



HILLSDALE COLLEGE

K-12 Education Office

*1<sup>st</sup> Grade Poetry  
Packet*

# HOW TO TEACH A POEM

## *Poetry Instruction in a Hillsdale Classical School*

### 1. Consult the Hillsdale Poetry Packet for the given grade level.

- Each Poetry Packet contains a collection of the poems Hillsdale College believes students should hear and think about at each grade level. The Poetry Packet is for teacher use only, not for students.
- Teachers may introduce the poems in whichever order they choose.
- **Bold** titles indicate poems Hillsdale College recommends students learn and recite by heart.
- Teach approximately one poem per week.

### 2. Read the poem aloud to yourself as part of lesson preparation.

- Listen carefully and imagine the poem.
- Rest with it, without trying to analyze it.
- Then ask yourself these questions, in this order.
  1. What do I see? What is literally depicted or happening?
  2. How does the thought of the narrator proceed from beginning to end?
  3. How does the poem move in time and in physical space?
  4. Who is speaking?
  5. With which of the listener's physical senses does the poem engage?
  6. What is the rhyme or meter of the poem?
  7. What questions is the poem trying to answer? What is it saying?
- Read the poem aloud to yourself again.

### 3. Teach each poem in literature class.

- Days 1 and 2 | *5 minutes*
  - Read the poem aloud to the students.
  - Ask, "What do you notice in the poem?"
- Days 3 and 4 | *5-10 minutes or more, if needed*
  - For grades K-2:
    - Read the poem aloud to the students.
  - For grades 3+:
    - Project the text of the poem.
    - Read the poem aloud together as a class.
  - Ask, "What new things do you notice in the poem?"
  - Ask, "What do you think is happening in the poem?"
  - Ask, "What do you think the poem is saying?"

**4. Have students learn specific poems by heart.** (*Hillsdale's recommendations are in **Bold***)

- Always have students learning something by heart. That is, when one poem is known by heart and recited, have them begin to learn another.
- Students will learn at minimum one poem by heart per month.
- Steps for teaching students to know a poem by heart:
  1. Begin each class by reciting the poem line-by-line and having students repeat after you, adding lines each day until the poem is complete.
  2. At this point, begin each subsequent class by reciting the poem aloud and allowing students to join in with you.
  3. Once you determine most students are ready to recite it individually, on their own, set a date, and distribute printed copies of the poem for those who need more practice at home.
- Provide ongoing coaching and encouragement on public speaking.

**5. Hold poetry recitations.**

- Each student stands at the front of the class by him or herself and recites the poem individually.
- Teachers should grade recitations, with minor deductions for honest mistakes and significant deductions for what is clearly a lack of preparation.
- Scheduling:
  - Option A: Set aside one or two literature periods to conduct all recitations.
  - Option B: Over the course of a week, set aside the first 10-15 minutes of each class to have 5-6 students recite the poem.
- For students with IEPs, 504s, or who otherwise struggle with public speaking, continue to encourage and coach them. If the struggle is serious enough, the student may write-out from memory the poem or recite it privately to the teacher. But the goal should be to have the student reciting aloud in the front of the classroom by the end of the year.

## WHY STUDENTS LEARN THINGS BY HEART

### *Memorization in a Hillsdale Classical School*

Students memorize or “learn by heart” dozens of poems, songs, and excerpts from important historical figures and documents during their K-12 education. The question is: Why?

At the most basic level, knowing something by heart sharpens the abilities of the mind. Children already have a great capacity to memorize and remember, and giving them a steady stream of things to memorize keeps that ability sharp. Students can then apply this agility of mind to various bodies of knowledge and daily tasks to help them excel in anything they do.

Memorization also helps students make new connections in thought and understanding. Growing in understanding oftentimes involves the mind making connections between something it already knows and something new that the student learns. The best way to ensure there is a broad foundation of knowledge is continually to compare new information against it. And the strongest pieces of that foundation are those that are committed to memory. Additionally, once a student has something in his or her memory, it is more pliable and open to play and manipulation. We need only to recall a child manipulating a song he is singing to see this creativity with memorized content. In turn, the child’s creativity fosters flexibility, which can be applied not only to art but also to solving problems generally.

It is worth recognizing the obvious: that memorization answers to human nature. It is natural for human beings to memorize and remember. We memorize without even trying, though as with running, we of course do much better when we work at it. While we may sometimes chafe at the work of memorizing, having something in our memory to recall at will is real power—and a joyful one at that—a possession no one would refuse were it not for the practice required to gain it. At the same time, memorization helps students withstand a culture of noise and high-intensity, intrusive stimulation.

When looking at the specific kinds of things students learn by heart, we see that memorization furnishes the mind and memory with excellent things in song, story, and speech. After all, students are not memorizing the ugly or meaningless things of the world. These excellent things become the standard for good and great things of many sorts for a lifetime.

And yet, things known by heart not only establish a standard, but they also give shape to the student’s mind, forming its contours. They inform the imagination most powerfully. It is called “by heart” because memorized things become part of us and also, they teach us to love the right things. Memorized things are not only right and loveable, but they attune our desires to other goods worthy of desire, love, and emulation.

Memorization, therefore, gives students something beautiful and meaningful to carry with them in their lives. Things that are memorized take up a kind of existence within the student which forms his or

her thoughts, feelings, and attentiveness to beauty and meaning in the world. This interior possession also ensures that no matter their situation or environment, students have access to beauty, meaning, and the joy of these possessions, real boons to life. Poems, songs, and quotations are possessions—and reminders—about goodness and justice and happiness that can never be taken away from them.

To conclude with an example and a relevant quotation, consider these lines from the great American poet Robert Frost’s “Choose Something Like a Star.” The poet asks a star to

Say something to us we can learn  
By heart and when alone repeat...  
So when at times the mob is swayed  
To carry praise or blame too far,  
We may choose something like a star  
To stay our minds on and be staid.

And these lines from the renowned Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky, which apply equally to things that are memorized as to memories:

“[T]here is nothing higher, or stronger, or sounder, or more useful afterwards in life, than some good memory, especially a memory from childhood, from the parental home. You hear a lot said about your education, yet some such beautiful, sacred memory, preserved from childhood, is perhaps the best education. If a man stores up many such memories to take into life, then he is saved for his whole life. And even if only one good memory remains with us in our hearts, that alone may serve some day for our salvation.”

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- “Disobedience,” A.A. Milne  
“Halfway Down,” A.A. Milne  
“Hope,” Langston Hughes  
“I Know All the Sounds that the Animals Make,” Jack Prelutsky  
**“My Shadow,” Robert Louis Stevenson**  
“The Land of Nod,” Robert Louis Stevenson  
**“Marching Song,” Robert Louis Stevenson**  
“The North Wind Doth Blow,” Anonymous  
**“The Owl and the Pussycat,” Edward Lear**  
“The Pasture,” Robert Frost  
“The Purple Cow,” Gelett Burgess  
“Rope Rhyme,” Eloise Greenfield  
“Sing a Song of People,” Lois Lenski  
“Solomon Grundy,” Anonymous  
“Someone,” Walter de la Mare  
**“The Swing,” Robert Louis Stevenson**  
“Table Manners” (also known as “The Goops”), Gelett Burgess  
“Thanksgiving Day” (also known as “Over the River and Through the Woods”), Lydia Maria Child  
“Three Jovial Huntsmen,” Susan Jeffers  
“Us Two,” A.A. Milne  
**“Washington,” Nancy Byrd Turner**  
“Wynken, Blynken, and Nod,” Eugene Field

*Note: Hillsdale K12’s recommendations for which poems should be memorized are bolded. Given that the amount of poems a class can memorize will vary from one classroom to another, teachers should use their discretion in choosing additional poems for memorization.*

## DISOBEDIENCE

A.A. Milne

James James  
Morrison Morrison  
Weatherby George Dupree  
Took great  
Care of his Mother,  
Though he was only three.  
James James Said to his Mother,  
"Mother," he said, said he;  
"You must never go down  
to the end of the town,  
if you don't go down with me."

James James  
Morrison's Mother  
Put on a golden gown.  
James James Morrison's Mother  
Drove to the end of the town.  
James James Morrison's Mother  
Said to herself, said she:  
"I can get right down  
to the end of the town  
and be back in time for tea."

King John  
Put up a notice,  
"LOST or STOLEN or STRAYED!  
JAMES JAMES MORRISON'S MOTHER  
SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN MISLAID.  
LAST SEEN  
WANDERING VAGUELY:"

QUITE OF HER OWN ACCORD,  
SHE TRIED TO GET DOWN  
TO THE END OF THE TOWN -  
FORTY SHILLINGS REWARD!"

James James  
Morrison Morrison  
(Commonly known as Jim)  
Told his  
Other relations  
Not to go blaming him.  
James James  
Said to his Mother,  
"Mother," he said, said he:  
"You must never go down to the end of the town  
without consulting me."

James James  
Morrison's mother  
Hasn't been heard of since.  
King John said he was sorry,  
So did the Queen and Prince.  
King John  
(Somebody told me)  
Said to a man he knew:  
If people go down to the end of the town, well,  
what can anyone do?"

(Now then, very softly)  
J.J.  
M.M.  
W.G.Du P.



Took great

C/O his M\*\*\*\*\*

Though he was only 3.

J.J. said to his M\*\*\*\*\*

"M\*\*\*\*\*," he said, said he:

"You-must-never-go-down-to-the-end-of-the-town-  
if-you-don't-go-down-with-ME!"

## HALFWAY DOWN

A.A. Milne

Halfway down the stairs  
Is a stair  
Where I sit.  
There isn't any  
Other stair  
Quite like  
It.  
I'm not at the bottom,  
I'm not at the top;  
So this is the stair  
Where  
I always  
Stop.

Halfway up the stairs  
Isn't up  
And isn't down.  
It isn't in the nursery,  
It isn't in the town.  
And all sorts of funny thoughts  
Run round my head:  
It isn't really  
Anywhere!  
It's somewhere else  
Instead!

## HOPE

Langston Hughes

Sometimes when I'm lonely,  
Don't know why,  
Keep thinkin' I won't be lonely  
By and by.

## I KNOW ALL THE SOUNDS THAT THE ANIMALS MAKE

Jack Prelutsky

I know all the sounds that the animals make,  
and make them all day from the moment I wake,  
I roar like a mouse, and I purr like a moose,  
I hoot like a duck and I moo like a goose.

I squeak like a cat and I quack like a frog,  
I oink like a bear, and I honk like a hog.  
I croak like a cow, and I bark like a bee,  
no wonder the animals marvel at me!

## MY SHADOW

Robert Louis Stevenson

I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,  
And what can be the use of him is more than I can see.  
He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head;  
And I see him jump before me, when I jump into my bed.

The funniest thing about him is the way he likes to grow—  
Not at all like proper children, which is always very slow;  
For he sometimes shoots up taller like an india-rubber ball,  
And he sometimes gets so little that there's none of him at all.

He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to play,  
And can only make a fool of me in every sort of way.  
He stays so close beside me, he's a coward you can see;  
I'd think shame to stick to nursie as that shadow sticks to me!

One morning, very early, before the sun was up,  
I rose and found the shining dew on every buttercup;  
But my lazy little shadow, like an arrant sleepy-head,  
Had stayed at home behind me and was fast asleep in bed.

## THE LAND OF NOD

Robert Louis Stevenson

From breakfast on through all the day  
At home among my friends I stay,  
But every night I go abroad  
Afar into the land of Nod.

All by myself I have to go,  
With none to tell me what to do —  
All alone beside the streams  
And up the mountain-sides of dreams.

The strangest things are there for me,  
Both things to eat and things to see,  
And many frightening sights abroad  
Till morning in the land of Nod.

Try as I like to find the way,  
I never can get back by day,  
Nor can remember plain and clear  
The curious music that I hear.

## MARCHING SONG

Robert Louis Stevenson

Bring the comb and play upon it!  
Marching, here we come!  
Willie cocks his highland bonnet,  
Johnnie beats the drum.

Mary Jane commands the party,  
Peter leads the rear;  
Feet in time, alert and hearty,  
Each a Grenadier!

All in the most martial manner  
Marching double-quick;  
While the napkin, like a banner,  
Waves upon the stick!

Here's enough of fame and pillage,  
Great commander Jane!  
Now that we've been round the village,  
Let's go home again.

## THE NORTH WIND DOTTH BLOW

Anonymous

The north wind doth blow,  
And we shall have snow,  
And what will the robin do then, Poor thing?  
He'll sit in a barn,  
And keep himself warm,  
And hide his head under his wing, Poor thing!

The north wind doth blow,  
And we shall have snow,  
And what will the swallow do then, Poor thing?  
Oh, do you not know  
That he's off long ago,  
To a country where he will find spring, Poor thing!

The north wind doth blow,  
And we shall have snow,  
And what will the dormouse do then, Poor thing?  
Roll'd up like a ball  
In his nest snug and small  
He'll sleep till warm weather comes in, Poor thing!

The north wind doth blow,  
And we shall have snow,  
And what will the honey-bee do then, Poor thing?  
In his hive he will stay



Till the cold is away  
And then he'll come out in the spring, Poor thing!

The north wind doth blow,  
And we shall have snow,  
And what will the children do then, Poor things?  
When lessons are done  
They will skip, jump and run,  
Until they have made themselves warm, Poor things!

## THE OWL AND THE PUSSYCAT

Edward Lear

The Owl and the Pussy-cat went to sea  
In a beautiful pea-green boat,  
They took some honey, and plenty of money,  
Wrapped up in a five-pound note.  
The Owl looked up to the stars above,  
And sang to a small guitar,  
"O lovely Pussy! O Pussy, my love,  
What a beautiful Pussy you are,  
You are,  
You are!  
What a beautiful Pussy you are!"

Pussy said to the Owl, "You elegant fowl!  
How charmingly sweet you sing!  
O let us be married! too long we have tarried:  
But what shall we do for a ring?"  
They sailed away, for a year and a day,  
To the land where the Bong-Tree grows  
And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood  
With a ring at the end of his nose,  
His nose,  
His nose,  
With a ring at the end of his nose.

"Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling  
Your ring?" Said the Piggy, "I will."

So they took it away, and were married next day  
By the Turkey who lives on the hill.  
They dined on mince, and slices of quince,  
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;  
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,  
They danced by the light of the moon,  
The moon,  
The moon,  
They danced by the light of the moon.

## THE PASTURE

Robert Frost

I'm going out to clean the pasture spring;  
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away  
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may):  
I shan't be gone long.—You come too.

I'm going out to fetch the little calf  
That's standing by the mother. It's so young,  
It totters when she licks it with her tongue.  
I shan't be gone long.—You come too.

## THE PURPLE COW

Gelett Burgess

I never saw a Purple Cow,  
I never hope to see one;  
But I can tell you, anyhow,  
I'd rather see than be one!

## ROPE RHYME

Eloise Greenfield

Get set, ready now, jump right in  
Bounce and kick and giggle and spin  
Listen to the rope when it hits the ground  
Listen to that clappedy-slappedy sound  
Jump right up when it tells you to  
Come back down, whatever you do  
Count to a hundred, count by ten  
Start to count all over again  
That's what jumping is all about  
Get set, ready now,  
jump  
right  
out!

## SING A SONG OF PEOPLE

Lois Lenski

Sing a song of people  
Walking fast or slow;  
People in the city,  
Up and down they go.

People in tall buildings  
And in stores below;  
Riding elevators  
Up and down they go.

People on the sidewalk,  
People on the bus;  
People passing, passing,  
In back and front of us.

People walking singly,  
People in a crowd;  
People saying nothing,  
People talking loud.

People on the subway  
Underneath the ground;  
People riding taxis  
Round and round and round.

People laughing, smiling,  
Grumpy people too;  
People who just hurry  
And never look at you!

People with their hats on,  
Going in the doors;  
People with umbrellas  
When it rains and pours.

Sing a song of people  
Who like to come and go;  
Sing of city people  
You see but never know!

## SOLOMON GRUNDY

Anonymous

Solomon Grundy  
Born on a Monday,  
Christened on Tuesday,  
Married on Wednesday,  
Took ill on Thursday,  
Worse on Friday,  
Died on Saturday,  
Buried on Sunday.  
This is the end of  
Solomon Grundy.



## SOMEONE

Walter de la Mare

Someone came knocking  
At my wee, small door;  
Someone came knocking,  
I'm sure — sure — sure;  
I listened, I opened,  
I looked to left and right,  
But nought there was a-stirring  
In the still, dark night;  
Only the busy beetle  
Tap-tapping in the wall,  
Only from the forest  
The screech owl's call,  
Only the cricket whistling  
While the dewdrops fall,  
So I know not who came knocking,  
At all, at all, at all.

## THE SWING

Robert Louis Stevenson

How do you like to go up in a swing,  
Up in the air so blue?  
Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing  
Ever a child can do!

Up in the air and over the wall,  
Till I can see so wide,  
Rivers and trees and cattle and all  
Over the countryside—

Till I look down on the garden green,  
Down on the roof so brown—  
Up in the air I go flying again,  
Up in the air and down!

## TABLE MANNERS (OR “THE GOOPS”)

Gelett Burgess

The Goops they lick their fingers,  
And the Goops they lick their knives;  
They spill their broth on the tablecloth—  
Oh, they lead disgusting lives!

The Goops they talk while eating,  
And loud and fast they chew;  
And that is why I’m glad that I  
Am not a Goop—are you?

THANKSGIVING DAY (OR “OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE  
WOODS”)

Lydia Maria Child

Over the river and through the wood,  
To grandfather's house we go;  
The horse knows the way  
To carry the sleigh  
Through the white and drifted snow.

Over the river and through the wood—  
Oh, how the wind does blow!  
It stings the toes  
And bites the nose,  
As over the ground we go.

Over the river and through the wood,  
To have first-rate play.  
Hear the bells ring,  
"Ting-a-ling-ding!"  
Hurrah for Thanksgiving Day!

Over the river and through the wood,  
Trot fast, my dapple-gray!  
Spring over the ground,  
Like a hunting-hound!  
For this is Thanksgiving Day.

Over the river and through the wood,

And straight through the barn-yard gate.

We seem to go

Extremely slow—

It is so hard to wait!

Over the river and through the wood—

Now Grandmother's cap I spy!

Hurrah for the fun!

Is the pudding done?

Hurrah for the pumpkin-pie!

## THREE JOVIAL HUNTSMEN

Susan Jeffers

There were three jovial huntsmen,  
As I have heard men say,  
And they would go a-hunting  
Upon St. David's day.

All the day they hunted,  
And nothing could they find,  
But a ship a-sailing,  
A-sailing with the wind.

One said it was a ship,  
The other he said, Nay;  
The third said it was a house,  
With the chimney blown away.

And all the night they hunted  
And nothing could they find,  
But the moon a-gliding,  
A-gliding with the wind.

One said it was the moon,  
The other he said, Nay;  
The third said it was a cheese  
With half of it cut away.

And all the day they hunted

And nothing could they find,  
But a hedgehog in a bramble bush,  
And that they left behind.

The first said it was a hedgehog,  
The second he said, Nay;  
The third said it was a pincushion  
With the pins stuck in wrong way.

And all the night they hunted,  
And nothing could they find,  
But a hare in a turnip field,  
And that they left behind.

The first said it was a hare,  
The second he said, Nay;  
The third said it was a calf,  
And the cow had run away.

There were three jovial huntsmen,  
As I have heard men say,  
And they would go a-hunting  
Upon St. David's day.

## Us Two

A.A. Milne

Wherever I am, there's always Pooh,  
There's always Pooh and Me.  
Whatever I do, he wants to do,  
"Where are you going today?" says Pooh:  
"Well, that's very odd 'cos I was too.  
Let's go together," says Pooh, says he.  
"Let's go together," says Pooh.

"What's twice eleven?" I said to Pooh.  
("Twice what?" said Pooh to Me.)  
"I think it ought to be twenty-two."  
"Just what I think myself," said Pooh.  
"It wasn't an easy sum to do,  
But that's what it is," said Pooh, said he.  
"That's what it is," said Pooh.

"Let's look for dragons," I said to Pooh.  
"Yes, let's," said Pooh to Me.  
We crossed the river and found a few-  
"Yes, those are dragons all right," said Pooh.  
"As soon as I saw their beaks I knew.  
That's what they are," said Pooh, said he.  
"That's what they are," said Pooh.

"Let's frighten the dragons," I said to Pooh.  
"That's right," said Pooh to Me.



"I'm not afraid," I said to Pooh,  
And I held his paw and I shouted "Shoo!  
Silly old dragons!" - and off they flew.

"I wasn't afraid," said Pooh, said he,  
"I'm never afraid with you."

So wherever I am, there's always Pooh,  
There's always Pooh and Me.  
"What would I do?" I said to Pooh,  
"If it wasn't for you," and Pooh said: "True,  
It isn't much fun for One, but Two,  
Can stick together, says Pooh, says he. "That's how it is," says  
Pooh.

## WASHINGTON

Nancy Byrd Turner

He played by the river when he was young,  
He raced with rabbits along the hills,  
He fished for minnows, and climbed and swung,  
And hooted back at the whippoorwills.  
Strong and slender and tall he grew—  
And then, one morning, the bugles blew.

Over the hills the summons came,  
Over the river's shining rim.  
He said that the bugles called his name,  
He knew that his country needed him,  
And he answered, "Coming!" and marched away  
For many a night and many a day.

Perhaps when the marches were hot and long  
He'd think of the river flowing by  
Or, camping under the winter sky,  
Would hear the whippoorwill's far-off song.  
Boy or soldier, in peace or strife,  
He loved America all his life!

## WYNKEN, BLYNKEN, AND NOD

Eugene Field

Wynken, Blynken, and Nod one night

Sailed off in a wooden shoe—

Sailed on a river of crystal light

Into a sea of dew.

"Where are you going, and what do you wish?"

The old moon asked the three.

"We have come to fish for the herring-fish

That live in this beautiful sea;

Nets of silver and gold have we,"

Said Wynken,

Blynken,

And Nod.

The old moon laughed and sang a song,

As they rocked in the wooden shoe;

And the wind that sped them all night long

Ruffled the waves of dew;

The little stars were the herring fish

That lived in the beautiful sea;

"Now cast your nets wherever you wish,

Never afraid are we!"

So cried the stars to the fishermen three,

Wynken,

Blynken,

And Nod.

All night long their nets they threw  
To the stars in the twinkling foam;  
Then down from the skies came the wooden shoe,  
Bringing the fishermen home:  
'Twas all so pretty a sail, it seemed  
As if it could not be;  
And some folk thought 'twas a dream they'd dreamed  
Of sailing that beautiful sea;  
But I shall name you the fishermen three:  
Wynken,  
Blynken,  
And Nod.

Wynken and Blynken are two little eyes,  
And Nod is a little head,  
And the wooden shoe that sailed the skies  
Is a wee one's trundle-bed;  
So shut your eyes while Mother sings  
Of wonderful sights that be,  
And you shall see the beautiful things  
As you rock in the misty sea  
Where the old shoe rocked the fishermen three,  
Wynken,  
Blynken,  
And Nod.