National Poetry Centre

Young Poets Week 2025

Key stage three toolkit

In partnership with

National Literacy Trust

Change your story

Contents

About National Poetry Centre and National Literacy Trust

National Poetry Centre

The National Poetry Centre is the UK's first dedicated national headquarters, connecting people to poetry from all cultures and backgrounds. A unique hub for awards, events, performances, exhibitions, workshops, open-mic nights, a library, archives, digital access and more, it is also a champion of poetry in schools, healthcare settings, community centres and public spaces across the country. Based in Leeds and guided by the vision of the Poet Laureate Simon Armitage, the National Poetry Centre has been created to support and celebrate poetry everywhere in the UK.

National Literacy Trust

The National Literacy Trust is an independent charity that empowers children, young people, and adults with the literacy skills they need to succeed. Over the last 30 years, we have continued to work with people who need us the most, supporting schools, families and communities on a local and national level.

Our Young Writers Programme supports schools to develop lasting writing for pleasure practices, with the view that every young person is a writer. Over the last ten years, we have developed a range of writing programmes based on our evidence-based, 'three-pillar model' for writing that emphasises the importance of memorable experiences, working with professional authors and providing a real audience and purpose for writing.

About the Young Poet Laureate Programme

The Young Poet Laureate programme aims to inspire a new generation of young poets by:

- Championing young poetic voices
- Celebrating poetry as an accessible, diverse and powerful form of expression
- Raising the profile of poetry in schools
- Fostering children and young people's engagement in reading, writing, listening to and performing poetry
- Developing children and young people's literacy, creativity and confidence

Created by National Poetry Centre in partnership with National Literacy Trust, and supported by Poet Laureate Simon Armitage; the programme provides children and young people with new opportunities to explore and discover poetry in their schools and communities. Alongside free workshops, training and resources for schools, the programme aims to seek and appoint regional young poet laureates across the nation to become ambassadors for poetry, alongside Poet Laureate Simon Armitage. Shortlisted students and appointed laureates will receive opportunities for professional mentoring and publication and will form a network of young poetry champions.

Key Dates

24 to 28 November 2025	Young Poets Week and launch of the Young Poet Laureate application process
19 January 2026	Deadline for Young Poet Laureate submissions
March 2026	Shortlist announcement
20 April to 8 May 2026	Regional masterclasses and judging panels for shortlisted young poets
June 2026	Announcement and appointing of the 12 Young Poets Laureate
June 2026 to June 2027	Laureateship: Mentoring programme, publication of shortlisted anthology, events and celebrations

Welcome to Young Poets Week

Young Poets Week is a celebration of the power, depth and diversity of poetry and writing for pleasure. At its heart is the belief that poetry is a space for young people to express themselves honestly, creatively and fearlessly.

This week also launches the Young Poet Laureate opportunity, a chance for young people to be recognised for their originality and voice. By taking part in the programme, schools can support children in building their confidence and skills while fostering engagement in poetry and opening the door to the opportunities of the wider Young Poet Laureate programme.

The need for meaningful, creative writing opportunities has never been greater. According to the National Literacy Trust's Children and Young People's Writing in 2025 report, just one in four young people (26.6%) say they enjoy writing in their free time, the lowest level recorded in over a decade, and only 10.4% write something every day outside of school. Yet the same research shows that when young people are given the freedom to choose what they write about and how they express themselves, they are more likely to feel motivated, confident and creative. Poetry offers exactly this kind of freedom: an open, expressive form where young writers can play with language, challenge perspectives and enjoy the thrill of making something entirely their own.

This is a week for young people to write boldly, explore identity, experiment with form and say what matters. Poetry is personal, political, playful and profound; it can whisper, rage, joke or sing. There are no rigid rules unless students choose them. Poetry becomes a way to tell untold stories, to reflect, imagine and push the boundaries of language and thought. Through this process, young writers not only build literacy and creative skills but also develop confidence in their voice and a deeper sense of how they engage with the world. It invites them to write authentically, reflect critically and engage with the world around them in fresh, imaginative ways.

The benefits of poetry for children

Poetry is more than an artform. It supports learning, personal growth and wellbeing in powerful and lasting ways.

The National Literacy Trust's latest research (Clark et al., 2025) shows that between 2024 and 2025, poetry engagement among children and young people aged 8 to 18 remained steady, despite the competing demands of digital media and other leisure activities, suggesting a sustained interest in the form. Around 1 in 4 said that in their free time, they read poetry at least once a month (24.2% in 2025 vs 24.1% in 2024), and 1 in 6 said they wrote poetry at least once a month (17.5% in 2025 vs 17.5% in 2024).

Importantly, more children and young people who receive free school meals read poetry (29.8% vs 22.2%) as well as write poetry (22.7% vs 15.6%) than their non-FSM peers. This highlights poetry's potential as an empowering and accessible form of expression for those from financially disadvantaged backgrounds.

Additionally, children and young people who read and write poetry in their free time:

- reported greater confidence in reading (80.0% vs. 73.0%) and writing (75.8% vs. 65.4%) than peers who do not engage with poetry
- are more likely to enjoy reading (46.8% vs 28.1%) and writing (53.0% vs. 20.3%) in general than their peers who don't engage with poetry.

Children and young people also reported engaging with poetry not just to be creative, but to feel better, to express themselves, and as a tool to make sense of their emotions and connect with the world around them.

Poetry clearly has the potential to build confidence with language, improve oracy and performance skills, and foster empathy and self-expression. It is known to be especially effective for children and young people who may struggle to engage with reading and writing in more traditional ways. Amongst the many benefits of poetry, it can help children and young people to:

Amongst the many benefits of poetry, it can help children to:

- Unlock imagination and creativity
- Develop oracy and public speaking skills
- Improve reading fluency and expression
- Build confidence in using language
- Express themselves in healthy, empowering ways
- Increase cultural awareness and empathy
- Support wellbeing and mental health
- Expand vocabulary in rich and exciting ways
- Engage reluctant readers and writers through play and performance

For more on how poetry changes lives, click here to read this inspirational blog post by poet, Sharena Lee Satti.

Meet our poet ambassadors

Laura Mucha

Laura Mucha is an award-winning poet and Author-in-Residence in the Department of Public Health & Primary Care, University of Cambridge. Her books have been described as 'stunningly original' by BookTrust, 'fantastic' by the Daily Mail, 'brilliant' by the Telegraph, 'a must for every school library and classroom' by The School Librarian and 'a marvellous feat' by Richard Curtis. She recently broke the Guinness World Records title for Largest Poetry Lesson (multi venue) together with 43,516 young people from over 500 schools around the world.

Zohab Zee Khan

Zohab Zee Khan is a Performance Poet and multidisciplinary artist. His work integrates Urdu & Punjabi and paints pictures of family, heritage and a better world. He has worked as a performer and facilitator in festivals, schools and refugee camps across the globe. His first poetry collection "I Write" reached best-seller status in Australia within months of its release. In 2014 he became the National Poetry Slam Champion of Australia.

Karl Nova

Karl Nova is one of the UK's leading poets and hip-hop artists delivering his work in his own unique, witty and energetic style. His debut won the 2018 CLiPPA poetry prize and he won the Ruth Rendell award for services to literacy in 2020.

Nikita Gill

Nikita Gill is an Irish-Indian poet who has written seven poetry collections and two verse novels. She has given a TEDx Talk, spoken at every major literary festival in the UK and been shortlisted for the Goodreads Choice Award in poetry three times, the Children's Poetry Award two times and longlisted for the Jhalak Prize.

Using this resource pack

There's no 'one way' to use this resource. You'll find ideas, prompts and models that balance structure with freedom to support students with poetic exploration and experimentation.

The daily lesson plans in this pack for Key Stage 3 follow a toolkit approach and are designed to flexibly support classrooms across a range of time frames, settings and levels of confidence. You can follow the full structure across the week or dip in and adapt sessions to suit your timetable. The resources offer poetry writing ideas for teachers to use in the classroom during Young Poets Week and beyond.

The 'Dip, Dive, Make Waves' structure provides different options for daily activities from shorter bursts that could be used to begin or end the day, to full lessons for a literacy unit. Each day builds on a theme in the poetic journey: from generating content, to experimenting with form, to editing, to performance.

Dip, Dive, Make Waves: a poetry toolkit

This toolkit is designed around a flexible, purposeful structure to support students as they explore poetry, develop their voice and produce original work.

The three-part flow (Dip, Dive, Make Waves) is designed to work like a toolkit, not a rigid sequence. Teachers can adapt it to suit different curriculum demands and class timings:

Dip - Short sessions (5–10 minutes): Use **Dip** as a quick way into poetry - spark discussion, explore language or respond to a line or image.

Dive - Medium Sessions (around 30 minutes): Combine **Dip and Dive** - start with a hook and then move into shared reading or writing as a class or in pairs.

Make Waves - Full lessons (around 60 minutes): Follow the complete structure - **Dip** as a warm-up, **Dive** as focused exploration or modelling and **Make Waves** as independent drafting, crafting or performance.

This structure gives you flexible entry points for teaching poetry, whether you are slotting it into a packed timetable or running an extended creative sequence across the week.

To complement your lessons:

- Read and explore the model poems with your students
- Join our live online Young Poets Week masterclass with Karl Nova and Nikita Gill on 25 November at 10am

Don't forget to encourage your KS3 students to submit to become a laureate for their region! The deadline for Young Poet Laureate submissions is Monday 19 January 2026.

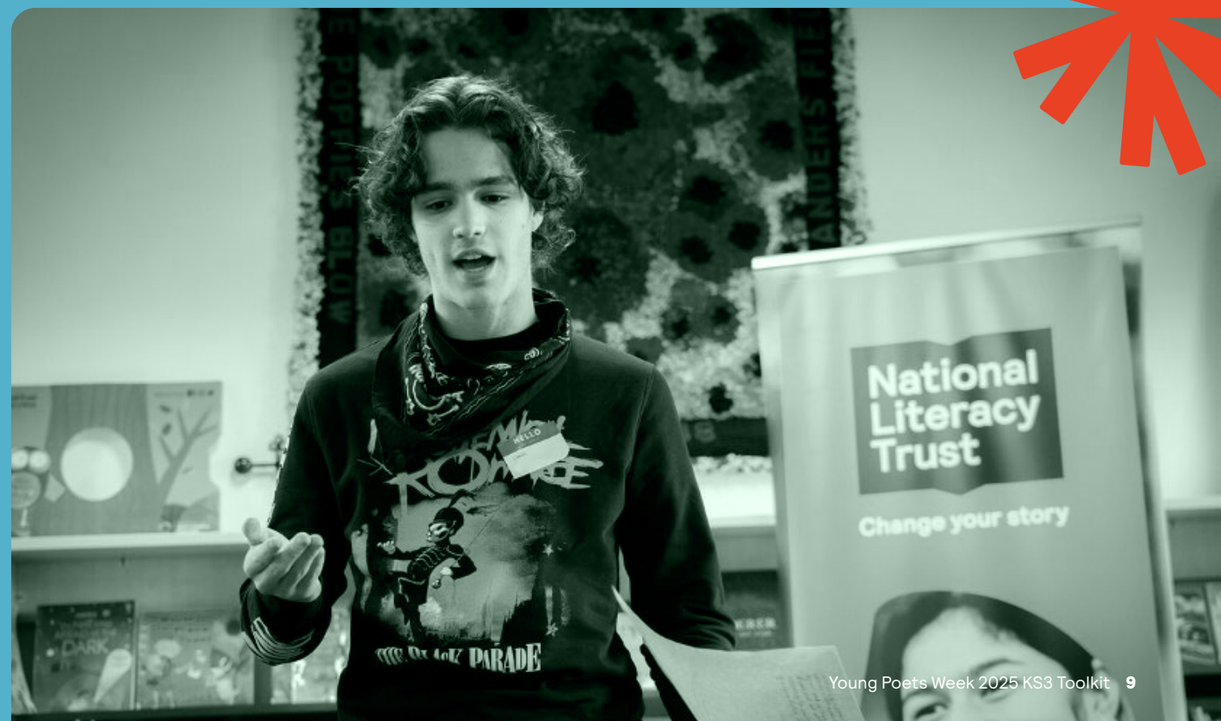
More info about the opportunity and how to submit can be found here!

Get ready: creating a poetic culture

In the weeks or months running up to Young Poets Week, aim to surround students with a rich range of poetry. Exposure is key, not just reading silently, but hearing, watching, performing and discussing. You could try some of the following:

- Share a **Poem of the Day** (perhaps in form time) chosen by teachers or pupils
- Share the **Poem of the Week –** hold a class vote on the week's favourite poem
- Share **clips from spoken word events** like Apples and Snakes, Roundhouse or Barbican Young Poets
- Responding to poems through **artwork**
- Pair poetry with **visual art, music or film**
- Host **informal performances**, open mics or poetry slams
- Use **Poets' Walls** or digital pinboards (such as Padlet) for students to post poems or lines from poems that they love
- Create classroom **displays of diverse poets' work**
- Encourage **students to bring in poems** from their lives or cultures
- Link poems to **wider curriculum topics** such as identity, conflict, protest, power, nature, memory, etc.
- Explore ways in which poetry is part of everyday life, for instance noticing it in rap music, song lyrics, advertising, etc.

Make poetry feel relevant, dynamic and alive. The goal is immersion: let it spark discussion, connection, disagreement and inspiration.



Top tips

1. Write alongside your students

Share your thinking process. Model drafting, failure, rewording and vulnerability. Show writing as a practice, not perfection.

2. Provide every young person with a 'poetry journal'

Use journals as places to play, free-write and store fragments. Normalise the 'messy middle' process of writing and make it clear that half-formed ideas are valuable.

3. Create a Poets' Wall

Use this as space to display stimulus materials, model poems, pictures, ideas and writing by young people.

4. Scaffold and stretch as needed

While the plans and resources in this handbook are open-ended and designed to be accessible, you may wish to adapt the activities to suit the needs of your students by providing scaffolds such as word banks, sentence starters or line frames for those who need extra support; extension prompts could be offered to those ready for more challenge.

5. Celebrate first languages and cultural identity

Encourage students to write in their first or home language, or to blend languages as they wish. This validates all linguistic backgrounds and makes poetry more inclusive and personal. Prompts that draw on memory, place, food or family can offer rich ground for students to explore their identity, culture and heritage through poetry.

6. Challenge pupils' pre-conceptions and champion poetry as both diverse and 'every day'

It's vital to recognise that poetry takes many forms and for many pupils, especially those who may not usually connect with traditional verse, it's rap, spoken word and song lyrics that open the door. These forms not only share poetic techniques like rhythm, metaphor and internal rhyme, but also connect to students' lived experiences and cultural references. Embracing them in your poetry exploration can ignite excitement and boost confidence, particularly for reluctant writers.

7. Build in lots of opportunities for oracy through class discussion and performance.

Give students plenty of chances to talk through their ideas before writing. Rehearsing lines aloud, performing in pairs or groups and using movement and expression can all boost confidence. Encourage students to write and perform in a range of styles, from traditional poetry to rap and spoken word.

- **Choral reading with expression:** Groups rehearse a poem aloud, experimenting with different tones, volumes and pacing to bring out emotions and meaning.
- **Solo and paired performances with movement:** encourage students to rehearse poems solo or in pairs, incorporating gestures, facial expressions and body language to enhance their delivery.
- **Debate the poem:** students discuss the poem's themes and ideas out loud and then rehearse performing the poem from different viewpoints or with varied emotions.
- **Performance remix with music:** students adapt a poem into a spoken word piece or combine it with a musical backing track or beatboxing, rehearsing orally to refine flow and expression before performing.

8. Focus on growth, not grades

Reassure students that this week is about experimentation, confidence and connection. It is an opportunity to celebrate risk-taking and originality above correctness.

Suggested resources

- Poetry journals
- Highlighters, sticky notes, mini whiteboards
- Anthologies of modern, diverse poetry
- iPads/recording tools for voice and video
- Access to videos of spoken word poets (YouTube, Roundhouse, Apples and Snakes)
- Poets' Wall' for sharing drafts, lines, titles and quotes

Overview of the week

Day	Focus	Aim	Toolkit approach
Monday 24 November	Generating content and ideas.	Launch into poetic thinking, gathering creative cargo.	Imaginative thinking, sensory detail, free writing, poetic seeds (imagery, memories, voices).
Tuesday 25 November	ONLINE EVENT 10:00am – Live Poet Masterclass.	Be immersed in real voices and raw material.	Authentic voice, emotional truth, experimentation with form.
Wednesday 26 November	Shaping and structuring of poems.	Find direction, building momentum.	Craft intentionally with form and freedom, line breaks, structure with purpose.
Thursday 27 November	Imagery and bringing poems to life.	Refine and polish with figurative language.	Language and precision, sound and rhythm, stylistic devices.
Friday 28 November	Editing technique and depth.	Revise and refine poetry.	Edit for clarity, refine, redraft and polish poems.

Young Poets Week Toolkit for Key Stage Three

Launching the week

Young Poets Week is a powerful opportunity to offer children and young people immersive and joyful experiences that can spark lasting engagement with creative writing. By anchoring the Young Writers programme's three pillars — memorable experiences, working with professional writers and writing for a real audience — schools can create an atmosphere where poetry becomes a form of personal and powerful expression.

To inspire your pupils' writing, begin with a memorable experience that launches the week. Below is a flexible menu of creative springboard experiences that you can draw from to launch the week and inspire your young poets.

Launch menu

1. Launch assembly or visiting poet performance

- Kick off the week with a performance poetry assembly and share what students can look forward to during Young Poets Week
- On Tuesday 25 November 10am, join our live online KS3 masterclass with Nikita Gill and Karl Nova
- Invite a local poet, spoken word artist or rapper (in-person or virtually) to perform and talk about how they find inspiration
- Use video clips if a live visit isn't possible (e.g., Using Your Voice as a Means of Change with Caleb Femi | Daisie Spotlight - YouTube)
- Include a short rap or lyric breakdown to show how poetic devices appear in song lyrics

2. Poetry walks: verses on the move

- Take students outside for a guided sensory walk on school grounds, in a local park or around the neighbourhood
- Encourage notetaking, sketching and capturing soundscapes or overheard conversation
- Use prompts such as 'What does the wind want to tell you?' or 'What story does the pavement hold?'

3. Five minute festivals

- Create micro-moments of joy: flash performances in the corridor, poetry passed around on postcards, daily challenges on classroom doors, QR codes around school linked to poetry videos
- Invite students to perform their own spoken word or song-inspired poetry
- Encourage everyone in school to get involved and share favourite poems, lyrics or verses

4. Virtual museum tour and response writing

- Use free online tours like:
  - The British Museum's Virtual Tour
  - The Natural History Museum Virtual Tours
  - Tate Kids Art Explorer
  - Google Arts and Culture
- Students write poems in response to an artefact or artwork: personifying it or imagining its story
- Prompt ideas: 'Write from the object's perspective — what does it see? What is it thinking?

5. Found in fiction: use the class novel or book corner to inspire

- Students pick ten interesting phrases from a book and remix them into a poem
- Book spine poetry: stack titles to create poems, then perform them with dramatic flair
- Imagine characters' voices or settings transformed into lyrics or spoken word pieces
- Use illustrations or covers as visual prompts

6. Object stories: poetry from a pocket

- Invite students to bring in (or select) a small object that's meaningful, strange or intriguing
- Discuss what makes it interesting, then use it as the basis for a personal poem or monologue
- Could also be developed into a rap or lyrical poem, e.g., If this object could talk, what would it say?

7. Rap, spoken word and lyric exploration

- Play clips of age-appropriate rap, spoken word and song lyrics
- Encourage students to share their favourite appropriate rap, song lyrics or freestyle poems
- Compare traditional poems with lyrics to spark debate and inspiration

Monday

Lesson 1: Generating content and ideas

Aim: Launch into poetic thinking, gathering creative cargo.

Toolkit focus: imaginative thinking, sensory detail, free writing, poetic seeds (imagery, memories, voices)

Dip (10 – 15 minutes)

Watch the Welcome to Young Poet's Week video. Key take away is that **everyone is a poet and everyone can write poetry.**

Watch one of the poems from our Poetry Resource Bank or one of your own choice:

Key discussion questions:

- *What do you think this poem is about?*
- *Why do you think the poet chose this subject matter?*
- *What makes it feel like a poem and not just speech? (tune into imagery, form, subject matter)*
- *How did it make you feel?*
- *So, what, exactly, is a poem, do you think?*
- *What exactly is poetry and what do poets do?*

Poetry prompt writing activity:

Find one word or line from the poems above that grabs your attention and inspires you. Use this word, phrase or line to springboard your own writing. Write 3 – 5 lines in your poetry journal. Volunteers could share with the class or young people could share with a partner.

Dive (30 – 35 minutes)

Complete **Dip** activities above.

Choose either a Poetry Gallery Walk or watch one or some of the YouTube videos featuring spoken word performances in the Poetry Resource Bank.

Poetry Gallery walk

Using poems stuck up around classroom, (or on printed sheets or booklets) students scan poems with their partners.

Students list the themes that they find in their journals. Which ones do they find most interesting? Are there any that inspire them to write similar poems using a similar theme?

OR

Compare two spoken word poems from the Poetry Resource Bank.

Watch the videos and discuss the themes. Which ones do they find most interesting? Do these themes inspire them to write similar poems using a similar theme?

'Dive in' activity menu

Choose one activity from below (see full activities in the Resources section of this handbook) to inspire content for poetry or share as a menu to students – they could choose one that particularly inspires them.

These activities should be written alongside the students by the teacher and can be carried out in pairs or individually by students.

1. Inspiration Circles
2. Sense Poetry from Objects
3. Everyday Inventions Technique

Make Waves (50 - 60 minutes)

Complete **Dip** and **Dive** activities above.

Teacher models continuing to brainstorm possible content ideas – favourite place, memory, celebration, etc. Students write theirs into their journals. Partner talk: share ideas.

Freewrite activity:

Freewriting is a technique poets use to warm up their 'writing muscles'. Watch Simon Mole's How to free write – poetry tips and techniques to learn more or to follow along.

Set a timer for 3 minutes. Use the prompts created earlier the teacher models free writing or use prompts such as:

I come from…

It doesn't matter how much…

You are…

Write quickly and, most importantly, continuously for 3 minutes without worrying about style, spelling or grammar. Tell children that they can write anything that comes into their heads on their topic. They don't have to share with anyone. If they get stuck, they can write the same word repeatedly until something else comes up. There is only one rule: never stop writing!

Students now have 3 minutes per idea to free write in their poetry journals.

Key questions:

- *How did you find the exercise? Were you able to write easily? Were you stuck at any point?*
- *How did freewriting make you feel?*
- *What subjects did you choose? Have you chosen something you care about?*

Freewrites can be used to create a draft of a future poem. It is like a baby poem: a quick sketch, outline or an initial version from which a final poem is then produced.

Plenary:

Students share one idea they feel excited about in pairs. Volunteers could share with the whole class or ideas could be added to the class Poets' Wall on sticky notes or cards.

By the end of the lesson, students should a have a range of ideas in their journals collected from the word or phrase they found in the shared poem in the **Dip** section, the ideas and snippets they wrote for the **Dive** activity and further subjects they thought of and created some freewriting about in the **Make Waves** section.

Tuesday

Lesson 2: Online masterclass with Ambassador Poets

Aim: Be immersed in real voices and raw material.

Toolkit focus: Authentic voice, emotional truth, experimentation with form

The online event will provide students with inspiration for their poetry content.

Wednesday

Lesson 3: Shaping and structuring of poems

Aim: Find direction, building momentum.

Toolkit focus: Craft intentionally with form and freedom, line breaks, structure with purpose.

Dip (10 – 15 minutes)

Watch and listen to the featured poems below or one of your own choices.

You are a miracle by Nikita Gill

Home by Zohab Zee Khan

Have the poem displayed which features an interesting structure (e.g., enjambment, repetition, unconventional spacing)

Key questions:

- *Do you think this form is effective? Why?*
- *Does the form have an impact on the meaning?*

Poetry prompt writing activity:

Students rearrange a prose paragraph into poetic form, using spacing and line breaks creatively. You could use your current class novel or the following opening of the *October, October* by Katya Balen:

We find the owl at the very edge of our woods the morning after the storm. Wind-blasted and wings flight-frozen and round eyes glassy. I touch its feathers lightly with my fingertip and I'm surprised because they still feel real even though the owl has slipped away somewhere else and dad is already digging a hole for it in the rain-soaked earth.

Now write a 4 – 5-line poem using either of the following prompts. How will you structure your poem?

You step into the city streets and everything feels alive...

- ***Where do the streets take you?***
- ***What stories do the buildings and places want to tell?***
- ***What do you discover as you explore the city's hidden corners?***

Or

I searched every pocket, every corner, even the sky...

- ***What are you searching for?***
- ***Why does it matter so much?***
- ***What might happen if it's never found?***

Dive (30 – 35 minutes)

Complete **Dip** activities above.

Poetry Gallery walk OR booklet of poems on tables

Explore a gallery or booklet of poems using various forms:

- Free verse
- List poems
- Sonnets
- Spoken word
- Prose poetry
- Concrete poems
- Song lyrics and rap

Students note any examples of structural features they find interesting or effective.

'Dive in' activity menu

Choose one activity listed below from the resources section at the back of this handbook to inspire content for poetry or share as a menu to students – they could choose one that particularly inspires them.

These activities should be written alongside the students by the teacher and can be written in pairs or individually by students.

1. Poem Generator: Exploring FormRoll-a-Poem
2. Free Verse Disruptor
3. Poetry Architects: Build a Poem, Break the Rules

Make Waves (50 - 60 minutes)

Complete **Dip** and **Dive** activities above.

Students can draft a new poem or reshape a freewrite from Monday or Tuesday. Remind them not to worry about spelling or being grammatically correct – they are experimenting with what works such as line length, playing with line breaks, playing with line starters and repeated phrases.

Remind them to focus on purpose: Why this form? What mood or rhythm does it create?

Students share with a partner for feedback on impact, pacing and line break.

Key questions:

- *Which structure did you choose and why?*
- *What part of your poem do you really like?*
- *How did it feel today using a structure as your starting point?*

Plenary:

Each student shares the form they feel most excited about with a partner. Volunteers could share with the whole class. Examples of poems from the **Dive** activity could be shared on the Poets' Wall.

By the end of the lesson, students should have experimented with a form and structure in their journals collected from the line experimentation in the **Dip** section, the structure or structures they tried out for the **Dive** activity and further independent experimentation that they worked on in the **Make Waves** section.

Thursday

Lesson 4: Imagery and bringing poems to life

Aim: Refine and polish with figurative language.

Toolkit Approach: Language and precision, sound and rhythm, stylistic devices.

Dip (10 – 15 minutes)

Watch and listen to one of the poems below or one from the Poetry Resource Bank.

Key questions:

- *Which images or sounds stood out for you?*
- *Why did you like them?*
- *What effect did they create?*

Poetry prompt writing activity:

As a warm-up, invite students to choose an everyday object or natural element such as the **wind, time, noise or darkness**. Ask them to write three original **similes** comparing it to unexpected or abstract things, using the structure "___ is like..." or "___ is as ___ as...". Encourage imaginative or emotional comparisons (e.g., *Time is like a cracked mirror, Noise is as heavy as regret*), to get them started, or for students who may struggle, you could ask them to play with matching up any of the following ideas, reminding them there is no right or wrong answers:

Wind	a trapdoor
Time	a wild animal in a cage
Light	like a broken promise
Silence	the first note of a song
The moon	a mouth that won't speak
Darkness	an unanswered text
A falling leaf	like a warning no one hears
A heartbeat	like a secret

Ask students to make their own lists in their poetry journals, creating interesting similes.

Then challenge them to transform their strongest similes into **metaphors** by removing 'like' or 'as,' creating vivid, poetic statements. To finish, they write a short, three-line poem blending both simile and metaphor. This activity builds confidence with figurative language while encouraging creative risk-taking.

Dive (30 – 35 minutes)

Complete **Dip** activities above.

Video of a poet explaining form choices.

Poetry Gallery walk OR booklet of poems on tables

Using poems stuck up around the classroom (or available on tables) students note in their journals any figurative language or rhythms that strike them most.

'Dive in' activity menu

Choose one activity from the menu below to inspire content for poetry or share as a menu to students – they could choose one that particularly inspires them.

These activities should be modelled and written alongside the students by the teacher and can be written in pairs or individually by students.

1. Personification Lab
2. Metaphor Generator
3. Alphabet Alliteration Remix

Make Waves (50 - 60 minutes)

Complete **Dip** and **Dive** activities above.

Students use their experimentation with imagery and/or sound to work on their poems in their journals, either independently or in pairs.

They add in a choice image or sound through use of simile, metaphor, personification or alliteration/onomatopoeia.

Encourage students to re-read their poems so far and use a highlighter to find plain lines that could be brought to life with one of the techniques that they learned in the Dive section.

After 6 – 7 minutes, children can share their ideas with the class.

Plenary:

Volunteers could share with the whole class one newly revised line that celebrates bold or surprising imagery.

By the end of the lesson, students should have experimented with imagery and/or sound in their journals created during the **Dip** and **Dive** sections and should have spent time exploring where imagery could work in their own poems in the **Make Waves** section.

Friday

Lesson 5: Editing technique and depth

Aim: Revise and refine poetry.

Toolkit focus: Edit for clarity, refine, redraft and polish poems.

Dip (10 – 15 minutes)

Video message from the Young Poet Laureate Ambassadors.

Watch two contrasting performances such as the ones below or choices of your own from the Poetry Resource Bank:

The Hill We Climb by Amanda Gorman

Nowt but pride by Jamie Thrasivoulou

As a class, discuss how each performer uses their voice and body to bring the poem to life. Focus on delivery, energy and interpretation. When poets read their work aloud, it gives them a crucial springboard into editing their poem. The ear tells the pen which words or phrases sound clunky and may need taking out, or it can prompt poets to change words or find more powerful ways of expressing their ideas.

Poetry prompt activity:

In pairs, students return to a short poem, line or stanza written in their journals. They read their poems aloud to decide where they might want to make edits. They could also highlight action words to emphasise, add slashes for a Poetry Pause, add simple movements or gestures. Choose lines to say softly or loudly – explain your reasons.

Key questions:

- *How did the poet vary their voice throughout the piece?*
- *Were there moments of silence, emphasis or change in pace—and why?*
- How did they use gesture, movement or stillness to support meaning?

Poetry prompt activity:

Return to a short poem, line or stanza you have written in your journal. In pairs, take turns helping each other rehearse a performance. Highlight words to emphasise, add a 'Poetry Pause',

slashes (/) for pauses and note any gestures or facial expressions.

Choose one or two lines to whisper or project loudly and explain why you have made this choice. Consider pace/speed and where it would work to add energy and speed versus slowness.

Try performing once with movement and once still, reflect on the difference.

Dive (30 – 35 minutes)

Complete **Dip** activities above.

Follow Simon Mole's guided interactive tutorial, How to re-draft and edit a poem to support students develop their poems.

OR

'Dive in' activity menu: Poetry Editing Zones

Poetry Editing Zones, available in the resources section at the back of this handbook, can either be carried out where the students physically move around the room, having a go at each activity, or they can work together in pairs at their desks working on each focus for a set amount of time. They should annotate their work and have lots of opportunities to read aloud.

Make Waves (50 - 60 minutes)

Complete **Dip** and **Dive** activities above.

Spend some time modelling and talking through the editing process. You could use or adapt the **W.A.V.E Poetry Checklist** below. This does not need to be stuck to rigidly but can act as a guide for children to start assessing their poems.

W = Words	Are my words vivid, precise and necessary? Can I add stronger language or cut anything that doesn't need to be there?
A = Add imagery	Have I used a simile, metaphor or personification to create a clear image or feeling?
V = Voice and sound	Does it sound good when I read it aloud? Could I use alliteration, assonance or onomatopoeia? Should I shorten any lines to improve rhythm or flow?
E = Edit for effect	Can I change the order of lines, add or remove repetition or adjust line breaks for impact? Have I used a **'Poet's Pause'** (a slash for a dramatic pause)? Now's the time to check spelling too.

Encourage lots of reading aloud to oneself and then to a partner to check for effect, listening for flow, rhythm, awkward phrasing and sound to make any final adjustments.

Key questions:

- *How does it sound when you say it out loud?*
- *Are your opening and closing lines powerful?*
- *How does my poem look on the page?*

Partners could rehearse together giving each other lots of praise and encouragement. Students could record themselves reciting their poem on iPads to check how it sounds, what they like and what they might want to amend.

Plenary:

Discussion and celebration of achievements:

- What did you discover about poetry this week?
- What have you enjoyed most about the week?
- What are you most proud of?
- How has your writing or confidence changed?
- What could we do as a class to enjoy reading and writing poetry regularly?

By the end of the lesson, students will have had the opportunity to watch two professional poets and to think about how performing a poem can lead to editing in the **Dip** section; try different editing technique during the **Dive** section and should have spent time making some final adjustments and giving peer feedback in the **Make Waves** section. They will have also reflected on their poetry journeys through the week and had the chance to think about what they want to do next to continue writing and reading poetry.

Open waters: taking it further

Performance and Celebration

The National Literacy Trust's evidence-based, Young Writers programme offers a lasting approach for schools wanting to nurture a culture of writing for pleasure. Based on three key pillars, (providing memorable experiences, connecting with professional writers and giving children a real audience and purpose) it creates the conditions where young voices can flourish. These same principles can guide what happens next in your school after Young Poets Week.

Whether spoken or published, poetry becomes more powerful when it's shared. Use the poems written during the week to explore performance opportunities, whether it's a quiet sharing circle, a class poetry slam or a school-wide showcase. Use the guidance below to help them rehearse, perform and support each other, and make space to mark the moment with celebration through recordings, displays, anthologies or performances big and small.

Poetry performance checklist

- **Make eye contact** (choose a spot at the back of the room to fix your gaze on or scan the audience for a few friendly faces to look at)
- **Introduction:** 'Hello, my name is… My poem is called…' and take a breath before starting
- **Volume:** double your usual speaking voice
- **Speed:** speak at half your normal pace
- **Body language:** include gestures or posture to match the tone
- **Pauses:** add silence for drama or meaning
- **Emphasis:** stress key words or lines
- **Emotion:** match your voice and face to the feeling of the poem
- **Try to memorise** all or part of your poem to connect with your audience

Partners could rehearse together giving each other lots of praise and encouragement. Children could record themselves reciting their poem on iPads to check how it sounds, what they like and what they might want to amend.

Have a go at the Poetry Voice Stations activity (found in the Appendices of the resources section) to help pupils enhance their performance skills.

For further support, watch Lence's Preparing for performance

How to be a good audience

When it comes to sharing work, the more inclusive and supportive the atmosphere the better. It's not possible to be too kind or encouraging – performing can be a terrifying thing even for seasoned professionals.

Being a good audience is just as important as being a good performer. When we listen carefully and show respect, we help our friends feel confident and proud.

Here are some top tips for being an excellent audience member:

Watch closely: Keep your eyes on the performer to show you are interested.

Stay quiet: Not talking, whispering or making noises shows you are engaged with the performance.

Show encouragement: Smile and use kind body language to support your classmates.

Listen with care: Think about the words, feelings and ideas being shared.

Applaud politely: Wait until the end of the performance to clap and celebrate their efforts.

Be thoughtful: Get ready to give positive feedback, sharing something you liked.

How to combat stage fright

Some children may be especially anxious about performing. Share these top tips so that they can work on overcoming their fears:

Top tips to overcome stage fright

- Practise in a mirror and to a friendly audience
- Practise a lot
- Take deep, slow breaths
- Meditate (include child-friendly examples of bringing them back to the here and now)
- Remember to eat and drink like a normal day
- Go to the toilet just before the performance
- Sip a little water before the performance to stop getting a dry mouth.
- Just before going on stage do some stretches and walk around a little bit, hum to warm up your voice.
- Fix your vision on something in the audience or just above the line of the audience's head or at the back wall of the place you are performing
- Take a deep breath and then start!

Preparing for a performance: four things to remember

1. Pace yourself
2. Project your voice
3. Act relaxed
4. Practise, practise, practise!

Publish writing

Then find ways to celebrate and share children's work: You could try some of the following to publish your budding poets' work:

- Create a class anthology or poetry zine (digital or printed) using our How to create a pupil anthology resource
- Add poems to an online bulletin board such as Padlet
- Add to a dedicated space for children's poetry on the school website
- Add to a poetry display
- Publish poems in the school newsletter

Laureateship submissions

Don't forget to take the next step: invite your young poets to submit an application to become a Young Poet Laureate for their region. It's a brilliant opportunity for children to be recognised for their creativity, originality and love of poetry, and to be part of something bigger. You'll find everything you need to enter here.

Use Young Poets Week as a launchpad for building regular, meaningful engagement with poetry. Encourage children to keep collecting words, ideas and fragments in their journals, and use the poetry prompts provided in the Appendices to create space for daily writing. These small, consistent moments will help children develop confidence and a bank of original material that they can return to and build on over time.

Useful links and further reading

Apples and Snakes – A leading spoken word poetry organisation.

Homepage | Roundhouse - Collective young writers and performers who meet weekly to create, experiment and develop their craft.

Poetry | Centre for Literacy in Primary Education – for excellent age-appropriate poetry and poet recommendations for both primary and secondary audiences.

The following books continue to be an invaluable source of inspiration for professionals, and some of the activities in this handbook have been inspired by these authors' ideas:

- *Jumpstart! Poetry: Games and Activities for Ages 7-12* by Pie Corbett
- *Jumpstart!: Literacy - Games and Activities for Ages 7-14* by Pie Corbett
- *What Is Poetry?: The Essential Guide to Reading and Writing Poems* by Michael Rosen

Further Poet Laureate Programme Resources

The following links feature a range of poets who share their inspirations for writing and performing poetry. They can be used to complement Young Poets Week and to support further poetry exploration in class:

- Mohamed Saloo – What is poetry?
- Lauren Kara – Poetry is everywhere
- Jamie H Scrutton – Let's get writing
- Laura Baldwin – Editing
- Lence – Preparing for performance

Note for teachers

Poetry can explore complex themes and, for many, it can be an outlet for expressing personal issues or emotions. Teachers should always pre-read or pre-watch a poem to ensure it's appropriate for their class, avoiding content that may be triggering or trauma-inducing. In writing, some students may also explore difficult emotions, so it's important to stay alert and follow your school's safeguarding policy if any concerns arise.

Appendices of resources

Lesson 1: Generating content and ideas

Inspiration Circles

Use your personal experiences, thoughts and feelings as the foundation for a new poem. Draw a circle in the centre of a page and write your name inside it. Around it, draw 8 connected circles like a mind-map.

Fill them with the answers to these prompts:

- Something you love
- A happy memory
- Something you're proud of
- Something that excites or motivates you
- A fear or worry
- A dream or impossible wish
- A favourite type of weather or natural moment
- A word that represents who you want to become

List your chosen items in your poetry journals. Pick one and use the structure to write a poem.

Example: Poem Structure

Line 1 – Name the memory/idea/item using description (e.g., *Summer-drenched bicycle days*)

Line 2 – Describe what you or it did or does (e.g., *Freewheeling, no hands, down the hills*)

Line 3 – Add a sensory detail (e.g., *Wheels spinning like frisbees*)

(Optional Line 4) – Add a thought or internal reflection (e.g., *Feeling so free*)

(Optional Line 5) – End with a feeling, question or twist (e.g., *Feeling like I could outpace the wind.*)

Sense poetry from objects

Create a poetic riddle based on an unknown object using sensory detail and imagination.

Choose an object from home, provided by your teacher or seen in a photo.
Don't name it.
Answer these questions in note form:

- What might this object have seen?
- What could it have heard?
- What does it feel like to the touch?
- What kind of smell or taste might be associated with it?
- What emotion could it be feeling or have experienced?
- What might it wonder or think about the world?

Structure for your Riddle Poem:

- Line 1 (Sight): (e.g., I watched strangers rush through fogged glass)
- Line 2 (Sound): (Their footsteps murmured against marble floors)
- Line 3 (Touch): (My cracked spine curled from the cold)
- Line 4 (Smell): (A whiff of rust and winter air)
- Line 5 (Thought): (I wonder if I'll ever leave this shelf again…)

Swap poems with a partner and guess what the object is.

Everyday Inventions Technique

Use imaginative twists on ordinary objects to spark inventive poems. Pick something every day and ordinary, e.g., a sock, a phone charger, a lunchbox, a bus stop, etc.

Now ask:

- What if it could talk or think?
- What if it had a magical ability or secret life?
- What problem could it solve or cause, e.g. could it do your homework?
- How does it behave or feel when nobody's watching?

Example ideas:

- a toothbrush that talks back
- a crying umbrella
- a pen that writes secrets

Write a poem or short piece describing what your object does, thinks or says. Try including a short conversation between it and another object, or use it to reveal something deeper (emotion, fear, memory, humour), e.g., a kettle and a toaster having a conversation in the kitchen.

Lesson 3: Shaping and structuring of poems

Poem Generator: Exploring Form

Choose a poetic structure from the list below and use it to create a short poem in your journal. You can work independently or in pairs. If you finish early, try rewriting the same idea using a different structure and compare the results. Afterwards think about the following:

- How did the structure influence what you wrote?
- Did any structure feel more natural or surprising?
- What happens when you rewrite your idea in a new form?

Try bold ideas—these forms are just starting points. Make them your own.

Question-and-Answer Poem	Repetition Poem
Write a poem using a question in one line and a response in the next. You can be curious, serious, surreal or humorous. For example: *Why do the trees whisper at night?* *Because even the wind has secrets to tell.* Prompt line starters: *Why does the sky... ⁄ What if I never... ⁄ Is it possible that...*	Repeat a word, phrase or full line every third line to build rhythm or focus. You can shift the meaning slightly each time or keep it exactly the same. For example: *I walk past your gate again.* *The sun hits the roof like it always does.* *I walk past your gate again.* *My footsteps sound different this time.* Prompt line starters: *I remember... ⁄ Every day I...* *My people come from.../ I come from...*
List Poem	**Dialogue Poem**
Make a list of images, emotions or thoughts that link to a theme. Aim for at least six lines. Your last line could shift the meaning or offer a reflection. For example: *A dust-covered photo frame* *A jacket left behind* Prompt line starters: *These are the things I carry... ⁄ In this room, there is...*	Create a conversation between two voices (e.g., two people, two feelings, a person and an object, etc.). Let each voice have its own perspective. For example: Voice 1: *You left me in the drawer for years.* Voice 2: *I was waiting for the right moment.* Prompt line starters: Voice 1: *You always...* Voice 2: *That's not true, I...* Voice 1: *But what about...*

Free Verse Disruptor

Free verse doesn't mean no rules, it means more choices. Think of it as building a poem using rhythm, white space and image instead of punctuation and strict structure.

Free Verse Menu

Choose at least 2–3 'techniques' from the menu to try in your poem. Mix and match to find your style.

Starters: Line Play	Spices: Sound and Repetition
• **Break the line early:** end the line before the sentence ends to create pauses or emphasis. • **Use one-word lines:** give a single word its own space to make it stand out. • **Let a sentence stretch across multiple lines:** this creates flow and rhythm. Example: *The clouds ⁄ never asked ⁄ if I ⁄ wanted the rain*	• **Echo a phrase:** repeat the same word or line at different moments in the poem for emphasis. • **Alliteration or assonance**: use repeated sounds to create musicality. • **Let rhythm lead:** write as if the poem is being spoken aloud. Use natural breath and pauses.
Main Course: Structure & Shape	**Dessert: Imagery & Voice**
• **Play with white space:** leave gaps, centre lines or scatter words across the page to match emotion or movement. • **Stagger the lines:** start each line in a different place to create a visual rhythm. • **Build or shrink:** make lines longer or shorter as the poem builds energy or fades.	• **Use strong images:** show, don't tell. Use sensory language to help the reader feel, see, hear. • **Try direct address:** speak to a person, object or idea: "You always hide when..." • **Leave space for silence:** not everything needs to be explained.

Poetry Architects: Build a Poem, Break the Rules

This activity is about construction, experimentation and movement; as much about how the poem is built as what it says.

- **Choose Your Subject:** choose a theme, idea or object from your journal.
- **Draw Your Prompt Cards:** shuffle and draw 4–5 random prompt cards. Each one adds a new structural layer or technique to your poem.
- **Build the Poem:** use the prompts to build your poem one line at a time. What happens if you swap the opening and final lines? Could you break a line into two, or join two together? Where could white space or enjambment change the pace?
- **Reflect and Restructure:** once your draft is complete, reflect on how your poem feels in different orders or shapes.

Extension: Give your poem a title after it's written. What captures the essence best?

Ask a question: Pose a question to the subject, reader, or self. **Example:** *Why do I always remember what I meant to say too late?*	**Write a line that runs over more than one line (enjambment):** Break a sentence mid-flow to surprise or shift rhythm. **Example:** *He said he'd call tomorrow but tomorrow doesn't know how to keep promises.*
Repeat a word or phrase at the start of 3 or more lines: Builds rhythm and cohesion. **Example:** *Maybe I was wrong.* *Maybe I didn't look closely enough.* *Maybe the silence was saying more than I thought.*	**Break one line across the page using white space:** Use visual space to pace or fragment the thought. **Example:** *I almost told you, but the words froze.*
Repeat a word three times in a line: For emphasis, musicality or obsession. **Example:** *I ran, ran, ran until the street forgot my name.*	**Write one word on a line:** To give that word power, impact or clarity. **Example:** *She walked away without* *looking* *back*

Write one very short line (1–3 words): Use to emphasise a moment or mood. **Example:** *You paused.* *Just once.* *Too long.*	**Repeat your opening line at the end but change one (or two) key words:** Creates a sense of return with change. **Example:** *Opening: I thought the storm was outside.* *Closing: I knew the storm was inside.*
Write a line in CAPITALS or Bold: Use for emotional weight or contrast. **Example:** *We're fine. We're fine.* *WE ARE NOT FINE.*	**Include speech:** What would the subject say to someone or to the writer? **Example:** *The mirror said, 'This isn't who you were yesterday.'?*

W.A.V.E. Poetry Checklist

W = Words	Are my words vivid, precise and necessary? Can I add stronger language or cut anything that doesn't need to be there?
A = Add imagery	Have I used a simile, metaphor or personification to create a clear image or feeling?
V = Voice and sound	Does it sound good when I read it aloud? Could I use alliteration, assonance or onomatopoeia? Should I shorten any lines to improve rhythm or flow?
E = Edit for effect	Can I change the order of lines, add or remove repetition or adjust line breaks for impact? Have I used a **'Poet's Pause'** (a slash for a dramatic pause)? Now's the time to check spelling too.

Lesson 4: Imagery and bringing poems to life

Personification Lab

This technique can be used later to bring objects to life in your own poems. In your journals create two short lists:

- **Objects:** things around you or under a theme (e.g., items in a classroom, things in a bedroom, abandoned places, digital devices).
- **Human actions:** verbs that show movement, emotion or intent (e.g., sulks, paces, snaps, whispers, gloats). You can also add a few adverbs (slowly, awkwardly, fiercely) to give more control over tone.

Now, mix and match! Try pairing objects with unexpected human behaviours. You might start simple: *The keyboard sulks in silence.* Then try extending it with detail, mood or sound:

The sulking keyboard slouches in the dark,

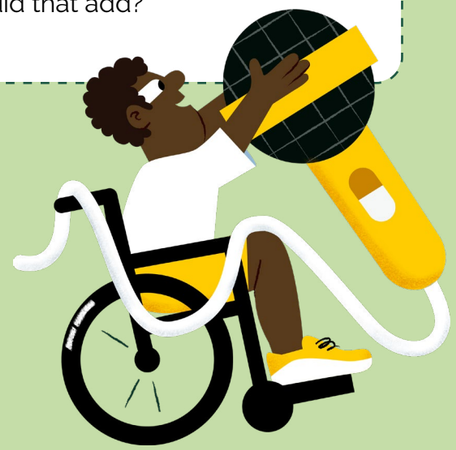
Its letters itching to shout.

Support prompts if you're stuck:

- How might your object move, if it had feelings?
- What mood is it in—bored? angry? smug? tired?
- How would it behave in a room full of people?
- Can you add sound or rhythm using alliteration?

Key questions:

- Which combinations made your object feel most alive or emotional?
- What kind of personality or mood does it have?
- Have you used alliteration or sound effects—what did that add?



Metaphor Generator

This technique will help you to build metaphors that link one abstract idea with a vivid, physical image. In journals, create two short columns: one of abstract nouns (e.g., guilt, courage, loneliness, power, trust, grief) and one of concrete nouns (e.g., engine, spider, flame, glass, clock, staircase). Teachers could give a random selection to begin with. For example:

- *Loneliness is a dripping tap.*
- *Power is a mirror that cracks.*
- *Joy is a fizzing can of coke.*

After experimenting, return to your own poems or journals and try weaving in a metaphor of your own. This is a great way to deepen theme or emotion.

Prompts if you're stuck:

- What does the object do that feels like the emotion?
- How does it move, break, repeat, glow, decay?
- Could it symbolise a moment, a person or a turning point?

Key questions:

- Does your metaphor show the emotion's behaviour or its impact?
- Can the reader picture it and feel it?

Alphabet Alliteration

Write out the alphabet (or A–M, depending on time) in your journal. Choose a theme for your word list—e.g., urban environments, digital life, nature, or emotion through objects. For each letter, list one concrete noun (e.g., antenna, bin, charger, drainpipe, engine...).

Now, create one strong alliterative line for each, using the same letter for key words. Play with rhythm, sound and tone. For example:

- *The blinking billboard buzzed above me.*
- *The cracked charger coughed sparks.*
- *The flickering fridge fought fearlessly.*

Add onomatopoeia where it feels natural, to build atmosphere:

The cracked charger coughed sparks—zzzt! zzzt!

- *Which sounds do you feel most? Why?*
- *Can you turn your onomatopoeic sound into a feeling of a key moment in your poem?*

Lesson 5: Editing and enhancing

Poetry Editing Zones

Set up 3 – 4 Editing Zones around the room. At each, students edit their poem using the edit instructions below and supported by a partner. Alternatively, they can stay in pairs at their desks and work through some or all of the activities. Set a class timer for 5 minutes for each focus.

Station 1: Sharpen the line

Goal: Playing with line length, breaks and punctuation.

Instructions:

- Use a Poetry Pause (slash /) to make a surprise break in the middle of one your lines. Rewrite on two separate lines. What is the effect?
- One word pop: Chose a single word to stand on a line by itself.
- Rewrite your poem starting with short lines that grow longer, or the opposite. What is the effect?
- Take out commas and/or full stops to see what the effect is like, or add them in. Try an exclamation mark to indicate surprise or excitement.

Station 2: Cut / keep / expand

Goal: Make bold decisions about what stays, goes or grows.

Instructions:

- Read your poem out loud to yourself or a partner.
- Go through it line by line and label:
- KEEP (green): This line is strong and essential.
- CUT (red): It's not adding much. Be brave and try cutting it!
- EXPAND (blue): This line is good but could grow; can you add imagery or detail?
- Revise your poem using your markings—tighten it up or build it out.

Station 3: Hear the sound and rhythm

Goal: Tune your poem's rhythm and sound devices (alliteration, onomatopoeia, repetition, flow).

Instructions:

- Read your poem slowly out loud.
- Circle places that feel clunky, rushed or awkward.
- Try tapping a beat as you read..
- Choose one stanza or section and:
  - Smooth the rhythm (shorten or lengthen lines).
  - Add or edit a sound device (like a repeated sound or onomatopoeia).
  - Read it again; does it flow better now?

Station 4: Line swap and structure shake up

Goal: Experiment with structure, sequencing and dramatic effect.

Instructions:

- Write each line of your poem on a separate slip of paper or sticky note.
- Rearrange the lines into a new order.
- Read the new version aloud.
- Choose whether to keep the new version or blend elements into your original.
- Re-write the new order on a fresh sheet of your journal if you love it!

W.A.V.E. Poetry Checklist		Tick
W = Words	Have a I used vivid, interesting words? Are there places I could swap plain words for more powerful ones? Should I take out any words that aren't needed?	
A = Add imagery	Have I used a simile, metaphor or personification to paint a picture or a feeling?	
V = Voice and sound	Does it sound good when I read it aloud? Could I add any alliteration or onomatopoeia? Do any lines need to be shortened to sound sharper or create a stonger rhythm?	
E = Edit for effect	Could I change the order of my lines, add repetition (or take it out) or play with the line breaks? Encourage '**Poet's Pause'**, marking with a slash to indicate a dramatic pause. Now's the time to check spelling too.	

Performance and celebration activity

Poetry Lab: poetry performance stations

Either rotate through a designated Voice Lab Station in a room or space, or work through them in pairs at desks. Choose a poem or section from your journals. At each station, annotate your poem and perform it aloud, experimenting with delivery. Give around 5 minutes for each below. Keep re-reading, revising, performing and reflecting.

Reflection prompts:

- Which station helped you connect most with your poem?
- What changes made your performance feel more powerful or authentic?
- How might you use these techniques in a final performance?

Emotion and feelings station	Speed and pause station
Try performing your lines with different emotions. Choose from a list (e.g., amused, defiant, nervous, calm, bitter, thrilled). Does the emotional tone suit the poem's mood? Could a surprising contrast add something unexpected? Make a note of moments that feel stronger when the emotion shifts.	Read your poem quickly, then slowly. Now choose one line to deliver at each speed and discuss the effect. Experiment with pausing mid-line or at unexpected places (mark pauses with slashes /). Which changes build tension, meaning or impact? Top tip: Speak at half your usual pace and double your volume/clarity.
Action and Gesture station	**Volume and Projection station**
Perform your poem using small, intentional gestures or movements. Do certain lines call for stillness, or a specific physical action? Could eye contact, a hand movement or a turn of the head highlight key moments? Add notes or simple sketches to your text. Try your performance again and ask your partner what worked.	This is ideal for outdoors or a large space. In pairs, stand a few metres apart and perform a single line from your poem. Your partner holds up a card: 'Clear' or 'Say it again—louder!' Swap after each turn. Focus on clarity, not shouting. **Voice tips:** • Breathe deeply before each line • Open your mouth clearly • Use your diaphragm, not just your throat • Keep energy high, even in quiet lines

Poetry Performance Checklist	Tick
Make eye contact (choose a spot at the back of the room to fix your gaze on or scan the audience for a few friendly faces to look at)	
Introduction: 'Hello, my name is… My poem is called…' Take a breath before starting	
Volume: double your usual speaking voice to improve clarity	
Speed: speak at half your normal pace to give words space	
Body language: include gestures or posture to match the tone	
Pauses: add silence for drama or meaning	
Emphasis: stress key words or lines	
Emotion: match your voice and face to the feeling of the poem	
Try to memorise all or part of your poem; it strengthens the connection with your audience	

Daily poetry prompts

To keep poetry momentum going in class after Young Poets Week, and keep inspiring students to create poetry for the laureateship application, why not display a daily poetry prompt as a quick writing activity at the beginning or end of the day?

1. **7 Days, 7 Lines**

   Write a poem where each line/sentence is about each day of last week.

2. **Grandma's Kitchen**

   Focus on a single memory, or describe what you might imagine the typical grandmother's kitchen to be like.

3. **Stranger Conversations**

   Start the first line of your poem with a word or phrase from a recent passing conversation between you and someone you don't know.

4. **Ghostwriter**

   Imagine an invisible ghost picks up a pen and starts writing – what would it say?

5. **How To**

   Write a poem on how to do something mundane most people take for granted, such as how to tie your shoes, how to turn on a lamp, how to pour a cup of coffee.

6. **Under 25 Words**

   Challenge yourself to write a poem that is no more than 25 words long.

7. **Home Planet**

   Imagine you are from another planet, stuck on earth and longing for home.

8. **Imagine Weather Indoors**

   Perhaps a thunderstorm in the attic? A tornado in the kitchen?

9. **Would You Rather?**

   Write about something you don't want to do, and what you would rather do instead.

10. **Last Words:**

    Use the last sentence from the nearest book as the inspiration for the first line of your poem.

11. **The Letter D**

    Make a list of 5 words that all start with the same letter and then use these items throughout the lines of your verse. This can be any letter, e.g., Daisy, Dishes, Desk, Darkness, Doubt.

12. **Recipe**.

    Write your poem in the form of a recipe. This can be for something tangible, such as a cake, or it can be a more abstract concept such as love or happiness. List ingredients and directions for mixing and tips for cooking up your concept to perfection.

13. **Fast Food**

    Write a poem about your favourite fast food restaurant.

14. **Sleepless Nights**

    What ideas and feelings keep you up at night? What's it like when you must wake up in the morning on a night you can't sleep?

National Poetry Centre

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Change your story