

# Fun with poetry

BY GINA ALFONSO



**P**oetry is the liveliest use of language, and children naturally and instinctively take delight in its playfulness, beginning with their first exposure to rhymes like “Itsy Bitsy Spider” and “*Paa, Tubod, Balikat, Ulo*”. Children love the magical effects of verse.

**Here’s how you can integrate poetry into your class:**

**1** Open your students’ eyes to poetry all around. There’s poetry in songs, in movies, prayers and even billboards! One can see how advertisers have to think like poets: words or phrases may have dual messages, and short lines need to make a very strong point.

**2** Expose students to fun kiddie poems and limericks like those by Shel Silverstein and Edward Lear. They can later take on classics by Robert Frost, Robert Louis Stevenson, e.e. cummings, and our very own poets such as Jose Rizal, Jose Garcia Villa and Gemino Abad.

**ABOUT THE WRITER:** Gina Alfonso is a teacher by profession. She is also the founding president of Cartwheel Foundation, a non-profit organization focused on providing access to quality education to indigenous children & families in the remotest areas in the country.

**WEB RESOURCES**  
 Online Poetry Classroom  
<http://www.gigglepoetry.com>  
[www.englishonline.co.uk](http://www.englishonline.co.uk)

**3** Encourage students to write poetry using their own experiences. Look up Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Bells,” which talks about the different sounds of significant bells in a person’s life. One assignment might be to think about the bells in their own life, like school bells, ice cream bells, alarm clock bells, and so on. Students can talk about how the sounds of these different bells make them feel. They might even decide to create and act out a group poem about bells.

**There was an Old Person of Ware  
 Who rode on the back of a Bear;  
 When they ask’d, ‘Does it trot?’  
 He said, ‘Certainly not!  
 He’s a Moppsikon Floppsikon Bear!’  
 —by Edward Lear**

**WEATHER**  
 Whether the weather be fine,  
 Or whether the weather be not,  
 Whether the weather be cold,  
 Or whether the weather be hot,  
 We’ll weather the weather  
 Whatever the weather,  
 Whether we like it or not!  
 —Anonymous

**READ TO ME**  
 Read to me riddles and read to me rhymes  
 Read to me stories of magical times  
 Read to me tales about castles and kings  
 Read to me stories of fabulous things  
 Read to me pirates and read to me knights  
 Read to me dragons and dragon-book fights  
 Read to me spaceships and cowboys and then  
 When you are finished— please read them again.  
 —Jane Yolen

**WATER AND FIRE**  
 Water are we, you say, and yourselves fire;  
 so let us be what we are  
 and co-exist without ire,  
 and may no conflagration ever find us at war:  
 But rather, fused together by cunning science  
 within the cauldrons of the ardent breast,  
 without rage, without defiance,  
 do we form steam, fifth element indeed:  
 progress, life, enlightenment, and speed!  
 —by Jose Rizal, translated from Spanish  
 by Nick Joaquin

**Try these fun activities centered around poems:**

**1 CHORAL READING.** Read poetry aloud to better appreciate the sound of rhyme and rhythm. You can ask your class read together or by small groups, each reading a different part.

**2 CREATIVE DRAMATICS:** Children may act out poems, especially those that talk about events, people and places. Try acting out the limericks featured here!

**3 USING POETRY FOR ART CLASS:** Have students draw pictures to accompany their favorite poems. You can also show them pictures or paintings and then ask them to write a poem about what they see.

**4 POETRY CENTER:** Create display area of poems written both by real poets and by your students. Accompany the poems with drawings and illustrations, and if you can find poetry books, make those available as well. If possible, make a cassette player with a poetry tape available, or allow students to make their own recordings of their favorite poems.