

## Poetry Books

There are lots of ways to incorporate poetry without doing a massive unit on poetry. Teachers could do a Poem of the Week or a Poet of the Month (be sure to include poets of color!). They could highlight a particular poetic technique like Repetition, Alliteration, Consonance, Rhyme, Rhythm, Assonance, Voice, and so on and include poetry that uses that technique. Or, feature a particular type of poetry like Haiku or Concrete Poems. Have kids write their own Haiku or concrete poem. Include a selection of poems in each thematic unit. For Mythology, find poems about Greek Gods or monsters; for a unit on Heroes, use poetry about courage or overcoming. Use rhyming books with younger kids and point out the sounds of words and how their arrangement makes rhythmic patterns. Try clapping or stomping the rhythm of *Bear Snores On* or other books.

Grade Level	Title	Author	Notes
PK-K	Jamberry!	Bruce Degan	An old book, but has a fun, rollicking rhyme with interesting internal rhyming structure. Kids learn it easily and it's fun to recite. Great read aloud and a nice intro to poems for little ones.
PK	Blue Hat, Green Hat	Sandra Boynton	Not a poem but does have a very defined structure that kids pick up on immediately. Simple text, lots of repetition that contributes to the rhythm. Great one to have kids try to replicate on their own through dictation and drawing.
PK-1	Bear Snores On	Karma Wilson	Great for teaching rhythm and rhyme; could also use for rhyme scheme with older kids.
PK-2	Hi, Koo! A Year of Seasons	Jon Muth	Haikus written about the different seasons of the year; good choice to use with a unit on the seasons or months of the year. Could use throughout the year at various times.
PK-2	Dirty Laundry Pile	Paul Janeczko	Poems told in different voices
PK-2	Firefly July: A Year of Very Short Poems	Paul Janeczko	Good for talking about word choice – a poem doesn't have to be long to convey meaning.
K-3	A Song for Gwendolyn Brooks	Alice Faye Duncan	Beautiful introduction to Gwendolyn Brooks' poetry for little ones
3-6	A Kick in the Head: An Everyday Guide to Poetic Forms	Paul Janeczko	Examples of different types of poems from acrostics to sonnets
3-6	A Poke in the I: A Collection of Concrete Poems	Paul Janeczko	Concrete Poems

3-5	Wet Cement: A Mix of Concrete Poems	Bob Racza	Concrete poems
1-5	Hip Hop Speaks to Children	Nikki Giovanni	Collection of hip hop verse from JayZ to Queen Latifa to Tupac and Maya Angelou.
1-4	If You're Not Here Please Raise Your Hand: Poems About School	Kalli Dakos	Silly poetry
2-6	The Death of the Hat: Brief History of Poetry in 50 Objects	Paul Janeczko	Traces the development of poetry
1-7 or 8	A River of Words: The Story of William Carlos Williams	Jen Bryant	Gorgeous book that gives biographical information and also conveys Williams' focus on the small, everyday things he celebrated in his poetry. Great jumping off point for getting kids to write about the meaningful things in their lives.
3-6	Poetry for Kids: Emily Dickinson (also, Robert Frost, Carl Sandburg, Walt Whitman William Shakespeare)	Emily Dickinson (Susan Snively, Editor)	Series for younger grades that offers a selection of poems from a few fairly well known sources. Not a bad way to introduce some poetry but doesn't have much in the way of authors of color.
3-6	Poetry for Young People: Maya Angelou (also Robert Frost, William Shakespeare, Rudyard Kipling, Langston Hughes, Edgar Allen Poe, African American Poetry)	Various Authors	Separate series on poetry/poets that offers a few African American writers.
4-6 or 7	Big Talk: Poems for 4 Voices	Paul Fleischman	Interesting book; reading the poems together helps students hear the rhythms of poetry better, understand the musical, lyrical qualities in the language. Covers a range of middle school topics.
1-6	Laughing Tomatoes and Other Spring Poems/Jitomates risueños y otros poemas de primavera	Francisco X. Alarcón	Bilingual poetry book – good resource for bilingual classrooms or classrooms with English Language Learners, or regular classrooms. These poems are fun and joyful.

2-5, younger for <b>Read aloud</b>	Poesía eres tú	F. Isabel Campoy	Spanish language poetry anthology. Wonderful collection of poems.
2-6	Cool Salsa: Bilingual Poems on Growing up Latino in the United States	Edited by Lori Marie Carlson	Bilingual text. Collection of many Latinx poets from the US. Wonderful array of poems.
4-7	Out of Wonder: Poets Celebrating Poets	Kwame Alexander	Nice introduction to a range of poets and their work.
2 and up	Poetry for Young People	Maya Angelou	Great intro to Angelou's most famous poetry
4-8 or 9	Flag of Childhood: Poems of the Middle East	Naomi Shihab Nye	Nice collection of poems from Middle Eastern authors. Some are a little more difficult to understand so best for older kids.
1-4	Pablo Neruda: Poet of the People	Monica Brown	Both discusses Neruda's poetry but also the motivation behind his poems.
K-4	Enormous Smallness: A Story of e.e. cummings	Matthew Burgess	Really nice text that will get kids playing with words.
1 or 2-6	This Poem is a Nest	Irene Latham	Amazing book showing how a poet writes a poem and then finds 160 additional poems within her original 37-line composition. Really great way to introduce the idea of found poetry.
K-3	Winter Bees and Other Poems of the Cold Dark Emperor and Other Poems of the Night Song of the Water Boatman and Other Pond Poems	Joyce Sidman	Newbery Award-winning poet, great collections of poems focused around cold, night, and water. Really nice way to get kids observing and using lyrical, descriptive language and imagery.
PK-2	Change Sings: A Children's Anthem	Amanda Gorman	Nice book from the inaugural poet
K-3 or 4	The Sun is so Quiet	Nikki Giovanni	Beautiful poetry in a variety of forms from a modern poet who's been described as a living legend. Highly recommended.
PK-3	Blooming Beneath the Sun	Christina Rosetti	Classic children's poems given wonderful new illustrations. Great for teaching rhyme, rhythm, repetition.

PK-3	Ashley Bryan's ABC of African American Poetry	Illus. Ashley Bryan	Great primer of African American poetry with wonderful illustrations from Ashley Bryan. Lots of poetic technique on display.

### Poetic Novels/Chapter Books

Novels written as poems can be great for reluctant readers. Chapters tend to be short, as do line lengths. The language is usually powerful and expressive, condensing everything down to the essentials. However, poetic novels require students to work a little harder to make meaning of the text – they need to be competent at making inferences about how characters feel or what their motives are. They will also need to look more closely at word choices the author uses to convey mood or tone. Poetic novels aren't necessarily easier, just shorter.

1-3	Gone Fishing: A Novel in Verse	Tamara Will Wissinger	Great introduction to poetry. A fishing trip is exciting until little sister comes along. Nice discussion of poetry tools at the back.
2-4 ( <b>Read Aloud</b> for younger grades)	Sarah, Plain and Tall	Patricia MacLachlan	Spare, beautiful writing. Not a difficult read, but suffused with emotion. To be clear, this is <b>prose</b> , but the word choice and the repetition make it read like poetry.
3-5	Little Dog, Lost	Marion Dane Bauer	A dog who needs a family, a boy who needs a dog, and an elderly man who needs community. Written in free verse that pulls the reader in. Younger grades as <b>Read Aloud</b> .
4-6	Love That Dog/ Hate that Cat	Sharon Creech	Jake finds his voice as a poet; includes some published poems from people like William Carlos Williams and Walter Dean Myers as well. Underscores the poetry of the everyday. Requires making inferences.
4-6	May B	Caroline Starr Rose	May is hired out to a pioneer couple to help her family when their wheat crop fails. All in verse.
4-6	Words with Wings	Nikki Grimes	Gabby daydreams to shut out the unpleasant things in her life.

4-6	The Red Pencil	Andrea Davis Pinckney	A young Sudanese refugee girl is finally allowed to go to school. Told in verse.
5-6 or 7	Out of the Dust	Sharon Hesse	Written in verse with quiet, evocative language. Stunning. Also good <b>Historical Fiction</b> , as it offers insight to the Dust Bowl era and the Great Depression.
5-6	Moo	Sharon Creech	A mix of prose and poetry, makes poetry approachable. Good one for teaching <b>Theme</b>
5-6	The Crossover	Kwame Alexander	Twin basketball stars wrestle with middle school issues, liking the same girl, and their dad's failing health, all in poem form. African American protagonists. Also good for <b>point of view</b> and <b>narrator</b> .
5-6	Rebound	Kwame Alexander	Prequel to the Crossover, this story follows Josh and Jordan's dad. Charlie is shipped off to his grandparents' for the summer. While he's there, he discovers the sport that will make him a star, but he also has to reckon with some family secrets. All in verse.
5-6	Booked	Kwame Alexander	Soccer obsessed Nick is having trouble with a bully and with feelings for a girl in his school. Great middle school characters, everything told in verse.
5-6	Planet Middle School	Nikki Grimes	Joy used to love hanging out with the guys playing basketball, but now nothing seems to fit – not her clothes, not her relationship with her best friend Jake. And there's this boy she likes...Great explorations of middle school feelings and situations. African American protagonist
5-9	Brains for Lunch: A Zombie Novel in Haiku	K. A. Holt	Poetry doesn't have to be serious. Good one for teaching about haiku specifically.
5-8	Caminar	Skila Brown	Story of the Guatemalan Civil War told through beautifully crafted poems. Probably best for older grades because of the traumatic themes. Lovely, emotional, visceral.
5-8	All the Broken Pieces	Ann E Burg	Matt has been adopted by a loving family: he would like to forget Vietnam but finds himself forced to confront his past.
5-8	Finding Wonders: Three Girls Who Changed Science	Jeannine Atkins	Three girls, separated by time and an ocean, made discoveries that changed the way we understand science.

			Their stories are told in verse, with beautiful, evocative language.
4-6	Inside Out and Back Again	Thanhha Lai	Story of Ha and her family as they flee Saigon. Inspired by the author's experiences. Themes of loss and new beginnings and being an outsider will resonate with middle schoolers.
5-6	Brown Girl Dreaming	Jacqueline Woodson	Woodson's semi-autobiographical story of growing up in the Civil Rights era. Told in a series of beautiful, evocative poems.
5-6	The Wild Book	Margarita Engle	The story of Engle's grandmother, Fefa, and her struggle to learn to read and write despite dyslexia. Takes place in pre-revolutionary Cuba, and the revolution plays a part in the plot.
5-8	Loving Vs. Virginia: A Documentary Novel of the Landmark Civil Rights Case	Patricia Hurby Powell	Mildred and Richard are in love, but he is white and she is black and in Virginia in 1958, it's illegal for them to marry. So they go to Washington D.C. and marry legally there, before returning to Virginia to be near family. Only 5 weeks later, they are arrested by the local sheriff. African American female protagonist. Written in verse, in simple but powerful lines, this novel dramatizes the struggle of one couple to have their right to marry legally recognized.
6-10	Sisters of Glass	Stephanie Hemphill (be sure you get the right version of this as there are two novels called Sisters of Glass by different authors.	Two Venetian sisters in the 15 <sup>th</sup> century; one destined for marriage, the other to stay at home and take care of the family. Each longs for the other's future. Beautiful language; more complex vocabulary. Good for a unit on the Renaissance.
6-10	Running with Trains: A Novel in Poetry and Two Voices	Michael J. Rosen	Vietnam Era story of two boys, one riding the train back and forth between his gran's and his mom's, the other watching the train that runs through his family's farm. The voice of the poet alternates between the two boys.
6-8	Unbound	Ann E. Burg	A story of Grace, a slave, who works in the Big House. Her poems question the right whites have to own others before she finds herself fleeing into the swamp to freedom.
9-12	CrashBoomLove: A Novel in Verse	Juan Felipe Herrera	Story about Caesar, whose family is falling apart and who is forced to attend a new school where it's everyone vs. the

			new guy (him). Herrera understands wanting to be a 'normal' kid but being trapped in labels. Hispanic protagonist.
7-10	The Poet X	Elizabeth Acevedo	Xiomara Batista is an Afro-Latina girl growing up in NYC; she tells the story of her struggle to find her voice in beautiful short chapters, all written in verse.
8-11	Chlorine Sky	Mahogany Brown	A novel in verse about broken promises, the speed of rumors, and growing apart from the person you thought was your friend. May skew a little younger because of length.
6-10	Muted	Tami Charles	An exploration of the music industry in verse. <b>Themes</b> of what we're willing to sacrifice for success, how young women are exploited by men in power positions, how truth can be manipulated, and the cost of breaking free.
9-12	Punching the Air	Ibi Zoboi and Yusuf Salaam	The story of 16 year old Amal Shahid, falsely accused of a crime and sent to prison, told in verse. <b>Themes</b> of survival, racism, overcoming, truth, humanity, and identity. African American protagonists.