

PICTURE the POET

TEACHER RESOURCE PACK • YEARS 5-7

Introduction

Welcome to Picture the Poet, a partnership programme between the National Portrait Gallery, the National Literacy Trust and poetry organisation, Apples & Snakes. This resource pack complements the Picture the Poet touring exhibition, a selection of outstanding photographic portraits of poets from the National Portrait Gallery's Collection, and offers a wide range of standalone poetry activities for the classroom.

The Picture the Poet portraits, some included in this pack, are all of living British poets whose work is rich for exploration in the classroom. Teaching poetry is not so much about showing pupils how to be 'good at' poetry, but encouraging them towards a curiosity about poems and how they work, a willingness to play with language and a desire to discover and define their individual poetry style.

These portraits and poets offer pupils a creative way into poetry, their ideas and their imagined world. In doing so they can connect with language and engage with literacy on their own terms. The magic of poetry in the classroom is that it's often the pupils who struggle that, with the right support, can blossom in writing and sharing their own work, researching poets online or in the library.

The activities in this pack have been written by poet and schools practitioner, Francesca Beard. The activities can work with poems that you love or the poems that you think will best engage your pupils. The photographic portraits in this pack and the activities are intended as much for your enjoyment of poetry and portraiture in the classroom as your pupils and we hope you enjoy it.

Francesca Beard is an internationally acclaimed performance poet. She has toured nationally and internationally as a solo artist and in various poetry collectives. She works extensively with the Poets in Education programme for Apples & Snakes, and has led poetry workshops and projects for over ten years in schools and cultural organisations.

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Cover image: Benjamin Zephaniah © Donald MacLellan (detail of photograph)

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Poetry in Key Stages 2&3

With poetry centre stage in the curriculum there is no better time to explore creative poetry writing – the range of activities in this resource pack all respond to literacy and English requirements across Years 5 – 7.

Reading and writing

- Encouraging poetry reading for pleasure
- Vocabulary development
- Discussing how poets use language and the impact on the reader
- Writing ideas down at speed
- Learning poetry by heart
- Developing initial ideas, drawing on reading and research
- Assessing the effectiveness of pupils' own and others' writing.

Spoken language

- Preparing poems to read aloud
- Performing compositions, using appropriate intonation, volume, and movement.

Activities in this pack encourage pupils to:

- value their own 'voice'
- gain confidence to voice their own thoughts and communicate their own experiences
- collaborate with each other in creative activity
- explore the building blocks of story
- appreciate the value of poetry and language
- appreciate connections between visual representation and the written word
- use drawing and visual imagery as a springboard for creative inspiration
- 'read' a portrait – exploring metaphor and making connections
- use drawing and photography to inform written work

Poetry tips to the wise...

An ice-breaker game or a physical warm-up works well in ensuring that poetry writing is accessible and relevant. Call and response games that focus on team-work and speaking and listening help the class to be a supportive audience when it comes to performances.

Brainstorming a poem is different to mapping an essay or factual piece. Poetry brainstorming is about not thinking too hard and trusting that you already know what you need for your poem. Poetry brainstorming is about welcoming the obvious ideas as well as the weird and off the wall ones.

A blank sheet can be intimidating. Using images and photographs as a starting point can raise pupils' curiosity and elicit vocabulary and dialogue towards poetry writing. Using visual prompts for discussion like this offers an inclusive approach that supports the abilities of all pupils, including those with EAL and SEN. Quick-fire sketching activities can help inspire ideas and act as a 'frame' for their written work; ie pupils draw round their hands or feet, draw self portraits and write poems in and around the shapes.

When pupils are preparing for performance, get them to rehearse in pairs, paying particular attention to voice projection, articulation, timing and rhythm, mood, facial expression and gesture.

Ask the listeners to think about what the sound and the sense of the poem is doing in certain lines and encourage them to discuss together how best to get that across with the performance.

Fidgety students can harness nervous energy by developing the unconscious movement into a choreographed gesture they can repeat. This does not have to be related to the action but can be a way of marking the rhythm. This is a trick that many professional performers use.

Write your own poems from these activities and perform your work in front of your pupils in all its messy glory. It may be scary but they will see that this is an acceptable, admirable, necessary risk to take.

When it comes to sharing work, the more inclusive and supportive the atmosphere the better. It's not possible to be too kind and encouraging - performing your work is a terrifying thing, even for seasoned professionals. In general, the more confident performers are, the better they will perform.

Poetry starters

Call and response rhythm game

Standing in a circle, each person creates a short, simple, rhythm, by clapping, clicking, stamping and/or percussive vocal sound that the others repeat back, as closely as possible. The group creates a simple four bar beat (e.g. clap clap stamp stamp.) Going round the group, each person inserts their name into the beat.

Silly stress name game

Standing in a circle, each person says their name in a strange way, simply by putting the stress on a different syllable or, if their name is one syllable, drawing it out in a tonal way. You can add actions to this and explore how in poetry, language is stressed and intonation is key to creating meaning.

Magic circle game

Standing in a circle, the class creates a portal to a magical dimension – one by one, each person reaches into the circle and pulls out an object, declaring ‘I’m taking out penguins/diamonds/traffic-lights/dragons...’. Far from being competitive, this is a collaborative improvisation with no pauses between each object and no commentary.

Self-portrait

Challenge pupils to the following sketch activities and after each drawing ask them to think of words they can associate with the version of themselves.

- sketch a self portrait in 60 seconds
- in 40 seconds with their non-writing hand
- in 40 seconds in one continuous line without taking the pencil off the page

How would you describe the person in each sketch? What does each self-portrait say about the pupil? Which self-portrait do they prefer and why? Generate a word-bank that describes the portraits and move the pupils into writing their self-portrait without using their first or family name. This could use a riddle form – or any simple form – haiku, limerick, kenning, cleriheuw or rap. Using an acrostic, for example, it could spell out *Who Am I?* Print out the pieces for the class to read them aloud and guess whose is whose.

Free write

The most established and competent poets swear by free-writes. An example of this would be to place objects through the classroom eg. a leaf, an orange, a spoon – and challenge pupils to describe the object in a free-write. They should write for 5 minutes without thinking and without stopping. If they get stuck, they just write ‘and and and...’ until the thought flows again.

At the end of the free-write, ask them to look back over their work and read out a phrase each. Write these phrases down on the board as they read them out. Ask them to combine as many of the phrases as possible into a new piece of writing – it can take any form.

OR

Ask them to use the phrase they shared as the title of a new piece.

Lesson plan 1 - A list poem

Using playful imagination to explore the surreal... (60 minutes)

Preparation:



You will need:

- Blank A4 paper
- Pens or pencils
- Two containers

Group activity: 20 minutes

Pupils fold one sheet of blank A4 paper into quarters and number each quarter 1 – 4. Number 1 will be the top left, number 2 as the top right, number 3 as the lower left and number 4 as the lower right.

Pupils will need to write in each quarter:

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| 1) noun or object | 2) definition |
| 3) abstract noun | 4) definition |

Examples to model:

- 1) Poem
- 2) A human construct, usually involving words, that bends language to get beyond it.
- 3) Love
- 4) A positive emotion

or...

- | | |
|-----------|-----------------------|
| 1) Carrot | 2) A root vegetable |
| 3) Space | 4) We all live in it. |

Tip: Don't use dictionaries. Give your class permission not to worry about using the correct definition - encourage them to choose things from their own experience and be as precise as possible in the description.

When everyone has done this, each person tears their paper into four pieces, being careful to keep the odd numbers separate from the even. All the even numbers go into container A, all the odd into container B.

A volunteer takes one random piece of paper from container A and another from container B and reads out the 'new' definition.

e.g. A carrot is a positive emotion.

Discussion: 10 minutes

Pupils pull out more 'new' definitions to read together. Sometimes you might have the correct definition paired with its word and this is surprisingly disappointing. In discussion, talk about why some of the combinations work better and are more interesting than others – this is getting to the heart of poetry!

Individual writing exercise - List Poem: 15 minutes

Pupils each choose an object or concept from container A to make a list poem using their own poetic definitions for the word. Encourage them to mix things up by using some 'correct' definitions and some imaginative, poetic or just plain silly ones.

e.g. *Poetry*

Poetry is a girl or a guy talking into a microphone.

Poetry is an ancient art form.

Poetry can be heard all over the world.

Poetry cannot be folded up, put in a box and stored.

Poetry is a game of football and you're in goal.

Poetry is rhythm, rhyme, space and time.

Poetry is a yawn as big as the ocean.

Poetry is a love letter from an alien.

Sharing: 15 mins

Volunteers read their list poems aloud, with the class as active listeners ready to comment and appreciate.

Take it further

Build a class poetic dictionary - pupils provide the poetic definitions for words beginning with the letters they are assigned.

Illustrate the activity as a board display or as part of an ICT project to be printed up into a class book.

Lesson plan 2

Analysing structure

...and discovering your own techniques... (60 minutes)

Preparation:

Use the Poetry Archive online resource for selecting from hundreds of poems and for the class to hear poets' own recordings. www.poetryarchive.org

See the list of poets in the exhibition on page 21 of this pack. Choose a variety of poetic forms e.g. limericks, haiku, rap or ballads with repeating choruses. This will give the class an opportunity to talk about rhyming patterns and rhythmic structure.



You will need:

- Selection of printed poems – one per A4 page in large font (3 included in this pack)
- A timer
- Class set of scissors and glue
- Large pieces of sugar paper.

Before you start:

- Cut up each poem line by line and then shuffle the lines.
- Divide the class into 5-6 groups and distribute a shuffled poem to each group.

Group exercise: 20 minutes

Give the class a time challenge to reassemble the poems in the way that they think makes most sense. The object of this game is to think about editing, about the active role of the reader and about how a poem's literal meaning can be obscure. Pupils will experience the poem through the filter of their own associations and therefore own their individual interpretations of a piece.

Sharing and discussion: 15 minutes

Ask each group to read out the poems and explain what they are about. Either play a recording of the actual poem or read the poem to the class.

Group writing exercise: 15 minutes

Give each group a large piece of sugar paper, scissors and glue. Challenge each group to make a new poem from the words of the original poems.

Sharing: 10 minutes

Groups learn the poems to read them aloud, with the class as active listeners ready to comment and appreciate.

Take it further

Each pupil takes any one line from the poems explored, and this forms the title for a new poem. If they want, they can use more than one line, including lines from other pieces, but the original poems act as prompts for their own original work.

Lesson plan 3

Reading a portrait

(60 minutes)



You will need:

- www.npg.org.uk/picturethepoet
- www.poetryarchive.org
- Paper and pens/pencils

Group exercise: 20 minutes

Working with a partner, pupils explore the exhibition portraits online and choose one to explore. They talk through the following prompts in preparation for sharing their findings with the class:

- Look closely at the image scanning it from top to bottom, left to right.
- What is the most obvious thing about the portrait?
- Is there a tiny detail that others might miss?
- What is in the corners of the image?
- What do you notice about the mood and colour?
- Where is the poet looking and what are they doing?
- What might their personality be like? How can you tell?
- What do you think their poetry might be like and why?

Sharing and discussion: 20 minutes

Pupils now explore the Poetry Archive to listen and read poems by their chosen poet.

- Is there a connection between the poet's personality in the portrait and what you know about the poems they write?
- How well do you think the photographer knew the poetry of the poet?
- How do you think the poet would have felt about their portrait?
- What might you have done differently to represent the poet?
- What question would you like to ask this poet?

Sharing: 20 minutes

Pupils share their photograph, a poem from the poet and their findings with the class.

Interpretation

Representation

Poetry self-portraits (across a series of lessons/days)

Pen portraits

This section explores identity and persona in preparation for an exhibition visit, but can equally be used as a series of standalone activities



You will need:

- Paper and pens/pencils
- Large sugar paper
- A timer

Activity 1:

A fun class demographic with the class:

*Hands up if –
You were born in e.g. Sheffield / Preston
You were born in England
Both parents were born in Sheffield / Preston
Both grandparents were born in Sheffield / Preston
You speak more than one language
You know the meaning of your name
You are scared of spiders
You remember your dreams*

In pairs, pupils interview each other for 3 minutes before swapping over. Challenge them to find out something surprising. The interviewers each report back to the class something unexpected they have discovered about their partner.

Activity 2:

Ask each student to write a poem in the form of a 5-line riddle about the person they interviewed to create a written poem portrait e.g.

*He has brown eyes and black hair.
He has a sister in Year 2 who drives him crazy.
He supports Manchester City but has never been
to see them play.
He can manual on his BMX.
When he was four, he wanted to grow up to be
a dragon.
Who is he?*

Volunteers share some of these poems with the class.

Activity 3:

Tell the class that you are going to give them a guided 5-minute free-write. (see tips on p5 to explain)

Guided free write sample starters:

*What is the story behind your name?
Where does your family come from?
Describe your favourite meal in as much detail as possible. Where do you eat this and who with?
What makes you angry?
What makes you laugh?
What could you not live without?
Where do you feel most safe?
Favourite object?*

Activity 4:

Using the free-write from activity 3 as raw ingredients, each pupil writes a five-ten line poem about him/herself in the same riddle form that they did with their classmates.

Activity 5:

Pupils bring in a photograph of a family member. They swap with a partner and are asked to 'read the portrait' using the prompts in Lesson Plan 3.

What words describe the person in the image?

What hopes and dreams might they have?

Pupils make a word list of the mood, colour, setting, smell, feel of the things in the photo, and write a poem about the person in the image.

Partners then share their poems and swap thoughts on how well they captured the family member. Were their ideas and poems close? What did the photograph not tell you about the person?

With new information shared about the family member in the photograph, pupils make new sketches of the person.

hip-hop

Activity 6:

A guided self-portrait free-write:

*What is the earliest memory you have?
Where does it happen? Outside or inside?
Is it hot or cold?
What smells are there? Is there food?
What colours are there? What are you wearing?
Holding?
What sounds can you hear? Are you moving?*

Ask each pupil to make an accompanying prose poem to their self-portrait using the structure 'And... And... And...' inserting the objects and sensations from their earliest memory plus objects and verbs from their riddle poem.

For example:

*And the dark grass and the curved sky and and
and the blue cup and the white butterfly and the
shhh of cars and hot of petrol and the left hand
back and the orange dog and the long road...*

NB. These Self Portraits work by the reader filling in the gaps in between. This piece needs mystery to make it work.

The following activities are ICT based requiring research online/in the library or to be supported by homework. Each pupil will need access to the internet and a printer.

Activity 7:

Pupils research a poet from the exhibition to explore forms of poetry eg. hip-hop poetry, comic poetry, ranting poetry, prose poetry, Diaspora poetry. Ask them to present their research in the style of the poet or poetry genre.

Activity 8:

Ask pupils to research a poet from one of the portraits in this pack. In pairs or as individuals they must collect 5 – 10 of their favourite lines from that poet. Ask them to make a collage portrait of the poet using their lines of poetry.

Activity 9: Secret Stanza

Each pupil pulls the name of a class-mate from a hat. Pupils then research poems from poets featured in the exhibition in order to choose a poem for their class-mate.

Once the poems have been gifted to each pupil in the class, the Secret Stanza gifters reveal who they are and why they chose their poem – whether they looked for something they thought the other person would like or whether they chose a poem they themselves enjoyed.

Everyone sits in a circle to the right of the person who gave them their poem gift. Going round the circle, pupils select and read out their favourite line of the poem they were given to create a new choral piece.

Comic... ranting

Poetry self-portraits

Photographic portraits



You will need:

- Cameras and a printer
- Paper and pens/pencils

Pupils work in pairs to describe their personality, what they like and dislike, where they come from, what makes them unique and the prompts from Activity 3.

The partners plan photographic portraits based on the information gathered above.

Where will they be?

What is in the background?

Which way should they be looking and what might this say about them?

Is it a full body shot or head shot?

Will they need props to help illustrate?

A black and white photograph or colour?

Support pupils over a session or a week to take photographic portraits of each other in a variety of settings and backdrops as the sitters / photographers have planned.

When pupils are happy with the photographic portrait, photographs are printed and shared. They write a self-portrait poem based on the photographic portrait they have made of themselves. Poems are left anonymous.

With a display of anonymous poems, the class as a full group now work out if they can match the photographic portraits to the poems.

Pupils now reflect on the various poems they have produced. What type of poet are they? What type of photograph would represent them best as a poet? Pupils take photos of each other as poets. What differences are there between their original photographic self-portrait and their portrait as a poet? What do the differences say about their personality and their poetry?

On display

Compile the work to create a class exhibition of poems and celebratory portraits of themselves the poets.

identity

Poems from featured Poets

Michael Rosen

Hand on the Bridge

Hand on the bridge

Feel the rhythm of the train

Hand on the window

Feel the rhythm of the rain

Hand on your throat

Feel the rhythm of your talk

Hand on your leg

Feel the rhythm of your walk

Hand in the sea

Feel the rhythm of the tide

Hand on your heart

Feel the rhythm inside

Hand on the rhythm

Feel the rhythm of the rhyme

Hand on your life

Feel the rhythm of time

Hand on your life

Feel the rhythm of time.

“Hand on the Bridge” by Michael Rosen

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Poems from featured Poets

Francesca Beard

Who Here?

Who here has a favourite pair of underpants?

Who here wishes they could break dance?

Who here knows the name of someone else's favourite flower?

Who here has attempted to carry on reading a really good book in the shower?

Who here has ever changed their name for a supply teacher?

Who here has made a New Year resolution to do better?

Who here has seen a film more than twenty times?

Who here stops to read the lost pet signs?

Who here has walked home crying in the rain?

Who here has walked home singing in the rain?

Who here has turned their bedroom into a fort?

Who here has a collection of plastic sporks?

Who here feels like a dj when they turn up the volume?

Who here has whispered a secret to the moon?

Who here has been kissed by someone you loved?

Who here likes lists?

Who here isn't included in the above?

© Francesca Beard

Poems from featured Poets

Ian McMillan

Ten Things Found in a Shipwrecked Sailor's Pocket

A litre of sea.

An unhappy jellyfish.

A small piece of lifeboat.

A pencil wrapped around with seaweed.

A soaking feather.

The first page of a book called 'Swimming is Easy'

A folded chart showing dangerous rocks.

A photograph of a little girl in a red dress.

A gold coin.

A letter from a mermaid.

(© Ian McMillan)

Poets & portraits in the exhibition

© Donald MacLellan



▲ *Benjamin Zephaniah*
by Donald MacLellan, 29 August 1996



© Nik Strangelove / National Portrait Gallery, London

▲ *John Hegley*
by Nik Strangelove, 15 December 1993



▶ *Roger McGough* by Michael Birt, 1 March 1984



▲ *Andrew Motion*

by Madeleine Waller, April 2006



▲ *Michael Rosen*

by Madeleine Waller, 8 June 2006



▲ *Gwyneth Lewis*

by Madeleine Waller, 12 December 2005



▲ *Carol Ann Duffy* by Peter Everard Smith, August 2005



 *Ian McMillan* by Andy Boag, February 2008



▲ *Anne Stevenson* by Jemimah Kuhfeld, September 2006

Other Poets appearing in the exhibition:

Dannie Abse

John Agard

Simon Armitage

Billy Childish

Wendy Mary Cope

Helen Dunmore

Paul Farley

Sophie Hannah

Tony Harrison

Kathleen Jamie

Linton Kwesi Johnson

Derek Mahon

Jamie McKendrick

Michael Morpurgo

Les Murray

Daljit Nagra

Grace Nichols

Sean O'Brien

Bernard O'Donoghue

Ben Okri

Ruth Sophia Padel

Don Paterson

Deryn Rees-Jones

Christopher Reid

Jo Shapcott

Owen Sheers

Lemn Sissay

Derek Walcott

Picture the Poet

Partners & touring venues

Touring venues and dates

Picture the Poet is a three-year project, a partnership between the National Portrait Gallery, the National Literacy Trust and Apples & Snakes.

Touring to six regions, an exhibition of photographic portraits of poets from the National Portrait Gallery and includes a selection of the best loved poets working today by some of the most important photographers. It is supported by an extensive schools literacy programme and participatory public programme for young people.

Norwich May – July 2014

Sheffield September – November 2014

Preston December 2014 – April 2015

Lincoln May 2015

Sunderland September 2015

Carlisle December 2015

Project Partners

National Portrait Gallery

Founded in 1856, the National Portrait Gallery London aims to promote the appreciation and understanding of the men and women who have made and are making British history and culture. The Gallery has been actively collecting photographs for forty years and holds over 250,000 photographs, making it the most important collection of photographic portraits in the country and overall the most extensive collection of portraits in the world.

www.npg.org.uk

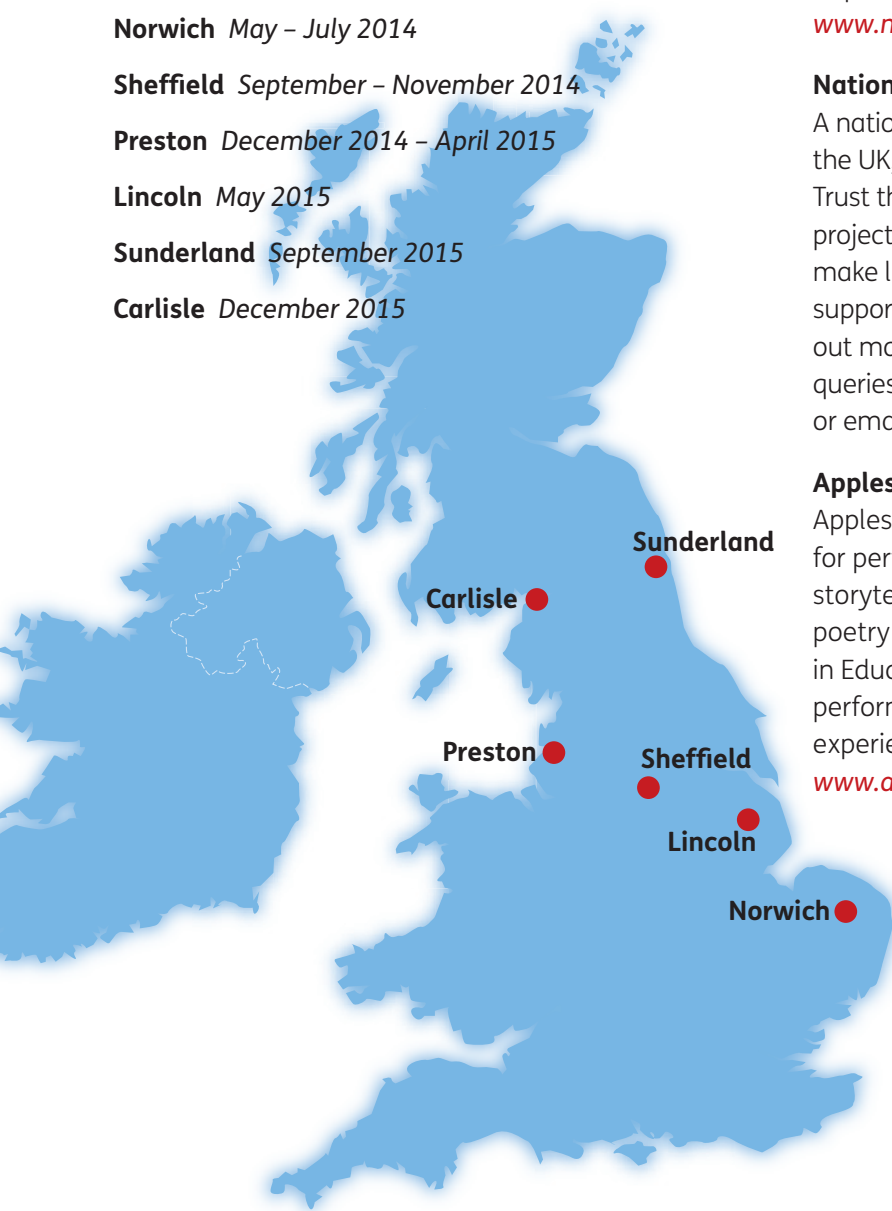
National Literacy Trust

A national charity dedicated to raising literacy levels in the UK, research and analysis make the National Literacy Trust the leading authority on literacy. The charity runs projects in the poorest communities, campaigns to make literacy a priority for politicians and parents, and supports schools. Visit www.literacytrust.org.uk to find out more, donate or sign up for free email updates. For queries regarding this resource pack call 020 7587 1842 or email erin.barnes@literacytrust.org.uk

Apples and Snakes

Apples and Snakes is the country's leading organisation for performance poetry. It works with top class poets, storytellers, lyricists and rappers who bring life to poetry in the classroom. The long established Poets in Education Scheme (PIES) introduces explosive performances, engaging workshops and memorable experiences to schools nationwide.

www.applesandsnakes.co.uk



Links to further activity

The Poetry Archive

A searchable website of poets and poems, including a comprehensive children's section.

www.poetryarchive.org/childrensarchive

The Poetry Society

A poetry organisation that deliver workshops, training and resources to support the delivery of poetry in schools.

www.poetrysociety.org.uk/education

The Poetry Foundation

A searchable website of poems and recordings, plus a poetry glossary.

www.poetryfoundation.org/learning

The Poetry Zone

A publisher of children's poems online, as well as book reviews by children, interviews with poets and lesson plans for teachers.

www.poetryzone.co.uk

National
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