



## General Tips for Schools: Bringing Poetry Alive II: Children aged 11-16

Look also at our tips for children aged 5-11, as you may find activities there which would suit your class too. Our own resources are not the only ones available - there are many resources and lesson plans available from providers such as the Children's Poetry Bookshelf ([www.childrenspoetrybookshelf.co.uk](http://www.childrenspoetrybookshelf.co.uk)) or Scottish Poetry Library ([www.spl.org.uk](http://www.spl.org.uk)) – have a look at our Education pages for links to these and other experts on poetry in the classroom.

### Haiku competition

A haiku is a poem of seventeen syllables – five in the first line, seven in the second and five in the third line. Organise a school-wide (or English department or school library) haiku competition on the theme of 'work'. Try approaching the theme from an interesting angle. Instead of concentrating on work that *people* undertake, try describing the work of inanimate objects or of creatures. Eg a butterfly, a bee, a tree, a football, a table, a book, a poem (!) These can be displayed, published in a school magazine, performed in assembly or made the subject of a competition with prize-giving.

### Poetry Catwalk/ Poems on the Changing Room Wall

This idea asks pupils to think about unusual places for displaying or finding poems. It is inspired by Poems on the Underground. Since 1986, poems have been chosen to be displayed on London Underground trains, in advertising spaces inside the Tube carriages.

Find out more about Poems on the Underground at [www.britishcouncil.org/arts-literature-poems-on-theunderground.htm](http://www.britishcouncil.org/arts-literature-poems-on-theunderground.htm) and at [www.poetrysociety.org.uk/content/educatio/potu/](http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/content/educatio/potu/).

Pupils have three tasks. Firstly to think about who might be the *audience* for their choice of poem (on the Underground, the 'audience' is just about as wide-ranging as it is possible to get as it is estimated that 3.5 million journeys are made every day.) Secondly to devise a list of at least three *unusual places* where one would not expect to see poems displayed. And, thirdly, to choose a *poem* suitable for display in the chosen place. This last task asks pupils to undertake the work of an anthologist in making an informed choice of poem, according to a range of considerations about suitability and audience response. Pupils should also prepare an explanation to support *why* they think the poem should be displayed.

### The Poetry Archive

Explore the world and work of poets. Research by finding five living poets on the Poetry Archive websites – [www.poetryarchive.org.uk](http://www.poetryarchive.org.uk). Turn reviewer and write a review of your favourite poem from the website as if it was the latest Hollywood movie or give three reasons why someone should read this poem. Best reviews win a prize.

### **A Poetry Slam**

Set up a poetry slam competition in your school. A slam competition is the equivalent of 'Britain's Got Talent' for poetry. It takes hard work and skill and practice to be successful. Each performer has two minutes to blow away the audience. Whoever gets the loudest applause goes through to the next round. This can be a very exciting way for young people to get directly involved in out-rapping, out-versifying each other. There are specialists who set up poetry slams in schools. Contact the Poetry Society [www.poetrysociety.org.uk](http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk) or [www.applesandsnakes.org.uk](http://www.applesandsnakes.org.uk) to find out more.

### **Responding to art**

Choose a work of art/photograph/image, connected in some way to the theme of work. Display multiple copies around the classroom or project on an interactive whiteboard. Create a whole class poem in response or individual poems. Begin by describing what you actually see. Take a visual detail (or details) and describe using simile or metaphor. Move on to what thoughts, dreams, reflections or aspirations are prompted.