Poetry in Voice

END2D3

All students enrolled in the enriched stream will have to participate in the Poetry in Voice contest. The school contest will take place on January 9, 2020. This event will feature the individual champions from each class (2 grade 9 students, 2 grade 10 students, etc.) competing against each other.

Mr. Ahumada’s grade 10 students will *recite* their poems the week of November 4. We will pick one winner per class.

Students must *select* their poems by October 1

Memorization and Recitation tips

Start your recitation with the title of the poem and the poet’s name:

**“Heat” by Archibald Lampman**

**« Clair de lune » de Victor Hugo**

Then begin your recitation.

Once you’ve finished your recitation, pause to let the poem settle over the audience, then walk away.

*Accuracy & Memorization*

A fundamental aspect of recitation is knowing every word of your poem.

* Be sure to memorize your poem exactly as it appears in the Poetry In Voice/Les voix de la poésie online anthology, including any epigraph.
* Rewrite your poem by hand several times. Each time, try to write more and more of it from memory.
* Read your poem aloud before going to sleep at night and repeat it when you wake up.
* Carry around a copy of your poem in your pocket or bag. You'll find many opportunities throughout the day to reread or recite it.
* Practise your poem by reciting it to family and friends.

*Voice and Articulation*

Use your voice to make the poem come alive for the audience. Make careful decisions about your volume and pacing: knowing every word of your poem.

* Ensure your voice reaches the whole audience.
* Proceed at a natural pace and accelerate or decelerate as needed.
* Let your voice rise and fall with the poem.
* Decide how long a pause to use for each punctuation mark.
* Play with the line breaks of the poem (N.B.: Not all linebreaks call for a pause).

Be sure to check your pronunciation with your teacher before you finalize your performance. When an older version of a word is used in a poem, both the modern and historic pronunciations of that word are acceptable (e.g., the word belov’d could be pronounced be-loved or be-lov-ed).

Avoid:

* mispronouncing word.
* being too loud or too quiet.
* reciting too quickly or too slowly for the poem.
* reciting monotonously.
* reciting in a sing-song manner (particularly if you’re reciting

a rhymed poem).

* singing your poem (some of the poems in our anthology are also known song lyrics; be sure that your pacing is based on your understanding of the poem and doesn’t mimic the beats and measures of the song.
* You’ll never be penalized for your natural accent; however, affected character accents are strongly discouraged.

*Interpretation*

When you recite, you’re more like a narrator than an actor. You need to convey the meaning and enhance the audience’s experience of the poem without acting it out.

* Let the words of the poem do the emotional work during your recitation.
* Depending on the poem, occasional gestures can be appropriate. If you’re uncertain about whether or not to include them, leave them out.

Avoid:

* An overly emotional delivery style.
* Distracting, excessive gestures or facial expressions.

*Evidence of Understanding*

If you don’t understand your poem, neither will your audience.

* Be sure you’re clear about the meaning of your poem. A great place to start is the poem’s page on our website, where you’ll find a list of the themes and poetic terms and forms used, as well as the poet’s biography.
* Double-check that you understand any words that are new to you.
* If you’re unclear on the meaning of a poem, you can’t recite it effectively. Research your poem and discuss it with your teacher. Once you understand your poem, you can craft your recitation accordingly.

*Physical Presence*

Establish a strong stage presence by practising the following:

* good posture
* comfortable, steady eye contact with the audience
* confident body language

Avoid:

* slouching
* timid eye contact
* nervous body language (fidgeting, shifting)

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| Feel free to check Youtube, Poetry Foundation.org, and any other source than can help you hear and see your poem being recited. |

**TONE**

Tone is usually defined as the author’s attitude toward audience and subject matter. No written work can be without tone, and it is essential that you grasp the tone of your poem prior to your recitation. The “tone of voice” often determines the way we take what is being said.

In poems, the speaker moves through a series of moods and tones of voice, arranged in a particular order, to tell an emotional story. Even when poems seem like a simple series of images and we can’t say exactly what events are taking place, there is usually an emotional drama that develops over the course of the poem and culminates in some kind of emotional resolution.

The tone of a piece of writing may be:

Light-hearted, casual, sarcastic, morbid, angry, jovial, condescending, begging, resigned, wistful, earnest, reticent, moral, ironic, playful, tragic, scoffing, bragging, contentious, obsequious, exhorting, pleading, skeptical, pessimistic, optimistic, conversational, formal, critical, noncommittal, sentimental, flat, exuberant, scolding, morose, tentative, flippant, secretive, regretful, forgiving, apologetic, maudlin, intimate, solemn, somber, forceful, irreverent, blunt, etc.

The above list is by no means exhaustive. There are many adjectives we can use to describe a writer’s tone.

Assaying the tone: 1) Examine the poet’s word choice (diction). What can we conclude based on their choices? Choosing to describe teens as “youths” rather than “adolescents” says something about the author’s tone because the words connote\* different ideas.

2) Ask yourself: if the poet were reading this poem aloud, what tone would they use; how would they sound?

3) How does the poet feel about what they are discussing?

\*Denotation: the dictionary meaning of a word.

* Dog: 4-legged mammal, part of the canine family.

\*Connotation: ideas, feelings, beliefs associated with a word.

* Dog: cute, loyal, cuddly, friend, etc.

Read the following poem and see what tone you would use for each stanza. Underline the words that help you justify your choice of tone.

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| Thoughtless Cruelty  By Charles Lamb |  | |
|  | Mood, atmosphere (how does the stanza feel; look at the diction) | Tone of voice (how would you read this stanza, what emotion would you use) | |
| There, Robert, you have kill'd that fly — ,  And should you thousand ages try  The life you've taken to supply,  You could not do it. |  |  | |
| You surely must have been devoid  Of thought and sense, to have destroy'd  A thing which no way you annoy'd —  You'll one day rue it. |  |  | |
| Twas but a fly perhaps you'll say,  That's born in April, dies in May;  That does but just learn to display  His wings one minute, |  |  | |
| And in the next is vanish'd quite.  A bird devours it in his flight —  Or come a cold blast in the night,  There's no breath in it. |  |  | |
| The bird but seeks his proper food —  And Providence, whose power enbu'd  That fly with life, when it thinks good,  May justly take it. |  |  | |
| But you have no excuses for't —  A life by Nature made so short,  Less reason is that you for sport  Should shorter make it. |  |  | |
| A fly a little thing you rate —  But, Robert do not estimate  A creature's pain by small or great;  The greatest being |  |  | |
| Can have but fibres, nerves, and flesh,  And these the smallest ones possess,  Although their frame and structure less  Escape our seeing. |  |  | |