slowest learner in the class.

Ryan, Calvin T., "The Poet, The Child, The Teacher," *Elementary English* (April, 1959), 36:237-239.

Observations show that every normal child loves poetry until some adult kills that love. Ryan states that it isn't always the teacher that is the murderer as most of us have had help from "prosy-minded" parents. The important thing for teachers of children is not to intrude between the child and the poet. She is dealing with three very much alive objects—the poet, the child, and herself. Poetry time should be fun time not only for the children but for the teacher who loves it, senses its value for the children, and takes pride in their accomplishments.

Smith, Sally True, "Why Teach Poetry," *Elementary English* (January, 1961), 38:27.

The author places the basic value of poetry on its symbolic control of environment. Science gives us information about the world. Poetry releases meanings about the world. Poetry observes nature closely, but it does much more than this. Through diction, structure and imagery, poetry releases underlying meanings about the world in which man lives. It provides a new and more vital way of looking at things. Poetry reflects culture. Its tone and structure reflect a search for values, a feeling of cultural disunity, and removal from traditionally accepted standards. It is an emotional expression of the times. Poetry using verbal symbols in the most tightly conceived way is an important and lasting means of environmental control and cultural understanding.

Thornley, Gwendella, "Reading Poetry to Children," *Elementary English* (November, 1962), 39:691-697.

To read poetry pleasantly, spontaneously, directly, and sincerely without artificial ornament or test-like questions afterwards may require considerable self-restraint on the part of the teacher. Thornley believes that reading this way is the only way to read and the surest way of keeping poetry where it belongs, in the child's heart as something genuinely true and a part of his real life experiences. It is the teacher's duty and pleasure to help the child correlate a poem with his own experiences, to help him re-create the imagery and feel a genuine, emotional response to the selection.

Wrigg, William, "Approaching Poetry Through Records," *Education* (May, 1962), 82:555-557.

Teachers of English on elementary, secondary, or even the college level are often worried over the paucity of time devoted to poetry in their classes. The reasons for this are many. A great number of teachers, Wrigg feels, are unable to inspire a genuine appreciation of poetry. It is also noted that class time given to poetry was producing little results. Furthermore he believes that in approaching poetry rarely does the heart of the problem lie with the subject matter but with the way it is presented. Making use of poetry records represent a marked improvement over certain methods which are all too frequently relied upon. Wrigg stated that achieving a genuine appreciation of poetry is never easy, even when the most effective methods are at one's command.