



HILLSDALE COLLEGE

K-12 Education Office

*4th 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.

AFTERNOON ON A HILL

Edna St. Vincent Millay

I will be the gladdest thing
Under the sun!
I will touch a hundred flowers
And not pick one.

I will look at cliffs and clouds
With quiet eyes,
Watch the wind bow down the grass,
And the grass rise.

And when lights begin to show
Up from the town,
I will mark which must be mine,
And then start down!

CLOUDS

Christina Rossetti

White sheep, white sheep,
On a blue hill,
When the wind stops,
You all stand still.
When the wind blows,
You walk away slow.
White sheep, white sheep,
Where do you go?

CONCORD HYMN

Ralph Waldo Emerson

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard round the world.

The foe long since in silence slept;
Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;
And Time the ruined bridge has swept
Down the dark stream which seaward creeps.

On this green bank, by this soft stream,
We set today a votive stone;
That memory may their deed redeem,
When, like our sires, our sons are gone.

Spirit, that made those heroes dare
To die, and leave their children free,
Bid Time and Nature gently spare
The shaft we raise to them and thee.

THE CORN-STALK FIDDLE

Paul Lawrence Dunbar

When the corn's all cut and the bright stalks shine
Like the burnished spears of a field of gold;
When the field-mice rich on the nubbins dine,
And the frost comes white and the wind blows cold;
Then its heigho fellows and hi-diddle-diddle,
For the time is ripe for the corn-stalk fiddle.

And you take a stalk that is straight and long,
With an expert eye to its worthy points,
And you think of the bubbling strains of song
That are bound between its pithy joints—
Then you cut out strings, with a bridge in the middle,
With a corn-stalk bow for a corn-stalk fiddle.

Then the strains that grow as you draw the bow
O'er the yielding strings with a practiced hand!
And the music's flow never loud but low
Is the concert note of a fairy band.
Oh, your dainty songs are a misty riddle
To the simple sweets of the corn-stalk fiddle.

When the eve comes on and our work is done
And the sun drops down with a tender glance,
With their hearts all prime for the harmless fun,
Come the neighbor girls for the evening's dance,
And they wait for the well-known twist and twiddle,
More time than tune—from the corn-stalk fiddle.

Then brother Jabez takes the bow,
While Ned stands off with Susan Bland,
Then Henry stops by Milly Snow
And John takes Nellie Jones's hand,

While I pair off with Mandy Biddle,
And scrape, scrape, scrape goes the corn-stalk fiddle.

“Salute your partners,” comes the call,
“All join hands and circle round,”
“Grand train back,” and “Balance all,”
Footsteps lightly spurn the ground,
“Take your lady and balance down the middle”
To the merry strains of the corn-stalk fiddle.

So the night goes on and the dance is o’er,
And the merry girls are homeward gone,
But I see it all in my sleep once more,
And I dream till the very break of dawn
Of an impish dance on a red-hot griddle
To the screech and scrape of a corn-stalk fiddle.

DREAMS

Langston Hughes

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

THE FLAG GOES BY

Henry Holcomb Bennett

Hats off!

Along the street there comes
A blare of bugles, a ruffle of drums,
A flash of color beneath the sky:

Hats off!

The flag is passing by!

Blue and crimson and white it shines,
Over the steel-tipped, ordered lines.

Hats off!

The colors before us fly;
But more than the flag is passing by.

Sea-fights and land-fights, grim and great,
Fought to make and to save the State:
Weary marches and sinking ships;
Cheers of victory on dying lips;

Days of plenty and years of peace;
March of a strong land's swift increase;
Equal justice, right and law,
Stately honor and reverend awe;

Sign of a nation, great and strong
To ward her people from foreign wrong:
Pride and glory and honor, all
Live in the colors to stand or fall.

Hats off!

Along the street there comes
A blare of bugles, a ruffle of drums;
And loyal hearts are beating high:

Hats off!
The flag is passing by!

FOG

Carl Sandburg

The fog comes
on little cat feet.

It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Rosemary and Stephen Vincent Benét

*Sing hey! for bold George Washington,
That jolly British tar,
King George's famous admiral
From Hull to Zanzibar!*

No – wait a minute – something's wrong –
George wished to sail the foam.
But, when his mother thought, aghast,
Of Georgie shinning up a mast,
Her tears and protests flowed so fast
That George remained at home.

*Sing ho! for grave Washington,
The staid Virginia squire,
Who farms his fields and hunts his hounds
And aims at nothing higher!*
Stop, stop, it's going wrong again!
George *liked* to live on farms,
But, when the Colonies agreed
They could and should and would be freed,
They called on George to do the deed
And George cried —Shoulder arms!

*Sing ha! for Emperor Washington,
That hero of renown,
Who freed his land from Britain's rule
To win a golden crown!*
No, no, that's what George *might* have won
But didn't, for he said,
—There's not much point about a king,
They're pretty but they're apt to sting
And, as for crowns – the heavy thing
Would only hurt my head.

Sing ho! for our George Washington!
(At last I've got it straight.)
The first in war, the first in peace,
The goodly and the great.
But, when you think about him now,
From here to Valley Forge,
Remember this – he might have been
A highly different specimen,
And, where on earth would we be, then?
I'm glad that George was George.

MONDAY'S CHILD IS FAIR OF FACE

Anonymous

Monday's child is fair of face,
Tuesday's child is full of grace,
Wednesday's child is full of woe,
Thursday's child has far to go,
Friday's child is loving and giving,
Saturday's child works hard for a living.
And the child born on the Sabbath day
Is fair and wise and good and gay.

OH, WHEN I WAS IN LOVE WITH YOU

A.E. Housman

Oh, when I was in love with you,
Then I was clean and brave,
And miles around the wonder grew
How well did I behave.

And now the fancy passes by,
And nothing will remain,
And miles around they'll say that I
Am quite myself again.

PAUL REVERE'S RIDE

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Listen, my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-Five:
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year.

He said to his friend, "If the British march
By land or sea from the town to-night,
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry-arch
Of the North-Church-tower, as a signal-light,—
One if by land, and two if by sea;
And I on the opposite shore will be,
Ready to ride and spread the alarm
Through every Middlesex village and farm,
For the country-folk to be up and to arm."

Then he said "Good night!" and with muffled oar
Silently rowed to the Charlestown shore,
Just as the moon rose over the bay,
Where swinging wide at her moorings lay
The Somerset, British man-of-war:
A phantom ship, with each mast and spar
Across the moon, like a prison-bar,
And a huge black hulk, that was magnified
By its own reflection in the tide.

Meanwhile, his friend, through alley and street
Wanders and watches with eager ears,
Till in the silence around him he hears
The muster of men at the barrack door,
The sound of arms, and the tramp of feet,
And the measured tread of the grenadiers
Marching down to their boats on the shore.

Then he climbed to the tower of the church,
Up the wooden stairs, with stealthy tread,
To the belfry-chamber overhead,
And startled the pigeons from their perch
On the sombre rafters, that round him made
Masses and moving shapes of shade,—
By the trembling ladder, steep and tall,
To the highest window in the wall,
Where he paused to listen and look down
A moment on the roofs of the town,
And the moonlight flowing over all.

Beneath, in the churchyard, lay the dead,
In their night-encampment on the hill,
Wrapped in silence so deep and still
That he could hear, like a sentinel's tread,
The watchful night-wind, as it went
Creeping along from tent to tent,
And seeming to whisper, "All is well!"
A moment only he feels the spell
Of the place and the hour, and the secret dread
Of the lonely belfry and the dead;
For suddenly all his thoughts are bent
On a shadowy something far away,
Where the river widens to meet the bay,—
A line of black, that bends and floats
On the rising tide, like a bridge of boats.

Meanwhile, impatient to mount and ride,
Booted and spurred, with a heavy stride,
On the opposite shore walked Paul Revere.
Now he patted his horse's side,
Now gazed on the landscape far and near,
Then impetuous stamped the earth,
And turned and tightened his saddle-girth;

But mostly he watched with eager search
The belfry-tower of the old North Church,
As it rose above the graves on the hill,
Lonely and spectral and sombre and still.
And lo! as he looks, on the belfry's height,
A glimmer, and then a gleam of light!
He springs to the saddle, the bridle he turns,
But lingers and gazes, till full on his sight
A second lamp in the belfry burns!

A hurry of hoofs in a village-street,
A shape in the moonlight, a bulk in the dark,
And beneath from the pebbles, in passing, a spark
Struck out by a steed that flies fearless and fleet:
That was all! And yet, through the gloom and the light,
The fate of a nation was riding that night;
And the spark struck out by that steed, in his flight,
Kindled the land into flame with its heat.

He has left the village and mounted the steep,
And beneath him, tranquil and broad and deep,
Is the Mystic, meeting the ocean tides;
And under the alders, that skirt its edge,
Now soft on the sand, now loud on the ledge,
Is heard the tramp of his steed as he rides.

It was twelve by the village clock
When he crossed the bridge into Medford town.
He heard the crowing of the cock,
And the barking of the farmer's dog,
And felt the damp of the river-fog,
That rises when the sun goes down.

It was one by the village clock,
When he galloped into Lexington.
He saw the gilded weathercock

Swim in the moonlight as he passed,
And the meeting-house windows, blank and bare,
Gaze at him with a spectral glare,
As if they already stood aghast
At the bloody work they would look upon.

It was two by the village clock,
When he came to the bridge in Concord town.
He heard the bleating of the flock,
And the twitter of birds among the trees,
And felt the breath of the morning breeze
Blowing over the meadows brown.
And one was safe and asleep in his bed
Who at the bridge would be first to fall,
Who that day would be lying dead,
Pierced by a British musket-ball.

You know the rest. In the books you have read,
How the British Regulars fired and fled,—
How the farmers gave them ball for ball,
From behind each fence and farmyard-wall,
Chasing the red-coats down the lane,
Then crossing the fields to emerge again
Under the trees at the turn of the road,
And only pausing to fire and load.

So through the night rode Paul Revere;
And so through the night went his cry of alarm
To every Middlesex village and farm,—
A cry of defiance, and not of fear,
A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,
And a word that shall echo forevermore!
For, borne on the night-wind of the Past,
Through all our history, to the last,
In the hour of darkness and peril and need,
The people will waken and listen to hear

The hurrying hoof-beats of that steed,
And the midnight message of Paul Revere.

THE POBBLE WHO HAS NO TOES

Edward Lear

The Pobble who has no toes
Had once as many as we;
When they said "Some day you may lose them all;"
He replied "Fish Fiddle de-dee!"
And his Aunt Jobiska made him drink
Lavender water tinged with pink;
For she said "The World in general knows
There's nothing so good for a Pobble's toes!"

The Pobble who has no toes
Swam across the Bristol Channel;
But before he set out he wrapped his nose
In a piece of scarlet flannel.
For his Aunt Jobiska said, "No harm
Can come to his toes if his nose is warm;
And it's perfectly known that a Pobble's toes
Are safe – provided he minds his nose!"

The Pobble swam fast and well.
And when boats or ships came near him
He tinkledy-blinkledy-winkled a bell,
So that all the world could hear him.
And all the Sailors and Admirals cried,
When they saw him nearing the further side –
"He has gone to fish for his Aunt Jobiska's
Runcible Cat with crimson whiskers!"

But before he touched the shore –
The shore of the Bristol Channel
A sea-green porpoise carried away
His wrapper of scarlet flannel.
And when he came to observe his feet,

Formerly garnished with toes so neat,
His face at once became forlorn,
On perceiving that all his toes were gone!

And nobody ever knew,
From that dark day to the present,
Whoso had taken the Pobble's toes,
In a manner so far from pleasant.
Whether the shrimps, or crawfish gray,
Or crafty Mermaids stole them away –
Nobody knew; and nobody knows
How the Pobble was robbed of his twice five toes!

The Pobble who has no toes
Was placed in a friendly Bark,
And they rowed him back, and carried him up
To his Aunt Jobiska's Park.
And she made him a feast at his earnest wish
Of eggs and buttercups fried with fish;
And she said "It's a fact the whole world knows,
That Pobbles are happier without their toes!"

THE PORTRAIT OF A WARRIOR

Walter de la Mare

His brow is seamed with line and scar;
His cheek is red and dark as wine;
The fires as of a Northern star
Beneath his cap of sable shine.

His right hand, bared of leathern glove,
Hangs open like an iron gin,
You stoop to see his pulses move,
To hear the blood sweep out and in.

He looks some king, so solitary
In earnest thought he seems to stand,
As if across a lonely sea
He gazed impatient of the land.

Out of the noisy centuries
The foolish and the fearful fade;
Yet burn unquenched these warrior eyes,
Time hath not dimmed nor death dismayed.

THE RHINOCEROS

Ogden Nash

The rhino is a homely beast,
For human eyes he's not a feast.
But you and I will never know
Why Nature chose to make him so.
Farewell, farewell, you old rhinoceros,
I'll stare at something less prepoceros.

THE SKYLARK

Christina Rosetti

The earth was green, the sky was blue:
I saw and heard one sunny morn,
A skylark hang between the two,
A singing speck above the corn;

A stage below, in gay accord,
White butterflies danced on the wing,
And still the singing skylark soared,
And silent sank and soared to sing.

The cornfield stretched a tender green
To right and left beside my walks;
I knew he had a nest unseen
Somewhere among the million stalks:

And as I paused to hear his song,
While swift the sunny moments slid,
Perhaps his mate sat listening long,
And listened longer than I did.

THE TIDE RISES, THE TIDE FALLS

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The tide rises, the tide falls,
The twilight darkens, the curlew calls;
Along the sea-sands damp and brown
The traveller hastens toward the town,
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

Darkness settles on roofs and walls,
But the sea, the sea in the darkness calls;
The little waves, with their soft, white hands,
Efface the footprints in the sands,
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

The morning breaks; the steeds in their stalls
Stamp and neigh, as the hostler calls;
The day returns, but nevermore
Returns the traveller to the shore,
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

TO THE HESITATING PURCHASER

Robert Louis Stevenson

If sailor tales to sailor tunes,
Storm and adventure, heat and cold,
If schooners, islands, and maroons
And Buccaneers and buried Gold
And all the old romance, retold,
Exactly in the ancient way,
Can please, as me they pleased of old,
The wiser youngsters of to-day:

-So be it, and fall on! If not,
If studious youth no longer crave,
His ancient appetites forgot,
Kingston, or Ballantyne the brave,
Or Cooper of the wood and wave:
So be it, also! And may I
And all my pirates share the grave,
Where these and their creations lie!

A TRAGIC STORY

William Makespeace Thackeray

There lived a sage in days of yore
And he a handsome pigtail wore:
But wondered much and sorrowed more
Because it hung behind him.

He mused upon this curious case,
And swore he'd change the pigtail's place,
And have it hanging at his face,
Not dangling there behind him.

Says he, "The mystery I've found—
I'll turn me round,"—he turned him round;
But still it hung behind him.

Then round, and round, and out and in,
All day the puzzled sage did spin;
In vain—it mattered not a pin—
The pigtail hung behind him.

And right and left, and round about,
And up and down, and in and out,
He turned; but still the pigtail stout
Hung steadily behind him.

And though his efforts never slack,
And though he twist, and twirl, and tack,
Alas! Still faithful to his back
The pigtail hangs behind him.

THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Under a spreading chestnut-tree
The village smithy stands;
The smith, a mighty man is he,
With large and sinewy hands,
And the muscles of his brawny arms
Are strong as iron bands.

His hair is crisp, and black, and long;
His face is like the tan;
His brow is wet with honest sweat,
He earns whate'er he can,
And looks the whole world in the face,
For he owes not any man.

Week in, week out, from morn till night,
You can hear his bellows blow;
You can hear him swing his heavy sledge,
With measured beat and slow,
Like a sexton ringing the village bell,
When the evening sun is low.

And children coming home from school
Look in at the open door;
They love to see the flaming forge,
And hear the bellows roar,
And catch the burning sparks that fly
Like chaff from a threshing-floor.

He goes on Sunday to the church,
And sits among his boys;
He hears the parson pray and preach,
He hears his daughter's voice

Singing in the village choir,
And it makes his heart rejoice.

It sounds to him like her mother's voice
Singing in Paradise!
He needs must think of her once more,
How in the grave she lies;
And with his hard, rough hand he wipes
A tear out of his eyes.

Toiling,—rejoicing,—sorrowing,
Onward through life he goes;
Each morning sees some task begin,
Each evening sees it close;
Something attempted, something done,
Has earned a night's repose.

Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend,
For the lesson thou hast taught!
Thus at the flaming forge of life
Our fortunes must be wrought;
Thus on its sounding anvil shaped
Each burning deed and thought.