



## **National Poetry Day 2008 Lesson Plans**

National Poetry Day has been bringing poetry to children and adults since 1994. In that time, our educational materials have changed a good deal, and this year they are entirely online.

Poetry is one of the most powerful ways to use language. Enjoying it is the first step in harnessing that power, and we know from your feedback that teachers sometimes want extra support in teaching poetry. We asked expert educationalist and poets, Andrew Fusek Peters and Polly Peters, to write enjoyable lesson plans. Each one includes a piece of poetry, followed by background information and suggestions for classroom activities and exercises. These will help children to hone their literacy and linguistic skills, but also to have *fun* with poetry.

We have made them as broad as possible but if you want further support or resources, do go back to our website for links and information. Our partners in the Poetry Society, the Poetry Archive, the Scottish Poetry Library, Academi in Wales and other organisations give access to a wide range of resources, tips and poems. Do explore these fully, to make the most of all the free resources available to you on National Poetry Day and all year round.

Please feel free to print and circulate these notes: we want them to be as widely used as possible.

Jo Bell  
**Co-ordinator, National Poetry Day**



## Lesson plan 1 – Level 1 (age 5-7)

From **A Midsummer Night's Dream** Act 2, Scene 1  
William Shakespeare

### **Fairy:**

Over hill, over dale,  
Through bush, through briar,  
Over park, over pale,  
Through flood, through fire,  
I do wander everywhere,  
Swifter than the moon's sphere;  
And I serve the fairy queen,  
To dew her orbs upon the green.  
The cowslips tall her pensioners be:  
In their gold coats spots you see;  
Those be rubies, fairy favours,  
In those freckles live their savours:  
I must go seek some dewdrops here  
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.  
Farewell, thou lob of spirits; I'll be gone:  
Our queen and all our elves come here anon.

### **Notes/ meanings:**

*Moon's sphere* - in Shakespeare's time it was thought that the moon was suspended inside a hollow, see-through ball that turned around the earth.

*Orbs* - fairy rings

*Pensioners* - body guards. In the time of Queen Elizabeth I, the queen had fifty 'Gentlemen Pensioners': young men chosen for their pleasing appearance. Their rich clothing was adorned with jewels and other fine decorations.

*Fairy favours* - presents from the queen of the fairies, Titania.

*Savours* - scent. It was thought that the scent of the cowslip came from the spots (freckles) at the bottom of the flowers.

*Lob* - clown or clod-hopper. This fairy is talking to another fairy called Puck who works for the fairy King, Oberon. Puck delights in making mischief and playing pranks.

## Background

This poetic speech appears in a very famous play called *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It is set in a magical wood, where the fate of four human characters becomes mixed up with the power of the fairies that rule and live there. The wood is a place of magic, dreams, enchantment and transformation (changes). This is the first speech set in the enchanted wood. This makes it very important because it is setting a scene and creating a particular mood or atmosphere using words to conjure a picture in the audience's minds. This poetic speech introduces us to the work of a fairy whose job is to serve the fairy queen (Titania).

## Sound/alliteration

There are lots of ways that this section of poetry creates a magical feeling. One way is through the sounds that have been chosen.

William Shakespeare used a special sound tool called alliteration to help this fairy's words flow like a river. Alliteration means that several words begin with (or include within their sound) the same letter. Listen to the poem again. Can you spot words beginning with the sounds 'b', 'p' and 'f'? Can you hear the sound 'w' being repeated?

What sort of effect does it make when sounds are repeated like this? Close your eyes and listen to just the first six lines being spoken aloud. Do the repeated sounds make it sound more like a spell? Do they help the sense of movement that the fairy is describing? Does it lull you into feeling like you are somewhere else?

## Favourite words and lines

Pick out your two favourite lines. Say what it is that you particularly like about each one. What picture does it give you in your head? Which words in particular help to make this picture?

## A Word Game

There are all sorts of other words for fairy, such as sprite or pixie. Think of as many as you can, or look up more words for 'fairy' (synonyms) in a thesaurus. Make a list.

Next, think up describing words (adjectives) that begin with the same letter and put an adjective in front of your fairy word. How many different ones can you think of? For instance, fairies could be 'floating fairies'. Sprites could be 'speedy sprites' or pixies 'perky pixies'. List all your alliterative descriptions on an interactive whiteboard to make a group poem. Add illustrations for display.

If you want to get *really* advanced, you can add a verb (doing word) to the description - to say what the fairies are doing (for instance speedy sprites spin). This will make a real tongue-twister of an alliteration poem!

## Fairy jobs

The fairy in the poem works for Titania, queen of the Fairies: she says,  
'I serve the fairy queen.'

The fairy's work is being described here. Pick out some of the jobs the fairy is performing (or things the fairy is doing) with the flowers and landscape. What do you think it means when the fairy says it will 'hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear'? What picture does this give you in your head?

**Imaginative response: go on, give a fairy a job! A class response:**

(Someone appointed as scribe, such as a Teaching Assistant can collect all the verbal responses and collate them into a group poem or story).

What other jobs could fairies do to help nature? What things might they collect? What would they use these things for?

Imagine they have a paint box. What could they use it for? To paint the sunset? Let's say that not all the fairies have wings. How could they get up into the sky? Do they use ladders? What are the ladders made out of? What if they run out of paint? Where do they go to find or buy or make more? What might the paint be made from?

How much does a fairy get paid for its work? What do you pay a fairy with? Moonbeams? Giggles? How many moonbeams? What weight of giggles? A kilogram of smiles? Look up some old-fashioned measurements. How about a quart of moonbeams?

Fairies could do all sorts of useful tasks outside. What kind of things might fairies tidy away? Puddles? Shadows in the morning? Mist? What kind of help could fairies give to help the sun get up in the morning? Would they make the sun a cup of cloud tea?!

**Extension**

Would you like to hire a fairy to help with chores at home? I know I would. Make a list of types of fairy that could assist you, such as the Dishwasher-Emptying Fairy: the Sock-Pairing Fairy! How would you pay your fairies? If they didn't do the job properly, could you sack them?

Draw one of your ideas.

**Poetic development**

In Shakespeare's poetic speech, the fairy describes its journey.

*Over hill, over dale,  
Through bush, through briar,  
Over park, over pale,  
Through flood, through fire,  
I do wander everywhere,  
Swifter than the moon's sphere;*

Write about or describe and record an imaginative journey that you as a fairy or sprite might make, somewhere that you know very well. This could be inside your house, inside the classroom, round the school grounds or through your neighbourhood. In the example below, the nouns have been taken away so you can put in your own ideas.

Over..., over ...,  
Through..., through ...,  
Over ..., over ...,  
Through ..., through ...,  
I do wander ...,  
Swifter than ...

Here's an example:

Over *sofa*, over *bed*  
Through *cupboard*, through *drawer*,  
Over *cooker*, overhead,  
Through *keyhole*, through *door* ...etc.

### Ways of describing

In the poem, the fairy is described as flying 'swifter than the moon's sphere.' When Shakespeare was alive, many people thought that the moon was fixed inside a hollow ball that turned quickly around the earth. What else could a fairy fly faster than? A Ferrari? A bat? (Think of things that actually fly or that move extremely fast).

Perhaps fairy wings come in all colours. A way of making poetic images with colour is to describe something as being *like* something else of the same colour. (Simile). Try hard to avoid obvious or well-known comparisons. Think of unusual or unexpected ones.

Wings brown like... burnt toast  
Wings orange like...spilt sunset.

Now, you can create your own colour range by moving the comparison and putting it *before* the colour, instead of after. For example:

Wings: Burnt-toast-brown  
Wings: Spilt sunset-orange

### Finally

if you get a *flock* of birds and a *shoal* of fish (collective nouns), what would you call a group of fairies? A *swarm* of sprites? A *herd* of fairies? How many different ones can you come up with? Which are your favourites and why?

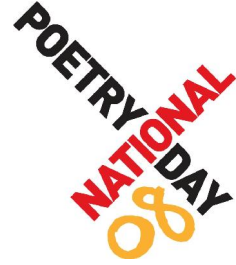
You can take this idea further by using measurements. How about a *pint* of fairies, a *cup* of pixies?

If you had a *cup* of pixies, how would they move? (Think about what is usually in a cup). How about 'a cup of pixies *pouring* through the evening sky'?  
Or, 'a *herd* of fairies...stampeding across the clouds'?

A teacher or teaching assistant can help to gather all these images and collective nouns into a group poem which can be dramatised for different voices, set to movement and music and performed.

### Author Background

William Shakespeare is regarded as the greatest writer in the English language. This makes him the most famous British writer ever! He produced volumes of poems (sonnets) as well as plays. Find out which are the most famous plays. Find examples of some of his poems (for instance, he used a particular poetic structure called a sonnet).



## Acknowledgments

### About the authors of these notes

Andrew Fusek Peters and Polly Peters wrote these lesson plans and notes for National Poetry Day. Andrew and Polly are poets, editors and novelists who have written over sixty five titles between them, including the best-selling *Poems With Attitude* (Wayland). 'It is rare and welcome to find a collection that speaks so directly to teenagers' - *The Guardian*.

Andrew also has a 'best of' for younger readers, *Mad, Bad & Dangerously Haddock* (Lion) and two collections for Oxford University Press – *Spies Unlimited* and *Ghosts Unlimited*. Their poems for both younger listeners and teenagers have been recorded for the Poetry Archive. Andrew has worked tirelessly over the last twenty years as a visiting poet in schools, performing his material and trying to show that poetry can be both entertaining and thought-provoking. He also juggles, plays didgeridoo and jaw-harp and has got back into skateboarding in his forties!

### Permissions

All poems remain copyright of the author. We are grateful to the following for permission to use poems in these notes.

**For My Poems:** Reproduced by kind permission of Bloodaxe Books. Find this poem in Marina Tsvetayeva's *Selected Poems*, published by Bloodaxe Books 1987.

**Guess What Dad Does:** Copyright © 1985 Brian Patten. Reproduced by kind permission of the author c/o Rogers, Coleridge & White Ltd., 20 Powis Mews, London W11 1JN. Find this poem in *Gargling with Jelly*, published by Puffin Books 2003.

**If I Hadn't Been A Writer:** Reproduced by kind permission of the author Gerard Benson. Find this poem in *Omba Balomba*, published by Smith/Doorstop Books 2005.