



www.jodyleecollins.com

9 Reasons to Read Poetry

(And what makes a poem 'good'?)

As a retired elementary classroom teacher, I know how difficult it can be to squeeze in all the creative content we think we should be covering in a day. Constraints and schedules are real. In my conversations with Home School parents, there are three things they find most challenging about including poetry in their homeschool curriculum:

- Finding the time
- Finding the content
- Making it fun

Well, you would be surprised what a difference even 15 minutes a week can make introducing your children (and you!) to poetry.

Kids who read poetry

- Learn to attend & listen better
- Are more engaged readers
- Have the foundation needed to write poems of their own.

START SMALL

Take 5: read a poem each day at breakfast or during family Bible Time.

Take 15: A short reading and listening lesson once a week can whet your child's appetite and help them *make friends with poetry*.

**** Here are THREE REASONS to include poetry in your Homeschool Rhythms**

Poetry

1. Hones our ears for language and new vocabulary
2. Helps us learn to read and think metaphorically (like in Jesus' Parables)
3. Requires careful attention, inviting us to slow down, look and listen

So where do we start?

As a poetry reader I look for work by Christian poets, both classical and contemporary as often as possible.

So, what do I mean by 'Christian' poets?

I do not necessarily mean people who write only poems that feature biblically centered, gospel-oriented content. A poem doesn't have to use the name of Jesus or a Bible story verse to be Christian poetry.

Christian poets are writers whose work brings glory to God through their ingenuity and creativity and point people in the direction of our Creator, even if, and often without, mentioning the name of God, as C.S. Lewis so aptly says.

"Most men glorify God by doing to his glory things which, though not *per se* acts of glorification, become so by being offered to him." -C.S. Lewis

Here are THREE FEATURES that make a poem "Good"

1. **A good poem** points to God in some way, offering a window to see Him through the writer's vivid, descriptive language. A good poem also invites the reader to look up in gratitude, hope or wonder.

2. **A good poem** provides a connection between poet and reader through evocative images or by eliciting strong emotions. Images and ideas resonate with us and we are moved, causing us to respond with, "Wow, I see that/feel that/think that too."

Or, "those words perfectly describe the feel of autumn or the look of a sunset or _____" (fill in the blank), and we are inspired.

3. Besides offering inspiration or a connection, **a good poem** often provides ways to generate a poem of our own, becoming a springboard for original work.

For instance, you might read these lines of Emily Dickinson's

"There is no Frigate like a Book

To take us Lands away..."

And be inspired to write your own phrases....

"There is no _____ like a _____ /

to take us _____."

and a poem will unfold from your pen.

****THREE MORE Reasons** to Read Poetry:

1. To learn new vocabulary. The best poems are those that send you to the dictionary on a word hunt, adding richness to our conversations and our writing.

2. To learn form and sound

FORM—There are two basic forms of poetry--Free verse and Rhyme or Meter

When reading **free verse**, consider how the poem appears on the page.

- What do you notice? Are the line endings even-ish and pleasing to the eyes?
- What about the end words? Are they strong verbs or adjectives?
- Where does the writer place the turn that moves the reader along to the next line, the words that pull you along to the next verse?

Note: The word 'verse' is from the Latin word 'vertere' meaning 'to turn.'

Reading poems in **rhyme and meter** offer the discovery of not just end rhymes but cadence.

- Notice the pattern of your voice as you read, the ups and downs, the syllables and sound
- Rhyming poems are the absolute best for memorizing.

SOUND—A poem comes alive when it is read! Hearing a poem read (or reading out loud to yourself) is the best way to experience it.

Notice:

- *How do the words feel in your mouth when you read them?*
- *What sound do they make as they trip over your tongue, Words like, marcescent', alterity' or 'mellifluous'?*
- *Where do you hear the rhymes?*

3. Learn Poetic Devices: Reading poetry helps discover features like musicality, onomatopoeia and metaphors.

- **Musicality** has to do with sound, syllable, rhythm and rhyme in a poem
- **Onomatopoeia** is the formation of a word from a sound associated with what is

named, i.e. 'sizzle' and 'cuckoo.'

- **Metaphors** are words that act as a bridge from a physical object to an abstract idea or emotion. Words like *shell or bead or boat or branch* become containers to hold images

and ideas. Jesus used metaphors all the time in His teachings, both in the way He described Himself—the Bread of Life, the Door—and so on, but also in the Parables.

Now you have 9 REASONS to use Poetry in your Home School rhythms. Below you will find three poems as simple illustrations of the poetic devices just mentioned: *Musicality, Onomatopoeia and Metaphor*. The first two are short rhyming poems, the last one is free verse.

Musicality—As you read ‘Happiness,’ (out loud!) listen for the cadence, rhythm and rhyme.

Happiness -*Alan Alexander Milne*

John had
Great Big
Waterproof
Boots on;
John had a
Great Big
Waterproof
Hat;
John had a
Great Big
Waterproof
Mackintosh –
And that
(Said John)
Is
That.

Did you hear a child jumping into puddles as you read this? The up and down and “splash!” of his boots? No? *Read it again.*

Onomatopoeia is the formation of a word from a sound associated with what is named. There are two or three such words in “Liquid Jewels” below; what rain sound words would you add?

Liquid Jewels -*Jody Collins*

The day is dripping diamonds
After early morning rain,
The plop of silver falls from leaf to tree.

Percussive sounds are muffled,
Sharing space with blinks of silence
While sunlight facets nudge me,
Pause and see.

Metaphor—A metaphor is a word that acts as a bridge from a physical object to an abstract idea or emotion. Read “Pressed into Joy,” inspired by a cruet of olive oil which became something else altogether. What is the image or idea that comes to mind as you read it?

Pressed into Joy -Jody Collins

Golden oil in
a bottle
liquid light
refracting sun in shimmers
a mirrored shape
reflects on the surface
and I wonder at the
drop, drop, drops
of light as they
drip, drip, drip
down.

All this tasting
joyfulness because
something was crushed
and pressed,
leaving light.

If you made some discoveries as you added in your 15 minutes of poetry time this week, will you email me and let me know what surprised you? I would love to hear! *Email me at jodyo (at) jodyleecollins.com*

For more resources in my Resource Library, visit the link [HERE](#).

NOTE: All of the content is organized using the following rubric for home or classroom use.

Also, age does not always equal grade level & vice-versa.

**AGE/GRADE LEVEL FOR
MAKING FRIENDS
WITH POETRY
ACTIVITIES**



CORAL 5-8 year olds
Lower Elementary



YELLOW 9-12 year olds
Upper Elementary



GREEN 12-15 year olds
Middle School-High School

About Me

I'm Jody Collins, retired Elementary and Middle School teacher and published poet. I spent over 20 years in the classroom, including 5 years working with Special Needs kids. I'm also a published poet and Nana of six grandkids ages 6-23. I'm passionate about helping parents, teachers and homeschoolers introduce children to poetry.

When I'm not at my desk writing or reading, I enjoy spending time with my children and grandchildren. My husband and I call the Seattle area home where we marvel at the birds and mess about in our garden.

Access more Free Resources and
Subscribe [HERE](#) for monthly inspiration to
help you *Make Friends with Poetry*.

