

How do I learn a poem?



First of all find a poem. There are lots of books in your local library to choose from. Some story books for very little children rhyme, so if you have younger brothers or sisters take a look at the sort of books they read. They might have some good poems amongst them. Do make sure you pick a poem that you really, really like.

Choose a poem with rhymes and a strong rhythm. This should help you remember it. You can learn free verse, but it's a bit harder to do. Don't let me put you off if you are feeling brave. Learn the poem a small chunk at a time. Focus on the first two lines or the first four lines to begin with.



I walk about to learn my poems. The rhythm of walking seems to help. I say the lines out loud, over and over and over. Perhaps you could do the same thing on your way to and from school. When you have got the first chunk learnt, do the next chunk in the same way.

You will need to carry a copy of the poem with you to help you when you are first learning it. When you think the whole of the poem is learnt, still keep practising. Run it through a couple of times a day. Tell it to the dog or cat, the mirror, your great aunty Ethel.



Always do it out loud.

This will make sure that the poem gets from your short term memory into your long term memory. I sometimes practise in the bath! Or sometimes I say my poem a couple of times before I go to sleep.

You might find that there are certain bits of the poem that you always forget. That happens sometimes. What I do is - I think of a hand movement or a facial expression that I can use with the word or the line that I've been forgetting.



I do the movement every time I say the line. This seems to help me remember my words. It's a bit weird but it works for me.

When you truly believe your poem is learned, start to perform it...

Use your face and your body to express things. You don't need to do this for every part of the poem, but certain things might need emphasis. For example, if somebody is said to be waving in a poem then why don't you wave? If there is something surprising in a poem, then you might make your face show shock.

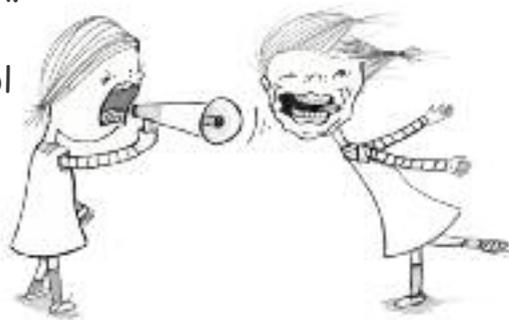


Maybe the whole poem is in the voice of a character? If so work out how the character might speak. Some poems might be partly narrated and then have a character speaking a couple of lines, so have one voice for the narrator and one for the character.

Why not have a go at performing to an audience? Invite family to listen.

Could you share a poem with your school friends? Remember, if you do forget your poem in front of the audience it isn't the end of the world.

It's just a poem. The sun will still come up, your friends and family will still love you. I have forgotten poems sometimes. If I do I just say, 'Sorry, I've



forgotten my poem,' to the audience, and then I laugh about it before leaving the stage.

There are lots of poems in this book that you could learn and perform. Look out for Figment (of the Imagination).



Figment is an ideas flea, and he will be flitting amongst the pages to give you some top tips about how to learn and perform some of the different poems here. And most importantly don't forget to have fun!



Best wishes
Emma P
xxx

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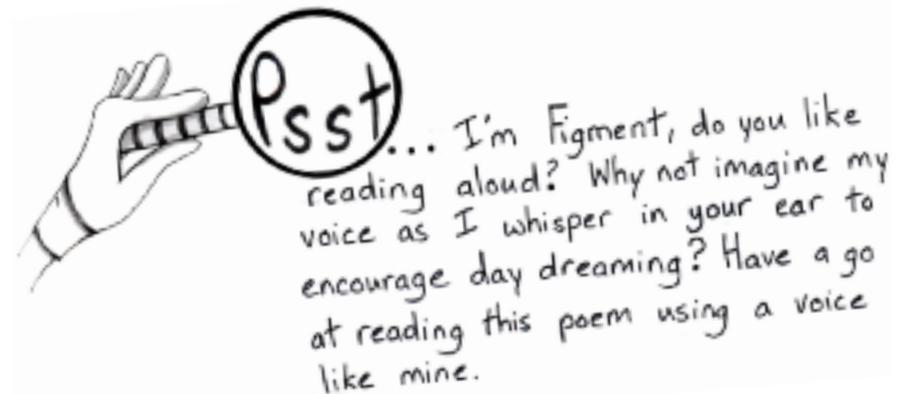


**Psst, I'm Figment (of the Imagination) -
pleased to meet you, here's my card**



Flights of fancy are my speciality.
I can organise a trip,
take your wits on a kind of daydream
or your brain on a moonlight flit.
Hurry it up. Book now. Be ready
to let reality sort of slip.
Phase out, chillax, glaze over,
make stuff up, believe in it.

Ready, steady, set your mind free,
let it go, watch it run.
Bear hunting on the moon?
Yeah. As soon as it's said it's done.
You can swim with orange dolphins
on the far side of the sun.
Why not sprout some swan wings?
Let your thoughts fly. Have some fun!



Poems I have known

Poems can be thin.
Poems can be fat.
I once knew a poem
who wore a hat.
Poems can be mad,
bad, crazy and weird.
Most are clean shaven,
though this has a beard!
Poems talk nonsense
and onomatopoeia.
Poems can calm you
or fill you with fear.
Poems have rhythm.
Poems have rhyme.
My uncle was a poem
who turned to crime.
Poems can be gentle.
Poems can be kind.
Poems can be fact
or a figment of the mind.
There are poems you'll love
and poems you'll hate.
There are poems to be shared
with your mum or your mate.
There are poems for the page
and poems for the stage.
There are poems in this book,

so come and have a look.
Make friends with a poem.
Read one today.
Then should anyone ask
you can shout up and say,
"Poems are wicked.
Poems are nice.
And some of them it seems
have been written by mice!"



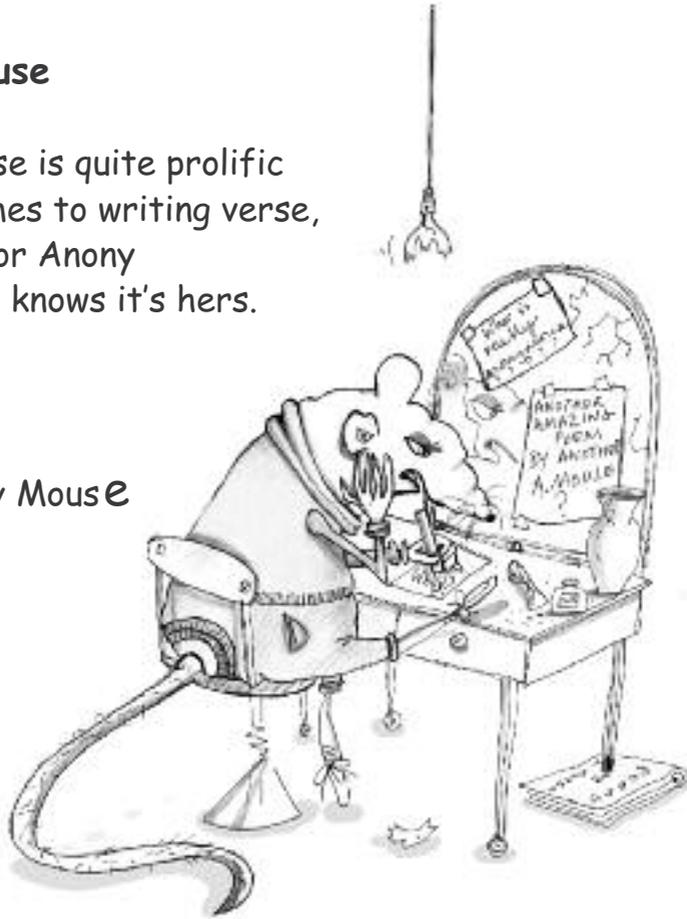
Spelling it out

"Eke!"
squeaked the mouse
as she taught her children
a valuable lesson
in saving cheese
for later.

Anony Mouse

Anony Mouse is quite prolific
when it comes to writing verse,
but sadly for Anony
no one ever knows it's hers.

By Anony Mouse



The snail's shell is curious

The snail's shell is curious.
It doesn't seem to fit the snail.
He'd be better in a banana skin -
he could stretch out his slimy tail.

Although I can foresee a problem
when you peel back the skin
of your yummy, yellow banana
and you find a snail within.

