



HILLSDALE COLLEGE

K-12 Education Office

*2nd 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.”

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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.

ARMIES IN THE FIRE

Robert Louis Stevenson

The lamps now glitter down the street;
Faintly sound the falling feet;
And the blue even slowly falls
About the garden trees and walls.

Now in the falling of the gloom
The red fire paints the empty room:
And warmly on the roof it looks,
And flickers on the back of books.

Armies march by tower and spire
Of cities blazing, in the fire;—
Till as I gaze with staring eyes,
The armies fall, the lustre dies.

Then once again the glow returns;
Again the phantom city burns;
And down the red-hot valley, lo!
The phantom armies marching go!

Blinking embers, tell me true
Where are those armies marching to,
And what the burning city is
That crumbles in your furnaces!

BED IN SUMMER

Robert Louis Stevenson

In winter I get up at night
And dress by yellow candle-light.
In summer, quite the other way,
I have to go to bed by day.

I have to go to bed and see
The birds still hopping on the tree,
Or hear the grown-up people's feet
Still going past me in the street.

And does it not seem hard to you,
When all the sky is clear and blue,
And I should like so much to play,
To have to go to bed by day?

BEE! I'M EXPECTING YOU!

Emily Dickinson

Bee! I'm expecting you!
Was saying Yesterday
To Somebody you know
That you were due—

The Frogs got Home last Week—
Are settled, and at work—
Birds, mostly back—
The Clover warm and thick—

You'll get my Letter by
The seventeenth; Reply
Or better, be with me—
Yours, Fly.

THE BLIND MEN AND THE ELEPHANT

John Godfrey Saxe

It was six men of Indostan, to learning much inclined,
who went to see the elephant (Though all of them were blind),
that each by observation, might satisfy his mind.

The first approached the elephant, and, happening to fall,
against his broad and sturdy side, at once began to bawl:
"God bless me! but the elephant, is nothing but a wall!"

The second feeling of the tusk, cried: "Ho! what have we here,
so very round and smooth and sharp? To me tis mighty clear,
this wonder of an elephant, is very like a spear!"

The third approached the animal, and, happening to take,
the squirming trunk within his hands, "I see," quoth he,
the elephant is very like a snake!"

The fourth reached out his eager hand, and felt about the knee:
"What most this wondrous beast is like, is mighty plain," quoth
he;
"Tis clear enough the elephant is very like a tree."

The fifth, who chanced to touch the ear, Said; "E'en the blindest
man
can tell what this resembles most; Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an elephant, is very like a fan!"

The sixth no sooner had begun, about the beast to grope,
than, seizing on the swinging tail, that fell within his scope,
"I see," quoth he, "the elephant is very like a rope!"

And so these men of Indostan, disputed loud and long,
each in his own opinion, exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right, and all were in the wrong!

So, oft in theologic wars, the disputants, I ween,
tread on in utter ignorance, of what each other mean,
and prate about the elephant, not one of them has seen!

BUFFALO DUSK

Carl Sandburg

The buffaloes are gone.

And those who saw the buffaloes are gone.

Those who saw the buffaloes by thousands and how they
pawed the prairie sod into dust with their hoofs, their great
heads down pawing on in a great pageant of dusk,

Those who saw the buffaloes are gone.

And the buffaloes are gone.

CATERPILLARS

Aileen Fisher

What do caterpillars do?
Nothing much but chew and chew.

What do caterpillars know?
Nothing much but how to grow.

They just eat what by and by
will make them be a butterfly,

But that is more than I can do
however much I chew and chew.

THE COW

Robert Louis Stevenson

The friendly cow all red and white,
I love with all my heart:
She gives me cream with all her might,
To eat with apple-tart.

She wanders lowing here and there,
And yet she cannot stray,
All in the pleasant open air,
The pleasant light of day;

And blown by all the winds that pass
And wet with all the showers,
She walks among the meadow grass
And eats the meadow flowers.

DISCOVERY

Harry Behn

In a puddle left from last week's rain,
A friend of mine whose name is Joe
Caught a tadpole, and showed me where
Its froggy legs were beginning to grow.

Then we turned over a musty log,
With lichens on it in a row,
And found some fiddleheads of ferns
Uncoiling out of the moss below.

We hunted around and saw the first
Jack-in-the-pulpits beginning to show,
And even spotted under a rock
Where spotted salamanders go.

I learned all this one morning from Joe,
But how much more there is to know!

FOREIGN LANDS

Robert Louis Stevenson

Up into the cherry tree
Who should climb but little me?
I held the trunk with both my hands
And looked abroad in foreign lands.

I saw the next door garden lie,
Adorned with flowers, before my eye,
And many pleasant places more
That I had never seen before.

I saw the dimpling river pass
And be the sky's blue looking-glass;
The dusty roads go up and down
With people tramping in to town.

If I could find a higher tree
Farther and farther I should see,
To where the grown-up river slips
Into the sea among the ships,

To where the road on either hand
Lead onward into fairy land,
Where all the children dine at five,
And all the playthings come alive.

HARRIET TUBMAN

Eloise Greenfield

Harriet Tubman didn't take no stuff
Wasn't scared of nothing neither
Didn't come in this world to be no slave
And wasn't going to stay one either
"Farewell!" she sang to her friends one night
She was mighty sad to leave 'em
But she ran away that dark, hot night
Ran looking for her freedom

She ran to the woods and she ran through the woods
With the slave catchers right behind her
And she kept on going till she got to the North
Where those mean men couldn't find her
Nineteen times she went back South
To get three hundred others
She ran for her freedom nineteen times
To save Black sisters and brothers

Harriet Tubman didn't take no stuff
Wasn't scared of nothing neither
Didn't come in this world to be no slave
And didn't stay one either
And didn't stay one either

HURT NO LIVING THING

Christina Rossetti

Hurt no living thing;
Ladybird, nor butterfly,
Nor moth with dusty wing,
Nor cricket chirping cheerily,
Nor grasshopper so light of leap,
Nor dancing gnat, nor beetle fat,
Nor harmless worms that creep.

I'M NOBODY! WHO ARE YOU?

Emily Dickinson

I'm Nobody! Who are you?
Are you – Nobody – too?
Then there's a pair of us!
Don't tell! they'd advertise – you know!

How dreary – to be – Somebody!
How public – like a Frog –
To tell one's name – the livelong June –
To an admiring Bog!

THE LAND OF COUNTERPANE

Robert Louis Stevenson

When I was sick and lay a-bed,
I had two pillows at my head,
And all my toys beside me lay
To keep me happy all the day.

And sometimes for an hour or so
I watched my leaden soldiers go,
With different uniforms and drills,
Among the bed-clothes, through the hills;

And sometimes sent my ships in fleets
All up and down among the sheets;
Or brought my trees and houses out,
And planted cities all about.

I was the giant great and still
That sits upon the pillow-hill,
And sees before him, dale and plain,
The pleasant land of counterpane.

LINCOLN

Nancy Byrd Turner

There was a boy of other days,
A quiet, awkward, earnest lad,
Who trudged long weary miles to get
A book on which his heart was set—
And then no candle had!

He was too poor to buy a lamp
But very wise in woodmen's ways.
He gathered seasoned bough and stem,
And crisping leaf, and kindled them
Into a ruddy blaze.

Then as he lay full length and read,
The firelight flickered on his face,
And etched his shadow on the gloom,
And made a picture in the room,
In that most humble place.

The hard years came, the hard years went,
But, gentle, brave, and strong of will,
He met them all. And when today
We see his pictured face, we say,
“There's light upon it still.”

THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Clement C. Moore

'Twas the night before Christmas,
when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there.
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar plums danced in their heads.
And mama in her kerchief, and I in my cap
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap.
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow,
Gave a luster of midday to objects below.
When what to my wondering eyes did appear,
But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer,
With a little old driver so lively and quick
I knew in a moment he must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name:
"Now, Dasher! Now, Dancer! Now Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! On, Cupid! On, Donner and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch! To the top of the wall!
Now dash away! Dash away! Dash away all!"
As leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,

When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky;
So up to the housetop the coursers they flew
With the sleigh full of toys, and St. Nicholas, too.
And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head, and was turning around . . .
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.
He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a pedlar just opening his pack.
His eyes—how they twinkled! his dimples, how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard on his chin was as white as the snow.
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath.
He had a broad face and a little round belly,
That shook when he laughed, like a bowlful of jelly.
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw him in spite of myself!
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings—then turned with a jerk . . .
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose!
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.

But I heard him exclaim, 'ere he drove out of sight . . .
“Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night!”

RUDOLPH IS TIRED OF THE CITY

Gwendolyn Brooks

These buildings are too close to me.
I'd like to PUSH away.
I'd like to live in the country,
And spread my arms all day.

I'd like to spread my breath out, too—
As farmers' sons and daughters do.

I'd tend the cows and chickens.
I'd do the other chores.
Then, all the hours left I'd go
A-SPREADING out-of-doors.

SEASHELL

Federico Garcia Lorca

Someone brought me a seashell.

Singing inside
is a sea from a map.
My heart
fills up with water
and little tiny fish,
silvery, shadowy.

SMART

Shel Silverstein

My dad gave me one dollar bill
'Cause I'm his smartest son,
And I swapped it for two shiny quarters
'Cause two is more than one!

And then I took the quarters
And traded them to Lou
For three dimes-- I guess he didn't know
That three is more than two!

Just then, along came old blind Bates
And just 'cause he can't see
He gave me four nickels for my three dimes,
And four is more than three!

And I took the nickels to Hiram Coombs
Down at the seed-feed store,
And the fool gave me five pennies for them,
And five is more than four!

And I went and showed my dad,
And he got red in the cheeks
And closed his eyes and shook his head—
Too proud of me to speak!

SOMETHING TOLD THE WILD GEESE

Rachel Field

Something told the wild geese
It was time to go.
Though the fields lay golden
Something whispered—“Snow.”
Leaves were green and stirring,
Berries, luster-glossed,
But beneath warm feathers
Something cautioned—“Frost.”
All the sagging orchards
Steamed with amber spice,
But each wild breast stiffened
At remembered ice.
Something told the wild geese
It was time to fly—
Summer sun was on their wings,
Winter in their cry.

THE SUNSHINE

Mary Botham Howitt

I love the sunshine everywhere —
In wood, and field, and glen;
I love it in the busy haunts
Of town-imprison'd men.

I love it, when it streameth in
The humble cottage door,
And casts the chequer'd casement shade
Upon the red-brick floor.

I love it, where the children lie
Deep in the clovery grass,
To watch among the twining roots,
The gold-green beetle pass.

I love it, on the breezy sea,
To glance on sail and oar,
While the great waves, like molten glass,
Come leaping to the shore.

I love it, on the mountain-tops,
Where lies the thawless snow;
And half a kingdom, bathed in light,
Lies stretching out below.

Oh! yes, I love the sunshine!

Like kindness, or like mirth,
Upon a human countenance,
Is sunshine on the earth.

Upon the earth — upon the sea —
And through the crystal air —
Or piled-up-clouds - the gracious sun
Is glorious everywhere.

THERE WAS AN OLD MAN WITH A BEARD

Edward Lear

There was an Old Man with a beard,
Who said, "It is just as I feared!
Two Owls and a Hen,
Four Larks and a Wren,
Have all built their nests in my beard.

WHO HAS SEEN THE WIND?

Christina Rossetti

Who has seen the wind?
Neither I nor you:
But when the leaves hang trembling,
The wind is passing through.

Who has seen the wind?
Neither you nor I:
But when the trees bow down their heads,
The wind is passing by.

WINDY NIGHTS

Robert Louis Stevenson

Whenever the moon and stars are set,
Whenever the wind is high,
All night long in the dark and wet,
A man goes riding by.
Late in the night when the fires are out,
Why does he gallop and gallop about?

Whenever the trees are crying aloud,
And ships are tossed at sea,
By, on the highway, low and loud,
By at the gallop goes he.
By at the gallop he goes, and then
By he comes back at the gallop again.