

30 Poetry Ideas

In honor of April, National Poetry Month, here are 30 easy, quick and engaging ideas for ways to respond to and appreciate, create and perform poetry, all with connections to The New York Times and, thereby, to the larger world.

Below the activities list are links to related resources.

ON PAGES THAT NEED LOGIN:

YOU MAY USE MINE OR CREATE YOUR OWN:

Gloria.moss = Username I.D.

Knights1 = Password

ACTIVITIES:

1. Read a poem inspired by a daily activity such as riding a train (The L.I.R.R. is the Long Island Railroad). Write a poem about an activity you do every day, trying to capture the details so that a reader will really feel "there" with you.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23diary.html? r=1>

2. Read "On Poetry: The Great(ness) Game". What poem or poet taught in school do you think is overrated? Give five reasons why.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/22/books/review/Orr-t.html>

3. Create a collage of images, words, headlines, advertisements, etc. from a week's worth of The New York Times that illustrates Langston Hughes's famous poem "Dreams".

<http://poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/16075>

4. Watch "Three Poems" and/or read "Teenagers With Souls of Poets Face Off". Hold a slam poetry competition or poetry "open mic" event.

http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2008/06/17/us/20080617_SLAM_FEATURE.html

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/03/nyregion/03slam.html>

30 Poetry Ideas

5. Read an obituary of a poet (such as the 1963 obit of Robert Frost). Research the poet of your choice and write your own obituary about him or her.

<http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/0326.html>

6. Listen to a poet reading his or her own poetry, such as Billy Collins. Record and perhaps even create a podcast of yourself reading your own poetry or a favorite poem. How does the vocal element shift the tone of the poem?

<http://www.nytimes.com/audiopages/2002/10/20/books/audio-collins.html>

7. Billy Collins said, "I learned how to start a poem in a very familiar place and move away from that and use it as a launching pad to abstract territories." Read the article "Region's Poets Convey a Sense of Place", which includes that quote. Write your own place-inspired poem. For further inspiration, read the poems that accompany the article,.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/04/nyregion/long-island/04Rpoets.html>

8. Read "Britney? That's All She Rote". Memorize and recite a favorite poem for an audience, such as your family or class.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/16/weekinreview/16bader.html>

9. Read a review of a poetry collection, such as the review of "Sea Change", Jorie Graham's 11th book of poems. Read at least five poems by the same poet and write your own review. Or assemble a poetry collection on the topic or theme of your choice, such as love or change.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/06/books/review/Longenbach-t.html>

10. Read the obit of George Schneeman and the article "Amid a Sculptural Physicality, a Poet Walks and Talks Onstage". Team up with a classmate to create and stage a poetry/dance performance or to create pairs of poems and visual art works.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/31/arts/design/31schneeman.html>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/08/arts/dance/08stac.html>

30 Poetry Ideas

11. Look over the list "100 Notable Books of 2008". Create a recommendation list of three poets and/or specific poems for two friends based on their personalities and interests.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/07/books/review/100Notable-t.html>

12. Read "His Back Pages", about an archive of poems Bob Dylan wrote in the early 1960s to accompany a group of Hollywood photos. Write a poem based on a contemporary photo of a celebrity.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/07/books/review/McGrath-t.html>

13. Read the poem "Voters Are Red, Voters Are Blue", written by Times book reviewer Michiko Kakutani about the writer Calvin Trillin, and Randy Kennedy's review of Trillin's book "Obliviously On He Sails: The Bush Administration in Rhyme". Write a poem about the current political climate, including specific references to people and events.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/21/books/21book.html>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/07/31/books/sensing-political-crime-drives-him-to-rhyme.html>

14. Read "Love, Your Ted", and "I Write Entirely For You", both about collections of letters written by poet couples. Write letters that you imagine could have been written to and from two poets of your choice.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/16/books/review/Orr-t.html>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/02/books/review/Logan-t.html>

15. Read "The Lives of the Poets". Identify a poet whose life and work you think children would find interesting. Create the cover art for an illustrated children's book about the poet's life and work.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/09/books/review/London-t.html>

16. Read "The Roustabout" and "Bullies, Addicts and Losers: A Poet Loves Them All", about the work of Clive James and August Kleinzahler, respectively. Are all topics --

30 Poetry Ideas

including Microsoft Windows and "losers" -- appropriate for poetry? Find a partner and write poems to each other about any topic of interest, in the place of talking about it. What was gained, and lost, in expressing your views in poetry?

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/28/books/review/Orr2-t.html>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/24/books/24garn.html>

17. Read "Those Who Write, Teach" and "For a Weekend, Fishermen Measure Haul in Verse". Interview a teacher or other adult who also writes poetry, and write an essay or news article.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/21/magazine/21writingprof-t.html>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/04/us/04poets.htm>

18. Read "Hands That Speak, Hands That Rhyme". Find out how to translate the poem of your choice into American Sign Language. Then perform it for a group. Need Login

[http://www.nytimes.com/glogin?URI=http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/07/nyregion/thecity/07deaf.html&OQ=rQ3D1&OP=4543acaaQ2FQ2Ft45Q2FARQ5CNvRR1Q2BQ2FQ2BaaQ3FQ2Fa7Q2Fa2Q2FDQ5Ev4Q5BSRDQ2F1\(4Q5CS1Q5EQ2Fa2A4n\)Q7B\(1Q20j](http://www.nytimes.com/glogin?URI=http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/07/nyregion/thecity/07deaf.html&OQ=rQ3D1&OP=4543acaaQ2FQ2Ft45Q2FARQ5CNvRR1Q2BQ2FQ2BaaQ3FQ2Fa7Q2Fa2Q2FDQ5Ev4Q5BSRDQ2F1(4Q5CS1Q5EQ2Fa2A4n)Q7B(1Q20j)

19. No longer Available

20. Read "Speak, O Muse, of Fallen 401(k)s and Malignant Mortgages". Look through the Business section and create a found poem about the current economic downturn using words you find there. Need login*.

[http://www.nytimes.com/glogin?URI=http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/08/weekinreview/08poems.html&OQ=rQ3D1&OP=61e6a89bQ2FQ25NAEQ25Uieb7iipQ25tLLWQ25L8Q25LQ27Q25NAAAn1\)7A,1ANQ25LQ27Q7DiABbdmpBh](http://www.nytimes.com/glogin?URI=http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/08/weekinreview/08poems.html&OQ=rQ3D1&OP=61e6a89bQ2FQ25NAEQ25Uieb7iipQ25tLLWQ25L8Q25LQ27Q25NAAAn1)7A,1ANQ25LQ27Q7DiABbdmpBh)

21. Read about a \$100 million donation made to Poetry magazine. What would you do to promote the writing and reading of poetry among teens if you were given a million dollars or more to spend? Brainstorm ideas and develop a plan for a project.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/11/19/books/lilly-heir-makes-100-million-bequest-to-poetry-magazine.html>

30 Poetry Ideas

22. Do you agree or disagree that slang is disposable poetry? Along with your classmates, identify a slang or made up expression (you may want to consult Schott's Vocab and other sources) that you think is colorful, interesting and expressive enough to be considered poetic, and "perform" the expressions in a staged reading.

<http://ideas.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/02/13/slang-the-disposable-poetry/>

<http://schott.blogs.nytimes.com/>

23. Answer the question "When do we most need poetry?". Find a poem that you find uplifting or comforting.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/11/books/on-writers-and-writing-the-news-from-poetry.html>

24. Read "It's Only Rhyming Quatrains, But I Like It". Put together a chapbook of five or more song lyrics that, in your view, "succeed" as poetry on the page.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/07/08/magazine/it-s-only-rhyming-quatrain-but-i-like-it.html>

25. Read "And It Goes Like This: 0-1-1-2-3-5-8". Write a "Fib," a six-line poem that uses a mathematical progression known as the Fibonacci sequence to dictate the number of syllables in each line, developed by the blogger Gregory K. Pincus.. Challenge your friends to a "Fib"-off. Need login*.

<http://www.nytimes.com/glogin?URI=http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/14/books/14bfibo.html&OQ=rQ3D1&OP=1cbe620cQ2FQ24sLiQ24O0M5300Q5EQ7DQ24Q7DQ3CQ3CQ3AQ24Q3CHQ24Q7BHQ24i00J5Q24Q7BHiNVi0!rQ5EkQ5D>

26. Taking a page from Dot Earth blogger Andrew Revkin, look at an evocative picture of nature in The Times and write, as Revkin puts it, "Rorschach-style, drawing impressions out of the exposed shapes and colors."

<http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/05/02/poetry-and-air-imagery-and-earth/>

27. Read a Times article from a section other than, and topically quite different from, Arts or Books -- such as Science or Sports -- in which the writing is descriptive.

30 Poetry Ideas

Choose an article whose language strikes you as poetic. Share selections with classmates and discuss the poetry of news reporting.

<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/science/index.html>

28. Find a Times photograph Cover or other image that directly or indirectly serves to illustrate a poem you are reading in school. Post the image and poem together for others to look at and respond to.

<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/multimedia/index.html>

29. Download an audio clip of a poem to your MP3 player as an audio version of carrying a poem in your pocket. Listen to it throughout the day on April 30.

<http://www.poets.org/audio.php>

<http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/04/17/a-burst-of-verse-is-that-a-poem-in-your-pock>

30. RELATED RESOURCES:

Teaching with The Times: Poetry

A collection of selected lesson plans, student crossword puzzles and more resources for teaching poetry across the curriculum.

http://www.nytimes.com/learning/issues_in_depth/20080407.html

Times Topics pages:

Poetry and Poets

http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/p/poetry_and_poets/index.html

Poetry Society of America

http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/p/poetry_society_of_america/index.html

Poets Laureate

http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/p/poets_laureate/index.html

30 Poetry Ideas

National Poetry Month

The Academy of American Poets' offerings for celebrating National Poetry Month, part of Poets.org.

<http://www.poets.org/page.php/prmID/41>

GottaBook's 30 Poets/30 Days

GottaBook blog's celebration of children's poetry for National Poetry Month.

<http://gottabook.blogspot.com/2009/03/announcing-30-poets30-days.html>

Scholastic: Celebrate National Poetry Month

A wide range of resources for all grade levels.

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/poetry/>

Favorite Poem Project

Program founded by former U.S. poet laureate Robert Pinsky, in which Americans shared their favorite poems. Includes video documentaries.

<http://www.favoritepoem.org/>

Poetry

From the Poetry Foundation, the online home of Poetry magazine. Includes podcasts, discussion guides, blogs and much more.

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/index.html>

Poetry Daily

An anthology of contemporary poetry that features a new poem every day.

<http://poems.com/>

http://www.nytimes.com/learning/issues_in_depth/30PoetryIdeas.html