

# Don't Forget the Poetry



By A+ Homeschooling

We've regularly memorized poetry since we began homeschooling, but have not often written and studied them. We just finished digging into a regular study of poetry recently that we want to share. We have found some new favorite books that are detailed on the last page.

I like this quote I read in Sing a Song of Popcorn compiled by Beatrice Schenk de Regniers - "To my mind, a poem is not completed until it is read aloud."

There is nothing like a poem with rhythm and rhyme or clever word usage that can cheer someone in the blues. Poetry begs to be shared, and additionally, shaped poetry needs to be visualized to get the full effect.



## A Poem of Poems by Serenity age 13

My poem is about poems  
Because I need to explain.  
Poems can be about a seashore,  
Poems can be about your home,  
Poems are about 'most anything,  
They don't always have to rhyme.  
They are sometimes neat  
And mine are careless,  
Because sometimes lines rhyme,  
And some don't.  
But poems can be funny,  
Some can be sad;  
Some make you feel that  
Was exactly how you felt,  
But you couldn't have expressed it  
In that way at all.

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If you like this ebook, you may wish to join our group here. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/aplushomeschooling/> You'll receive a newsletter and notices of any other ebooks and products.

We also host a poetry writing email course for upper elementary through adults. Look for details at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/wonderofwords>

In our study we found that there are four main reasons poetry is written.

To express thoughts, feelings, or emotion



Peacemakers by Eli age 10

Peacemakers don't tease,  
They think of things that will please.  
Peacemakers don't fight,  
Even when they're right.

To tell a story



Pancakes by Gideon age 8

One morning I was sitting at a table.  
Mommy brought out some apple pancakes,  
Whole-wheat, fresh-baked pancakes.  
Five in the tower,  
I ate them up!

To describe something or someone



Our Backyard by Amy, Eli, and Gideon

Bicycles, lizards, children, trees  
Our backyard has all of these.

Grass, bushes, and all kinds of bugs;  
Sometimes we've even seen some slugs.

Garden, swings, flowers, creek,  
It's a great place for hide-n-seek.

We thank God for a place to be,  
For a place to play, and nature to see.

To teach a lesson

The Hermit by Jasmine (12)

There once was a dirty old hermit.  
For meals he ate green eggs and kloppit.  
Then by the way,  
The king came that day,  
And the hermit was ashamed of his dumpit.

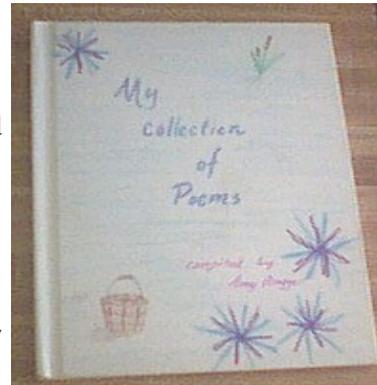
A poem may have some overlap between those four, but you can usually tell what the main reason is. Try reading aloud a poem with the four reasons written on the white board. Have the students guess which one applies to the poem read. Soon they'll know the four purposes well, and you can play the guessing game as you ride along in the car reading from one of the poetry anthologies.

We have one main project idea to help you begin or complete your study. That project is compiling a handmade book of poems; either ones that you copy from other books, ones that you have written, or a combination of both. The project details are outlined

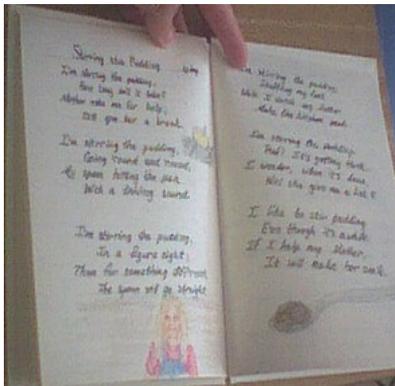
While reading aloud a poem that rhymes, I slow down then stop dramatically before the last rhyme, allowing the children to guess what word comes next. They enjoy this game and it helps with learning to hear rhymes and think about possibilities.

below. Read on for several ideas to use while doing this project.

**Poetry Books:** I finally found a use for the blank books I have had sitting around. Each child picked the book they wanted. I had hardback blank books for the older children from Miller Pads and Paper and small paperback shape books from Rainbow Resource Center. The hardback books had more pages to fill, so just the older children and I chose those. Yes, I made a book, too. It was lots of fun!



To begin, I asked each child to copy one poem a week into their book. We made lines to keep things straight. (See page with the lines are on the last page of this ebook. Print that page out on heavy paper; use it under the page and trace over.) The children chose their poems from some that I read. (Yes, we had some grumbling at times, but all in all, I think they all would say they liked the project.) As the weeks went by, we began writing more original poems. I also asked them to copy their own poems into the books.



They added illustrations to the poems. We used crayons or colored pencils. Markers tend to bleed through the pages. Here's a site with many cute poems for young children.

<http://www.canteach.ca/elementary/songspoems.html>

When you begin writing original poetry, you can use rhyming dictionaries and a thesaurus to help find just the word you want. This web site is also valuable help with finding word rhymes, synonyms, and much more.

<http://www.rhymezone.com/>

When I read poems to the children, I sometimes ask questions about the poem to make the children think deeper about it, or to draw their interest in it. After many times of doing this, I can see that they are enjoying poetry more. It also increases their desire to hear poetry, and read it themselves.

For example, I read the poem "Who Has Seen the Wind?" by Christina Rossetti to my 7 year old and he chose to copy it into his book. I asked him some questions about the poem like "What does it mean that the leaves hang trembling?" (he shook his hand like a leaf trembling)

I also asked these sorts of questions, "Why can't we see the wind?" "How can we tell the wind is there?" "What part of trees are the heads?". The purpose of my questions was to make him think about the imagery the writer used. I didn't tell him that she was using imagery, but he can begin to notice things like that.

Here's a link for the poem. It is also found in Poems for Memorization and many library books.

<http://celtic.benderweb.net/cr/cr81.html>

## Writing Original Poems

Read several examples of a certain type of poem, and try writing some together on the board with everyone contributing ideas. Then encourage the children to do this on their own right then and there. When they are finished you can ask each one to read theirs aloud. Sharing is good.



There are different ways to get ideas for writing your own poems, keep your eyes and ears open as you study. The books we recommend in the resource listing have many ideas. Here a few additional that we thought of along the way.

For non-writers or reluctant writers, make up a first line, then brainstorm together with something that might rhyme with the last word, then try to get them to say a second line when they have found a good word to rhyme. Or have them make a list of descriptive words then work together writing a few lines describing something. After doing this for a while, they might even start to do this on their own. (I couldn't believe it, until I saw it happen!)

Have you ever seen a poem that is a riddle?

By Serenity  
A woman who had faith in God,  
Had a son when she was old  
Named in the Bible many times,  
Fifty-six, as I am told.  
What is her name?

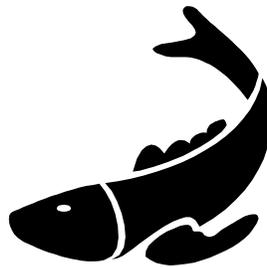
We wrote poems where each line rhymes with the first. We read *Houses* by Rachel Field from her book *Taxis and Toadstools*, then we each tried the same type of poem using our pocket rhyming dictionary.

We pulled Dad into this project by asking him to write a poem too. After everyone had written their poems, we sent all of them without the authors' names to some family and friends. They had to guess who wrote which poem! They mixed a few of them around. Remember to share your poetry with others.

Here's Jasmine's poem age 12

### Nate's Meal

A cute little child of eight  
Passed through a creakin' gate.  
Right away he began to skate.  
At this clickety-clatter rate  
He wasn't at all late  
To begin eating at his plate,  
For his appetite was truly great.  
What made his mother say, "Oh, Nate!"  
Was this strange meal he ate:  
Hash browns, green beans, and piranha fish bait!



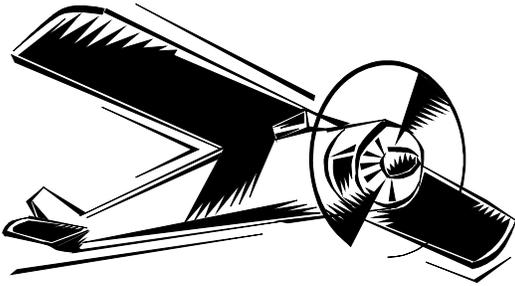
Have you wondered how grammar fits into this? For the very youngest (early elementary), when they copy their poems, have them notice where the punctuation marks are located. And capitalization rules are different for poetry.

As the older ones write their poems, they have to decide where to put periods and commas, etc. They must notice their action words, naming words and more as they adjust their poems to fit in a variety of patterns. They should notice the descriptive words are adjectives. The verbs contribute vividly to the action of the poems, sometimes a poem can be mostly verbs or mostly adverbs, etc.

Find poetic language in the Bible- encourage them to find similes, metaphors, and other poetic language throughout the Bible.

Try this one in stanzas and notice the poetic language- Hebrews 1:10-11  
Or Write Ps. 19: 7-10 in stanzas into your books and illustrate

Shape Poetry- Draw a shape of something that is distinctive in its silhouette. Brainstorm some descriptions, and then begin filling in the shapes with your sentences or words. We found it helpful to type these into the computer because it was easier to change the words around to fit the shape of what we were doing. The boys did a glider and a sailboat.



A Glider  
By Eli

Have you  
Seen a  
Glider  
Like a big  
White bird?

A glider swishing through the air, maybe you've heard?  
Have You seen A real

One, with  
Big white  
Wings  
Shining  
In the sun?

At the end of our books, we added our personal "Author" Biographies. I thought it would be a fitting finale to do it in a poem format. Here are some excerpts from Jasmine's Bio that we had fun writing together.

She writes poems for her family,  
And for this poem book too.  
She even writes them occasionally  
For the "famous" Ringer Review.

There's one sister, and four brothers,  
It makes a gang including her.  
There are ideas for more poems and stories,  
'Cause many interesting things occur.



We have some wonderful keepsakes now in our compiled poem books. The whole family enjoys looking at them and reading through them over and over. Now I am wondering what we can do next with those wonderful blank books...

Listing of Resources:

We have found some new favorite books. I like best to read them aloud to the children skipping over ones that aren't worth taking the time or are otherwise inappropriate. (I am not endorsing the entire contents of all the books below)

PK means preschool, E means Elementary ages, etc.

Hymnals and the Bible

The Collected Verse of Edgar A. Guest. Upper E to Adult

Talking Like the Rain by X.J. & Dorothy Kennedy- PK +

Read-Aloud Rhymes for the Very Young (forward by Jim Trelease, has helpful tips on reading poetry to preschoolers and toddlers)

Knock at a Star by Dorothy M. Kennedy and X.J. Kennedy -A compilation with some ideas to write your own -E+

Poems for Memorization-Rod and Staff Publishers- PK -gr. 8

If You're Trying to Teach Kids to Write, You've Gotta Have this Book by Marjorie Frank-Pk and up (not just for poetry)

Eric Carle's Animals, animals- PK+

Bear in mind: a book of bear poems- PK

The Book of a Thousand Poems -PK+

Go to Bed: a book of bedtime poems by Lee Hopkins (this one has a poem "Going to Bed" that is true to life at our house!)- PK+

How to Write, Recite, and Delight in All Kinds of Poetry by Joy N. Hulme (many ideas)-E+

Every Child's Book of Verse -PK +

Favorite Poems Old and New edited by Helen Farris -E+

Scholastic Lucky Pocket Rhyming Dictionary or another rhyming dictionary (a small booklet- we have several that were given to us so we each have a copy) -E +

Here is a brief listing of some of our recent favorite children's poetry authors. I'm sure as you look in the poetry section of the library; you, too, will find many books and authors you enjoy.

Marchette Chute

Dorothy Aldis

Myra Cohn Livingston

Langston Hughes

Lee Bennet Hopkins

Aileen Fisher

Christina Rossetti

Gwendolyn Brooks

Dennis Lee



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We also host a poetry writing email course for upper elementary through adults. Look for details at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/wonderofwords>

