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Fun with Poetry
in the Middle Grades

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the English Department
Eastern Illinois University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Science in Education

by
Mable M. Booker

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Fun with Poetry in the Middle Grades

In such a world as ours, what part can poetry play? Poetry, that wild, beautiful, elusive quality of which dreams are made? In educating for a world of new scientific interests, should we teach the children to chase will-o'-the-wisps, to seek for fairies under dew-spangled grass, to float on clouds over flower-covered hills? Should we teach poetry to our children? I believe that we should. Poetry can provide an inner fortitude to help the child grow up to face the stark realities of war, of economics, of history, of geography, or of science. And even if poetry does not have this effect upon every person, does poetry not give exercise to the imagination and thinking processes so necessarily a part of learning? Poetry holds a controversial position in respect to our schools and our lives and has held such a position for many years. But, as I see it, poetry has a distinct place in the lives of all humanity, and the changing state of our world in no way deters from this fact. Around the middle of the nineteenth century, Matthew Arnold wrote:

More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry.¹

Perhaps the greatest appeal which poetry has for its lovers is its emotional value. Poetry has a place in all the moods of man. There is poetry to soothe him, to tickle him, poetry to lift him from the depths of despair.

1. Matthew Arnold, Essays in Criticism, Second Series. (London: Macmillan and Company, Limited, 1935), p. 2.

But such an appreciation for poetry must be the result of constant association with poetry, of a real acquaintance with it. This association must begin in early childhood. At first, a physical activity may cause some nursery rhymes to become special favorites. Such rhymes as "Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake"² or "Ride a cock horse to Banbury Cross,"³ when accompanied by hand clapping and knee riding are thoroughly enjoyed by small children. Although nursery rhymes may remain favorites until after a child starts to school, children three or four years old can become intensely engrossed in such poems as A. A. Milne's "Missing"⁴ and "Hop-pity,"⁵ and Helen Cowles LeDron's "Little Charlie Chipmunk."⁶

However, for many children the road from nursery rhymes to good poetry usually leads through the jingle and doggerel land. "I know a poem," a wide-eyed youngster may suddenly say, and without waiting for an invitation, begin reciting:

Joe, Joe, stubbed his toe
On the way to Mexico.
Coming back he broke his back
Sliding down the railroad track.

This is poetry to him. Most children, when asked what poetry is, will say that poetry is "something that rhymes." Some will also mention rhythm.

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2. Edna Johnson, Evelyn R. Sickels, and Frances Clarke Sayers, Anthology of Children's Literature. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959), p. 6. See Appendix, no. 1.
 3. Ibid., p. 7. See Appendix, no. 2.
 4. A. A. Milne, When We Were Very Young. (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1945), pp. 52-54. See Appendix, no. 3.
 5. Ibid., pp. 60-61. See Appendix, no. 4.
 6. May Hill Arbutnot, Time for Poetry. (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1959), p. 112. See Appendix, no. 5.

"It kind of sings." "It is musical." A few will go farther. "Poetry is beautiful." "Poetry makes me feel good all over!" "Poetry means something special to me. I like the tune to poetry and I like the sound to it." "Poetry is even better than music because it makes its own music." "Poetry is something I can do all my life." "Poetry to me is something that the writer saw or felt and wanted to write about so he wrote a poem." "Poetry is fun and silly and sad and pretty." So it is that third, fourth, and fifth graders describe poetry. They are quick to note an elusive quality in poetry, an indefinable element which they can recognize in terms of happiness, sadness, music, and beauty. It is very difficult for them to put their feelings into words. Is it any wonder? Men and women with greater experience and more versatile vocabularies have tried to define poetry, and although many definitions are beautifully written, none of them seem to be really complete. Eleanor Farjeon says:

What is Poetry? Who knows?
Not the rose, but the scent of the rose!⁷

George Santayana, in The Last Puritan, says much the same:

Poetry is something secret and pure, some magical perception lighting up the mind for a moment, like reflections in the water, playful and fugitive. Your true poet catches the charm of something or anything, dropping the thing itself.⁸

World Book Encyclopedia tells our children that

Poetry is a record of experience told in words that are as intense and beautiful as possible. . . . To

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7. May Hill Arbuthnot, Children and Books. (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1957), p. 186.
 8. George Santayana, The Last Puritan. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), p. 180.

the unpoetic soul a tattered coat in a pawnshop window is only 'an old coat.' To the true poet it is not a coat, but the symbol of some unfortunate man's life--or even of the ills of all humanity.⁹

These experiences are the ones that good poetry gives to us. These experiences are the ones that we want to share with our children.

Although the children will naturally enjoy jingles or lines that have a definite rhythm or rhyme, they need to learn to recognize and appreciate good poetry both for pleasure and for the poetry's very goodness. They learn quickly to recognize rhythm and rhyme--the musical quality in poetry. Rhyme is perhaps the first element they recognize, and it rapidly and too often becomes the outstanding feature of poetry--a method of identification. But by the time a child becomes acquainted with a number of poems he begins to recognize the sensation of rhythm which is present. He feels the beat and hears the melody. Good poetry has a blending of melody and movement. It runs smoothly. It trips, or dances, or walks sedately along. It may move quickly or it may move slowly; but if it has a marked rhythm, the children will like it better than they will like free verse. Of course, this very preference for rhythm is quite likely to lead the children toward a fondness for doggerel, but if they hear enough good verse while they are small so that their ears become attuned to the melody and movement of good lyric poetry, their love of rhythm will be satisfied and experienced enough that they will always be able to enjoy good poetry without having to turn to doggerel for that satisfaction. After the children have become familiar with poetry, they feel more free to discuss their own feelings towards it. It is interesting to hear a child say, "I

9. "Poetry," World Book Encyclopedia. (1959), XIII, 6,439.

like the words to poetry" and know that he is, however inadequately, recognizing the excellent use of words which good poetry necessarily contains—that he is referring in his own way to what adults may call assonance, consonance, alliteration, or onomatopoeia, or he may be referring to the use of simile or metaphor. For although children may have difficulty in expressing themselves, they are quick to sense these elements in poetry. The children feel the activity when

Christopher Robin goes
Hoppity, hoppity
Hoppity, hoppity, hop.¹⁰

They feel it so intensely that fingers or feet may tap, or heads may bob in time to the rhythm.

They feel a keen sense of sympathy when a little boy asks,

Has anybody seen my mouse?

I opened his box for half a minute,
Just to make sure he was really in it,
And while I was looking, he jumped outside!
I tried to catch him, I tried, I tried. . . .¹¹

They feel the mystery when they hear

I saw a proud, mysterious cat,
I saw a proud, mysterious cat
Too proud to catch a mouse or rat—
Mew, mew, mew.¹²

They can hear the clump of a wooden leg in "The Pirate Don Durk of Dowdee."¹³

10. Milne, When We Were Very Young, p. 60. See Appendix, no. 4.

11. Ibid., p. 52. See Appendix, no. 3.

12. Vachel Lindsay, Johnny Appleseed and Other Poems. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1945), pp. 6-9. See Appendix, no. 6.

13. Arbuthnot, Time for Poetry, pp. 322-323. See Appendix, no. 7.

They nod sagely at a description of fence posts wearing marshmallow hats,¹⁴
and dandelion soldiers with golden helmets.¹⁵ They gleefully twist their
tongues around

Once there was an elephant
Who tried to use the telephant--
No! no! I mean an elephone
Who tried to use the telephone--¹⁶

They listen for the sound of galloping hoofs as "a man goes riding by."¹⁷
They are astonished that a fairy queen should appear amidst the hustle,
bustle, and noise of Oxford Street.¹⁸ They are completely in awe of the
grandeur and magnificence of "The Creation" as told by James Weldon
Johnson.¹⁹

And when we teachers see the children reaching that point, we know
that they have also achieved an understanding of the third feature of
good poetry, the emotional appeal of its content. For good poetry has a
way of weaving a spell of enchantment over its hearers or readers. May
Hill Arbuthnot sums the thought up well when she says that poetry invests
"the strange or the everyday experiences of life with new importance and

14. Ibid., p. 425. See Appendix, no. 8.

15. Ibid., p. 448. See Appendix, no. 9.

16. Laura Richards, Tirra Lirra, Rhymes Old and New. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1956), p. 31. See Appendix, no. 10.

17. Robert Louis Stevenson, A Child's Garden of Verses. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951), p. 30. See Appendix, no. 11.

18. Arbuthnot, Time for Poetry, p. 329. See Appendix, no. 12.

19. Johnson, Sickels, and Sayers, pp. 1075-1076. See Appendix, no. 13.

richer meaning."²⁰ Good poetry for children is about those subjects in which children are interested. It is written for the children rather than for the adults who buy and choose it for the children.

But children have not always had poetry to call their own. Children's poetry is a relatively new literary art which has grown from a poetic form of didacticism to poetry for and about children and their world. Nursery rhymes, so often a child's introduction to poetry, may also be termed the world's introduction to children's poetry. Mother Goose rhymes, contrary to popular belief, are not the work of one woman, but a collection of nursery rhymes from various times and places. These little rhymes have caused much controversy among historians of children's literature concerning their actual origin, but no matter what their beginnings, the fact remains that they are still great favorites with very small children. Very young children of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were able to enjoy some of these verses, too; but older children of those times were without poetry of their own in any form. Their searching natures grasped for some of the popular ballads or adult poetry such as a few of Shakespeare's songs--- just as some of our pre-teenagers today find an outlet in old ballads. It was early in the eighteenth century that Dr. Isaac Watt's Divine and Moral Songs for Children (1715) was first presented to the children. These poems were intended for religious and moral lessons, but Dr. Watts felt that those lessons would be more pleasant and more easily understood by the children if the lessons were written in verse than if they were presented in their usual dry prose. Some of his hymns are still to be found in the

20. Arbuthnot, Children and Books, pp. 188-189.

modern hymnal, and how many of us remember reading in old readers his poem "Against Idleness and Mischief"?

How doth the little busy bee
 Improve each shining hour
 And gather honey all the day
 From every op'ning flow'r.

How skillfully she builds her cell;
 How neat she spreads her wax,
 And labors hard to store it well
 With the sweet food she makes.

In works of labor or of skill,
 I would be busy too;
 For Satan finds some mischief still
 For idle hands to do.

In books, or work, or healthful play,
 Let my first days be past;
 That I may give for ev'ry day
 Some good account at last.²¹

Obviously here was a man who recognized the children's natural love for rhythm and rhyme. Unfortunately, although other people of his time realized the advantages of his method, they lacked the ability and gentleness of Dr. Watts. For many years most of the poetry written for children, both in England and America, was designed to teach the children about religion, morality, death, and about punishment for misbehavior. Poets dwelt at such length upon those topics that sensitive children must have found the poems terrifying.

At length, in 1789, William Blake's Songs of Innocence was printed, and the children were treated to their first taste of genius, but regretfully it was not fully appreciated. Actually, only a few of Blake's poems were really suitable for children, but those few have lived through the

21. Ibid., p. 129.

ages and still appear in many anthologies of children's poetry. "Piper's Song," the introduction to Songs of Innocence, expresses so well the need for children's poetry at that time.

Piping down the valleys wild,
Piping songs of pleasant glee,
On a cloud I saw a child,
And he laughing said to me;

'Pipe a song about a Lamb!'
So I piped with merry cheer.
'Piper, pipe that song again;'
So I piped: he wept to hear.

'Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe,
Sing thy songs of happy cheer.'
So I sung the same again
While he wept with joy to hear.

'Piper, sit thee down and write
In a book that all may read.'
So he vanish'd from my sight,
And I pluck'd a hollow reed,

And I made a rural pen,
And I stain'd the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Every child may joy to hear.²²

And many children did "joy to hear" this fresh, new voice who spoke for them. Even today his poem about "The Lamb" remains one which the children ask to hear again. "The Lamb" is sweet. It is gentle. Children still prefer their religion that way, and so they like "The Lamb."

Little lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life and bade thee feed
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;

22. George Hornby, Through Many-Colored Glasses. (New York: The Domesday Press, Inc., 1945), p. 58.

Gave thee such a tender voice,
 Making all the vales rejoice?
 Little lamb, who made thee?
 Dost thou know who made thee?

Little lamb, I'll tell thee;
 Little lamb, I'll tell thee.
 He is called by thy name
 For He calls Himself a Lamb.
 He is meek and He is mild,
 He became a little child.
 I a child and thou a lamb,
 We are called by His name.
 Little lamb, God bless thee!
 Little lamb, God bless thee!²³

But Blake, too, wrote only some poems for children. It was not until the early part of the nineteenth century that authors appeared who wrote solely for children. These authors were Ann and Jane Taylor. Many of their poems, too, were meant to improve the children, but the Taylors had a knack for story telling which held the children's interest. Many of the Taylors' poems were not good lyric poetry, but some were quite good and a few may still be found in modern anthologies. Jane Taylor's "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star"²⁴ is one of the best known among our nine-to-twelve-year olds, even those who have had little acquaintance with poetry.

In 1846 there suddenly appeared a book of poetry for children which was solely for purposes of fun and entertainment. This was Edward Lear's Book of Nonsense which introduced laughter into children's poetry. Here at last was poetry for fun. What child could resist the charm of "The Jumblies," who dared to do something despite the advice and warnings of others?

23. Ibid., p. 59.

24. Arbuthnot, Time for Poetry, p. 398. See Appendix, no. 14.

They went to sea in a sieve, they did;
 In a sieve they went to sea:
 In spite of all their friends could say,
 On a winter's morn, on a stormy day,
 In a sieve they went to sea.
 And when the sieve turned round and round,
 And everyone cried, 'You'll all be drowned!'
 They called aloud, 'Our sieve ain't big;
 But we don't care a button, we don't care a fig:
 In a sieve we'll go to sea!'
 Far and few, far and few,
 Are the lands where the Jumblies livé:
 Their heads are green, and their hands are blue;
 And they went to sea in a sieve.²⁵

And what a novel idea it was to think of "Two Owls and a Hen, four Larks and a Wren" all nesting in an old man's beard!²⁶ No wonder the children were charmed. What a relief it must have been from strict, serious poetry.

Then in 1871 Christina Rossetti's Sing-Song introduced authentic lyric poetry to the children. She made use of beautiful tone qualities and subtle music. She used personification, and for the most part dealt with those objects and creatures and interests of a child's world. What child has not wondered about the wind?

Who has seen the wind?
 Neither I nor you:
 But when the leaves hang trembling
 The wind is passing thro'.

Who has seen the wind?
 Neither you nor I:
 But when the trees bow down their heads
 The wind is passing by.²⁷

The universal interest of children in the wonders of nature make this

25. Ibid., pp. 324-326. See Appendix, no. 15.

26. Ibid., p. 301. See Appendix, no. 16.

27. Ibid., p. 365.

poem one of their favorites and one which is very often memorized, simply because they like it.

Carrying on in this same style of writing for children, Robert Louis Stevenson wrote A Child's Garden of Verses, which appeared on the market in 1885 under the title Penny Whistles. It is true that some of Stevenson's poems reflected adult reminiscences of childhood, but most of his poetry showed a more immediate understanding of children and their world. He portrayed real children with real interests or complaints. Boys and girls of today are very like Stevenson's children. They, too, like to climb to high places such as up trees and dream of visits to foreign lands.²⁸ Children now like to dig holes in the sands of the beach and watch the sea fill them up.²⁹ They like to sail toy boats,³⁰ to go up in swings,³¹ and to play with their toys among their bedclothes when they are sick in bed.³² They wonder, too, about the eeriness of windy nights³³ and the impish misbehavior of their shadows.³⁴ And today's children feel such kinship with the child who had to go to "Bed in Summer" that this poem remains one of their very favorites.

28. Stevenson, pp. 35-37. See Appendix, no. 17.

29. Ibid., p. 11. See Appendix, no. 18.

30. Ibid., pp. 22-23. See Appendix, no. 19.

31. Ibid., p. 51. See Appendix, no. 20.

32. Ibid., p. 56. See Appendix, no. 21.

33. Ibid., pp. 30-31. See Appendix, no. 11.

34. Ibid., pp. 12-13. See Appendix, no. 22.

In winter I get up at night
 And dress by yellow candle-light.
 In summer, quite the other way,
 I have to go to bed by day.

I have to go to bed and see
 The birds still hopping on the tree,
 Or hear the grown-up people's feet
 Still going past me in the street.

And does it not seem hard to you,
 When all the sky is clear and blue,
 And I should like so much to play,
 To have to go to bed by day?³⁵

Poems such as this prove his complete understanding of a child's nature. So well loved was his poetry that he became known as "poet laureate of childhood," a title which he held undisputed until A. A. Milne appeared around a century later.³⁶

Christina Rossetti and Robert Louis Stevenson marked the beginning of an era of beautiful poetry for children. These poets were followed by Walter de la Mare, Rose Fyleman, Eleanor Farjeon, Sara Teasdale, Frances Frost, Rachel Field, Eugene Field, Dorothy Aldis, Elizabeth Coatsworth, James Whitcomb Riley, and others who have contributed to that growing wealth of poetry for children. Some of the poets who generally write and have written for adults have made their contributions, too. Vachel Lindsay and Carl Sandburg, among our American poets, have written some of the children's favorites, and Rosemary Carr and Stephen Vincent Benet's A Book of Americans contains one poem especially loved by our nine-to-twelve-year olds, "Nancy Hanks."³⁷ But outstanding among our twentieth

35. Ibid., p. 68.

36. Arbuthnot, Children and Books, p. 132.

37. Rosemary Carr and Stephen Vincent Benet, A Book of Americans. (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1933), pp. 65-66. See Appendix, no. 23.

century poets is the name A. A. Milne. Not only does he please small children, but older children, too, enjoy his poems. "Disobedience,"³⁸ "The King's Breakfast,"³⁹ "Bad Sir Brian Botany,"⁴⁰ "Missing,"⁴¹ and "In the Fashion"⁴² are among the favorites of the nine-to-twelve-year olds. Milne gives the children a picture of themselves in their own world. The readers can identify themselves with Christopher Robin. They say his prayers,⁴³ suffer his colds,⁴⁴ and feel his antipathy for grown-up admonitions of "Don't do that" or "Now take care. . ." They, like Mary Jane, do not like rice pudding,⁴⁵ and like Emmeline, have trouble with their old enemy, dirt.⁴⁶ In "Independence" Milne expresses the urgent cry of children of any age.

I never did, I never did, I never did like
 'Now take care, dear!'
 I never did, I never did, I never did
 want 'Hold-my-hand';
 I never did, I never did, I never did think
 much of 'Not up there, dear!'
 It's no good saying it. They don't under-
 stand.⁴⁷

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38. Milne, When We Were Very Young, pp. 30-33. See Appendix, no. 24.
39. Ibid., pp. 55-59. See Appendix, no. 25.
40. Ibid., pp. 92-94. See Appendix, no. 26.
41. Ibid., pp. 52-54. See Appendix, no. 3.
42. Ibid., p. 95. See Appendix, no. 27.
43. Ibid., pp. 99-100. See Appendix, no. 28.
44. A. A. Milne, The World of Christopher Robin. (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1958), pp. 114-117. See Appendix, no. 29.
45. Milne, When We Were Very Young, pp. 48-51. See Appendix, no. 30.
46. Ibid., pp. 83-84. See Appendix, no. 31.
47. Ibid., p. 15.

There is no denying it. Modern children have much delightful poetry only for the asking. Poetry can be found that will satisfy almost any child. Louis Untermeyer, in the introduction to Stars to Steer By, says:

The variety is so great that there is something for every kind of taste. . . . There are poems for the dreamer and the doer, for the serious mind and the carefree spirit. There are even poems--many of them--for those who believe (or say) they dislike poetry. Don't take my word for it. Open the book and see.⁴⁸

And it would seem to be true that suitable poetry is available for every child. There is poetry with sound, with action, with rhythm. There is light, airy, fairy poetry; poetry of an almost mystical, misty mood; poetry of action, robust and hearty. There are poems for little naturalists, little sailors, little philosophers. There are poems full of color, poems of dazzling whiteness, poems of darkness, of mystery. With such a variety of poems available for children, it would seem that every child should find some subjects and qualities in poetry to enjoy. Yet it has been proven that many children have grown to a hearty dislike of poetry, chiefly because of its use in the school rooms of our country. In years past poetry has been taught in our elementary schools, generally appearing in the reading texts. These poems were to be read, dissected, and memorized. They were often difficult for the children to understand. Students were required to tear each poem apart, word by word, and to find hidden meanings, expecting to be examined upon their understanding of the poem. By the twentieth century educators were beginning to recognize the fact that children must be interested in the poetry--that it should be about subjects of which they have some knowledge. These people felt that poetry must be formally studied.

48. Louis Untermeyer, Stars to Steer By. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1941), p. 3.

Studying and memorizing the poems must enlarge the reading vocabularies of the pupils. The teacher should see that the work is made to enrich their writing and their speaking vocabularies as well. . . . In teaching a narrative poem the sequence of events must first be made clear. After that is accomplished, the aim should be to give fuller meaning to the story by bringing out clearly the causes, motives, and results of acts. . . . After a few words of introduction fitted to arouse the interest of the children or to remove any bar between them and the poet, the teacher should read the poem as well as she can, not stopping for comment unless it seem necessary to do so in order to hold the interest of the children. After this first reading, the poem should be read again, part by part. This is the time for question, explanation, and discussion. If time permit, the teacher should now read the poem a third time, that the final impression may be left by the author's own words. The whole or a part of the poem should now be memorized. Children will in this way learn with delight poems which they could not read by themselves with understanding or pleasure. With older pupils. . . it may be studied from the book with no help from the teacher but a simple statement of the character of the presentation[is] to be made. When class time comes, the pupils may be expected to tell the story clearly and to explain allusions. They may be trusted to see the moral with no help from the teacher. . . . No poem should be memorized until it has been read in class.⁴⁹

With such educational aims hanging over their heads, is it any wonder so many children did not enjoy poetry? Besides there being too much analyzing of poetry, many of the selections chosen were boring. They were too long. They were too hard to understand because of their figures of speech and long descriptions. Some of today's children complain of the same difficulties. Those who do not like poetry say it is "too long," "too full of words," "It doesn't make sense," and some, "It's too hard to read." "Poetry is a bunch of words put together so they don't make sense," was the definition of poetry which one child gave. For these reasons, many

49. Chestine Gowdy, Poems for the Study of Language, Prescribed in the Course of Study for the Common Schools of Illinois, With Biographical Sketches and Illustrations and Suggestions for Study. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1907), pp. vi, vii.

modern text book companies do not include poetry in their reading books. These companies feel that having the poems in the books is bad not only from the standpoint of difficulty in reading, but also because these poems are very likely to cause a teacher to use a too analytical approach and completely spoil the appreciation of the poetry for the children. But whether the text book used in the school includes poetry or not, the fact remains that poetry itself does have a place in the modern school room.

It is up to the teacher to help the children in her class to appreciate and love good poetry. The teacher is undeniably the instrument through which this is to be done. If the teacher herself loves poetry, she should find it to her advantage in the teaching of poetry. One of the outstanding features of poetry is that it charms its followers. It makes its lovers want to share their enjoyment with others. For some teachers this is a pitfall. Those who love poetry want to share it so badly they are quite likely to force it upon unwilling victims. On the contrary, teachers who do not really care for poetry may feel that it is their duty to teach it to the children, and they, too, may force poetry upon their students. Some teachers jump at any chance to use a poem which they consider appropriate, whether it is really suitable for their particular age group or not. For instance, a teacher who is teaching an animal unit is quite likely to hunt for poems about animals, all too often with complete disregard as to whether the poetry is worth the using. Processes such as these are not necessarily going to teach the children to appreciate good poetry.

What, then, is the answer? How can poetry be used in the classroom? How can we help children to love good poetry for its own sake? It helps a

great deal if the teacher loves poetry, but probably most important for the teacher to remember is that poetry should be heard. Poetry is an art of the ear. Long before poetry was ever written down, it was passed from one person to another by word of mouth. Even today the children's favorite poems seem to be those which they have heard. "Last year my teacher read us a poem about all kinds of shoes.⁵⁰ It was keen! Will you read it to us, too?" one ten-year-old girl asked during a few minutes set aside for poetry. Poetry should not be a reading exercise. If children have to struggle through a poem, and even then with very limited understanding, they are discouraged and do not feel that poetry is worth the effort. Although a few children may have learned to love poetry enough to wish to read it on their own by the time they are nine or ten years old, most children in fourth or fifth grades still do not find poetry interesting if they have to read it for themselves. However, let a teacher read a poem well, or say a poem well, and these children can become enthusiastic over poetry. May Hill Arbuthnot tells us that

Saying or reading poetry to children should continue all through their first twelve years. By that time they will have mastered the mechanics of reading for themselves; they will also be steeped in poetry; and they will have the habit of saying it so well established that they will go right on reading it and enjoying it by themselves.⁵¹

The very musical and singing quality of poetry makes it a natural medium for reading and reciting. Children enjoy action, sound, and rhythm. They care much less for meaning. The meaning, however, must be clear, or the

50. Arbuthnot, Time for Poetry, p. 234. See Appendix, no. 32.

51. Arbuthnot, Children and Books, p. 194.

children will not enjoy the poetry for the thought it contains; of course they may very possibly enjoy that same poem for the musical quality alone. Then, too, rather limited reading abilities do little to aid the understanding of the poem. The language and form of poetry make the reading of it more difficult than the reading of prose for even the best readers. A poor reader may not be able to master the reading of poetry alone, but let the same child hear that same poetry and he is far more likely to understand it.

It becomes obvious, then, that poetry must be read well. This in itself is discouraging to many teachers who feel that they have no ability in oral reading. And indeed some methods of reading poetry can be unpleasant and irritating to the children. They do not like to hear teachers who read poetry with "tears in their voices."⁵² Boys, especially, dislike this type of reading, for it makes poetry seem like "sissy stuff" to them. The children also dislike a special "poetry-reading" voice, pitched at an abnormal level from the reader's usual voice. But probably the children dislike most to hear poetry read by somebody who does not really understand what she is reading. Poetry must be read interpretatively. The reader must use her imagination, must get the general mood or feeling of the poem, must find its meaning for herself. Sometimes a teacher may feel the spontaneous need for a particular poem simply because the situation calls for this poem. If this happens she will not have had the time to prepare it for presentation. However, if she is definitely planning to present a poem to her class, she will find it to her advantage to read the poem aloud for practice. Reading the poem aloud often helps the teacher to

52. Calvin Ryan, "The Poet, the Child, the Teacher," Elementary English (April, 1959), 238.

locate some element of movement or sound which she might easily miss when reading the poem silently. Most poets write for the ear, and they use certain sounds or syllabication in order to achieve the effect they desire. Reading the poems aloud helps the teacher become a better interpreter of the poet's thoughts and emotions. When the teacher sees heads nodding in answer to Nancy Hanks's questions concerning her beloved Abe,⁵³ or hears suppressed giggles over a little boy's professed surprise that the other animals have tails, too,⁵⁴ or sees the astonishment expressed over the unexpected ending of "Little John Bottlejohn,"⁵⁵ or feels and hears the hushed silence and sees the tenderness in the children's expressions as they listen to "The Creation,"⁵⁶ she will feel that she has been more than repaid for any extra thought or work which she may have spent toward the presentation of the poem.

One must realize, however, that there are other considerations to be made when preparing to present poetry to children. Even if the teacher has a natural aptitude for reading poetry well, and even if the children can listen enchanted to the musical quality of the poetry she reads, there is a limit to what they will willingly listen to if they do not find the poetry itself interesting. The teacher should, first of all, find or know poetry which will appeal to the ages of the children she teaches. Teachers of nine-to-twelve-year olds must realize that these children

53. Benet, pp. 65-66. See Appendix, no. 23.

54. Milne, When We Were Very Young, p. 95. See Appendix, no. 27.

55. Arbuthnot, Children and Books, p. 113. See Appendix, no. 33.

56. Johnson, Sickels, and Sayers, pp. 1075-1076. See Appendix, no. 13.

have wide and varied interests. In a fifth-grade classroom all these ages may be represented. The children's physical and mental growths are uneven. Some may be well advanced physically, even for their chronological ages, while some may be mentally precocious, but emotionally very young. Some will be immature both physically and mentally. Because of these variations their interests are widespread. Some will still be interested in the world of make-believe where giants and dragons and fairies abound. Most will prefer modern, up-to-date realism. Some of the more advanced girls will have the beginnings of interest in romantic poetry. However, the boys especially like tales of adventure, even if they border on fantasy. Yet, at the same time, these children are interested in common, everyday familiar things and events. The poems chosen for these groups should be as varied as the classes themselves. But since all groups are not alike, it must, in the end, be up to the teacher to know her own class and its interests, then to set about finding poems for that group, not forgetting that poetry should be loved by every individual. This may require a concentrated effort on the part of the teacher; but somewhere, if she will keep on trying, she will find poems that will satisfy the interests of every pupil.

A really interested teacher of poetry usually has at her command a large number of poems ready for almost instant use. Some of these she may have memorized, but generally she will have them stored on her shelves, ready to be used at a moment's notice. There is much to be gained by this. A poem which is apropos at a given time and for a given situation makes a greater impression upon the child than such a poem will if its reading is postponed for a day or two while the teacher searches for the poem among

hard-to-find books. A group who has just come in from a nature-walk during which a robin's nest was found to contain eggs will feel a keen sense of understanding and sympathy for the child who has difficulty in keeping his own counsel in "The Secret,"⁵⁷ even though the poem may be geared for younger children. Nature poetry, especially about the weather, seems to be particularly adaptable to this type of spontaneous situation and is good poetry for the teacher to keep in mind.

However, usually the teaching of poetry is a planned process wherein the teacher recognizes a reason for presenting a specific poem, whether that reason has direct bearing upon some lesson or is purely for fun. From that point she sets out on a definite pattern of preparation, beginning by reading the poem aloud to acquire practice and correct interpretation. But all preparation cannot be done at home or alone at school before the children arrive. Part of this preparation deals with the classroom atmosphere. Poetry should be enjoyed. This is almost impossible to accomplish in a tense situation. The general atmosphere should be warm, genial, and uncritical. If the children are to enjoy poetry, they must be allowed to relax, to be comfortable. They need to feel peaceful companionship with their classmates and with their teacher. Many teachers and children find it pleasant to have spots in some corners of their rooms where the children are free to relax, to sit on the floor and lean against the furniture, and simply soak up enjoyment of well-being. Some rooms are fortunate enough to have easy chairs or small rugs in secluded nooks. Some teachers try to shove book shelves or work tables around so that

57. Jane Werner, The Golden Book of Poetry. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1947), pp. 76-77. See pp. 28-29.

the teachers and the children may have "quiet spots." Some simply try to have a corner, a shelf, or a table where something beautiful may be displayed and admired. All these efforts help to set the mood for friendliness, for relaxation, and for poetry. Children who are comfortable, who are relaxed, are far more willing to listen to poetry. Their very willingness to listen is a big step forward, for regrettably many children do not know how to listen. If poetry can contribute to this ability alone, it is worth having in our schools.

Atmosphere alone is not always sufficient. Some poetry requires further preparation. Before the class goes far into poetry, it helps to give the children a better attitude toward poetry if they realize that they will not always like a poem the first time they hear it, but that they might like it after hearing it a second or third time. For that reason, most teachers repeat poems a time or two, testing the children's reactions. Sometimes a poem which they do not care for upon the first hearing will later become a favorite, requested time and time again. Some poems never seem to "hit the mark"; nevertheless, it is good to let the children hear them a time or two, to help attune their ears to good poetry, if for no other purpose. However, such poems should not be repeated so often that the repetition causes the children to dislike them. Sometimes, too, when planning ahead upon the presentation of a certain poem, the teacher discovers the use of some terminology which she does not believe her class will understand well enough to gain any meaning from the poem. In this event, she will naturally need to make an explanation of this troublesome terminology to the class. Some teachers prefer reading the poem through once before doing this, but in my own

experience I have found that doing so before reading the poem makes it mean much more to the children--and if properly done it can foster a higher degree of interest in the poem they are about to hear than if the explanation were not made, or were made after hearing the poem.

The discussion period which follows the reading of any poem should be initiated by the pupils. It is the natural tendency of a teacher to desire to ask questions, to draw the children out. But where poetry is concerned, that is the exact process which can spoil the very effect we wish to create. We want our children to learn to enjoy and appreciate poetry. They cannot do this if they are required to dissect every poem they hear. It may be that the children have nothing to say. If this be true, the poem in question can be filed away for rereading on a later date. Perhaps the next time the children will wish to comment. If they do not, they are not yet ready for that particular poem. It does not need to be forced upon them. Maybe the children will wish to talk about the poem. If they do, that is good, and it should be encouraged. Such talk should be teacher guided, but not teacher dominated. Again, some teachers may feel insecure, and as though they are incapable of guiding such discussions on the basis of their own inadequacy in poetry. Probably they can let their consciences be their guides and do a good job of teaching poetry. Many of the new language text books are beginning to show a trend toward having a few suggestive questions to lead the teacher or the class in a study of poetry, without doing too much dissecting or memorizing, as the old reading and language texts were so prone to do. A few articles may be found in magazines or in library books, but many of these are outdated. But whether to use such references or not is entirely up to the discretion of the teacher. Perhaps she herself

can carry on naturally, feeling her way according to the interests of her group. The children's abilities to discuss a poem intelligently differ as greatly as their interests. Some groups are naturally more loquacious, more forward, and not only more willing to talk, but are more able to talk intelligently. Other groups are more shy, have less to say, and say it with less fluency. But if the schoolroom atmosphere is natural, relaxed, and free from critical attitudes, the children are far more likely to desire to carry on a discussion of the poetry; and if they are shy, have little to say, falter over words and meanings, or are halting of speech, then such an atmosphere of friendly discussion of an interesting subject can be of added value. This was illustrated in a particularly slow class where the children had just heard Rosemary Carr and Stephen Vincent Benet's "Pocahontas."⁵⁸ There was a moment of silence, and then one of the slowest, most backward girls murmured, "That's just the way I thought Pocahontas would feel," basing her opinion on a book which had been read to them; but finding in the poem the exact words for what she had felt.

Sometimes the interest of a group during a discussion of a poem may reveal a special liking for it. In this situation the teacher may wish to place a copy of the poem under discussion in the hands of the children so that they may read it for themselves. This should be after or during discussion when the children are familiar enough with the poem so that there will be no reading problems to frustrate the slow readers. It is

58. Benet, pp. 10-11. See Appendix, no. 34.

sometimes good to have enough copies of time-confirmed favorites available for just this purpose, but it is not good to force them onto the children. It may be that not everybody in the class is interested. If copies of the poem are available, it is sometimes pleasing to those children who enjoyed it to be able to get copies to keep for themselves, or to add to poetry scrapbooks of their own. There are always some children who would truly like a copy of every poem they hear, and will ask to be allowed to copy each poem for themselves from the teacher's book. At first, not many children may show any desire for copies of a poem, but later, as the children become more familiar with poetry, they may show more and more an inclination to like to have copies in their own hands during or after a discussion.

Once they have copies of the poems, they seem to have a natural tendency to want to read the poems aloud. It is well to encourage, but not to force, the children to read the poems or passages aloud to the group during discussions. It is entirely possible to get into quite a discussion concerning the interpretation of a poem, how it should be read, the meanings of various words, and good voice qualities. It is even possible to get into a discussion of rhythm patterns, assonance, alliteration, and onomatopoeia. However, since suggestions for such discussions should come from the children themselves, most fourth or fifth-grade classes will not probe to such depths. These children are more interested in reading the poem just to see how it sounds when they read it, or simply because they enjoy reading. Sometimes they may wish to read only a portion of the poem to illustrate a point they are trying to make in the discussion, to show their favorite part, or to ask a question about the poem. Some teachers

feel that a final reading of the poem after a discussion helps to unify the experience and makes a pleasant ending for the period.

Such readings and discussions not only give the children experience in understanding poetry, but also extend the ability of the children to enjoy poetry on their own. These methods do far more toward helping children appreciate good poetry than the direct question-and-answer method whereby the teacher asks all the questions and the children are expected to give all the answers. Children who have to worry about a test over the poems studied are not able to let their thoughts linger too long upon enjoying the poems, when in reality, those children who are enjoying the poetry usually get closer to the feeling which the poet meant to convey when the poetry was written. Poetry was meant to be enjoyed. It appeals in some way to the emotions. It was not written to be dissected, and although the first children's poetry was didactic, it is generally recognized today that children's poetry is not meant solely to teach. Even today, since poetry is available about many different subjects, some teachers have a tendency to use it to illustrate lessons. This is quite all right if that is not the only reason for using poetry. It can add to the child's ability to understand other subjects, such as nature, or history, or human characteristics and emotions. A poem used now and then in correlation with other classwork can be of great advantage. But although poetry may add to the understanding of other subjects, it should not be used only to present facts for the children to learn. This destroys every essence of appreciation or enjoyment.

But poetry can serve as an inspiration for creativity, both in the language arts and in the fine arts. Many children love to be given a

chance to draw or paint illustrations for favorite poems. What better chance in the world is there for the use of the much-neglected purple crayon or paint than to illustrate Gelett Burgess's "Purple Cow"?

I never saw a Purple Cow,
I never hope to see one;
But I can tell you, anyhow,
I'd rather see than be one.⁵⁹

What feeling of speed those amateur artists can get into Robert Louis Stevenson's "From a Railway Carriage"⁶⁰ and what contrasting oranges and blacks they can work into an illustration of Nancy Byrd Turner's "Black and Gold!"⁶¹ With delight they try to outscribe Edward Lear's own illustrations for his nonsense rhymes. Not only pencils, crayons, and paint, but also clay and plaster become magical media for illustrating poetry. Here a child gifted in art but lacking in all word skills may become the object of envy when he produces a clay figure recognizable as Abraham Lincoln walking at midnight through the streets of Springfield,⁶² or, with excelsior and plaster of paris models a bird's nest, complete with robin and eggs and undeniably the robin of "The Secret."

We have a secret, just we three,
The robin, and I, and the sweet cherry-tree;
The bird told the tree, and the tree told me,
And nobody knows it but just us three.

But of course the robin knows it best,
Because he built the--I shan't tell the rest;
And laid the four little--something in it--
I'm afraid I shall tell it every minute.

59. Arbuthnot, Time for Poetry, p. 271.

60. Stevenson, pp. 32-33. See Appendix, no. 35.

61. Arbuthnot, Time for Poetry, p. 417. See Appendix, no. 36.

62. Jay B. Hubbell and John O. Beaty, An Introduction to Poetry. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936), pp. 427-428. See Appendix, no. 37.

But if the tree and the robin don't peep,
 I'll try my best the secret to keep;
 Though I know when the little birds fly about
 Then the whole secret will be out.

--Unknown⁶³

Creative dramatics, too, can be the result of a study of poetry. The children find "Jonathan Bing"⁶⁴ or "Little Orphant Annie"⁶⁵ especially delightful when used in this way. Such creative work is good for the children. Not only does it tend toward bringing about a greater emotional stability, but it requires the children to think. Their intelligences are at work seeking ways to reach their goals, attempting to put their ideas or thoughts into concrete form.

Poetry can inspire creativeness in the fine arts such as painting, drawing, or even music, and poetry can also inspire creativeness in the language arts. Many teachers deliberately avoid teaching creative verse to the children because these teachers think it a waste of time or because they feel a personal sense of inadequacy or insecurity. But ordinary teachers with ordinary classes can surprise even themselves if they have a genuine desire to give creative writing of poetry a try. It is altogether possible that the children themselves will make the first advance. One child is usually responsible for the actual step when it is made--one child who, because of this enjoyment of the poetry he has heard, has felt the need to write verse of his own. Or it may be that the teacher herself desires

63. Werner, pp. 76-77.

64. Marjorie Barrows, 200 Best Poems for Boys and Girls. (Racine: Whitman Publishing Company, 1938), p. 183. See Appendix, no. 38.

65. Ibid., pp. 168-170. See Appendix, no. 39.

the children to try writing poetry. One method frequently used successfully is that of reading to the children poems which other children have written. When they see what others have done, they are more encouraged to try their own hands at it. Some teachers prefer to introduce the class to creative writing by having the whole class work together in composing a poem pertinent to the moment. When the class has just had some stirring or exciting experience, when feeling is intense, they may find that just this very outlet is extremely satisfying. But usually the urge to create poetry of their own is an outgrowth of listening to other poetry. Edward Lear's nonsense verses and limericks, for instance, furnished one class with a good beginning toward creative writing. This class found particular pleasure in the old man with a beard⁶⁶ and the lady of Norway.⁶⁷ They decided to try their hands at limericks and began by using their own names. These verses became a source of hilarity, and it was unanimously decided that Ernest had produced the favorite:

There once was a boy named Ernest.
 He stuck his head in the furnace.
 When they pulled out his head
 They found he was dead.
 Poor, dead Ernest.

--Ernest P., Grade 5

Another class, inspired by the work of these children, tried some creative writing of their own. How pleased and surprised the whole class was when shy, slow Cathy came up with this one:

66. Arbuthnot, Time for Poetry, p. 301. See Appendix, no. 16.

67. Ibid., See Appendix, no. 40.

There was an old fellow named Ben.
 He had a brown speckled hen.
 She first laid an egg
 And then broke her leg.
 And Ben said, 'You silly old hen!'

--Cathy F., Grade 4

The whole class was delighted with the work of their anonymous contributor who evidently did not want to claim his glory for this one:

There was once a mean, sly old crook.
 He had his hideout in a brook.
 He had lots of fun
 With his little toy gun
 And ate all the candy he took.

--Anonymous, Grade 4

Still another class gained their inspiration from a unit in their language book and chose Lewis Carroll's "The Gardener's Song"⁶⁸ as their model. For days suppressed giggles could be heard coming from various parts of the room as the children bent over their desks, then turned to read the object of their creativity to their neighbors. Most of the children concentrated on a single verse to be read immediately to their friends. Others felt a real drive to create and produced long assortments of verses. Some took their suggestions from the language book, and for that reason many of the verses began exactly alike--but the endings were the children's own. Others chose their own beginnings. But every child in the room of his own volition and under no pressure from the teacher, wrote verses, turning up with such as these:

I thought I saw a rabbit
 Sitting on a bench.

68. Paul McKee and Annie McCowen, Enriching Your Language. (Chicago: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1947), pp. 230-232. See Appendix, no. 41.

I looked again and saw it was
 A heavy monkey wrench,
 And so I picked it up and threw it
 Over a high fence.

--Julian K., Grade 5

The Merry Mixups

I thought I saw a little cow
 Standing in the road.
 I looked again and saw it was
 A tiny little toad.
 I said, 'I'll throw you out of here
 Into the garden I hoed!'

I thought I saw a big black bear
 Dancing in the rain;
 I looked again and saw it was
 A big electric train.
 'Get out of here,' I said,
 'Or I'll push you down the drain!'

I thought I saw a big white beard
 Hanging from the roof.
 I looked again and found it was
 A great big horse's hoof.
 I told all my friends of that
 And all they said was, 'Poof!'

--Dick S., Grade 5

A Nonsense Rhyme

I thought I saw an elephant
 Standing in the road.
 I looked again and found it was
 A little hoppy toad.
 He wore a funny little suit
 He said his wife had sewed.

I thought that I saw Alice
 Eating cake and pie.
 I looked again and saw it was
 A knot in Billy's tie.
 'Unless you come undone,' I said,
 'I'll toss you through the sky.'

I thought I saw a kangaroo
 Sleeping on a plank;
 I looked again and saw it was
 A pretty little bank.
 I picked it up and heard it go
 'Clank, clank, clank.'

I thought I saw a big black bear
 Dancing in the rain;
 I looked again and saw it was
 A funny little plane
 Trying to hitch a ride upon
 A great big choo-choo train.

I thought I saw an airplane
 Jumping in the corn;
 I looked again to find it was
 A bright and sunny morn.
 As I went toward it
 I stepped upon a thorn.

--Sharon S., Grade 5

The children in this particular class showed such marked interest in creative writing that a contest was decided upon as a purely voluntary extra-time project. The children went wildly to work writing many poems. Many were sadly lacking in any resemblance to good poetry, but since the children were constantly asking for advice, their poetry showed a marked improvement toward the end of the contest. Some developed styles all their own until the class could tell upon hearing the poem the name of the person who had written it. They knew Robert was responsible when they heard such rhymes as this:

Bubble Gum

I love to blow bubbles with bubble gum.
 Bubble gum always makes me hum.
 But my mom says I am dumb
 Because I buy bubble gum.

--Robert B., Grade 5

Just as surely they could identify the long, rambling poetry with broken rhythms as belonging to another boy.

The King

The King once invited some people to dine,
But they had to trim a man's grapevine.
So he asked some others,
But they had brothers.

The King was feeling sad at heart.
He was only trying to do his part.
So he bought him a parrot who would talk to him,
And always called him Uncle Bim.

The King was lonely, but his hopes were high.
He'd give another party a try.

He invited his counselors,
His fine ladies, too,
To come to the room
Where he always drew.

They were to have at the party
Ten gallons of tea,
Lots of ice cream and candy.
The hour was at three.

All the fine ladies to the party came,
All of his counselors, too,
And they had lots of tea and sugar-buns
In the room where the King always drew.

—Julian K., Grade 5

These children wrote poetry for fun. Most of them wanted to write funny poetry. They wanted to entertain themselves and each other, and they did. But they were also quick to recognize a poem which was a little better, and even when they themselves were not able to conquer rhythm, rhyme, and thought, they certainly appreciated the poems of those who did. One of their favorites, although still far from perfection, showed their basic appreciation for something a little better than the jingles and rhymes which most of them wrote.

The Forest at Night

The night is bright
 By the soft moonlight.
 The river sparkles and shines.
 And the little breeze
 Among the trees
 Whispers among the pines.

The stars twinkle in the sky
 And all is quiet and dark
 Except for an occasional bark
 From a fox near by.
 He scares away the watching fowl
 Because of his lonely howl.

All the forest is now asleep
 While over watch keeps
 The wise old owl--
 Watching o'er all, beast and fowl.

--Myrna S., Grade 5

Often the poetry written by the children will reveal much of themselves. One boy, with an obvious distaste for school, wrote this one early in the fall:

School

School, school, I hate it!
 I hate its very name.
 When I have to go to it,
 It's sure a dirty shame.

Spelling, arithmetic,
 History and stuff;
 After the first page or so
 I think that is enough!

All school work is awful,
 Arithmetic worst of all.
 But if I don't study it,
 I'm sent to the principal!

--Dick S., Grade 5

Such a poem could be a terrible blow to the teacher's pride, but it certainly lets her know how the child feels--and therefore enables her to improve the

situation. This particular child, it was discovered, had very high mental ability. A little attention and effort on the part of the teacher was able to change the boy's attitude toward school.

School subjects are natural choices for the children when they begin writing poetry--especially arithmetic, which usually bears the brunt of the children's dislike.

Arithmetic

Glory be, glory be!
 Here I come to school, you see.
 I like to work, I like to play.
 I like to run about all day.
 But arithmetic I do not like.
 I think that's for another tyke!

--Charles I., Grade 5

History discussions may lead several of the children to their choice of subject matter. The child who "hated" school found history a most fascinating subject, and produced this poem which the class enjoyed.

The Stagecoach

In the days of the wild and woolly West
 The stagecoach drivers did their best.
 No kind of danger did they fear
 'Though there were many there and here.

Outlaws, Indians, rain, or sleet--
 The old stagecoach, through all she beat.
 The roads were awful. They were bad.
 But no one could do anything--or they never had.

The men were fearless without one doubt.
 The horses were fast when the drivers did shout.
 The wheels were fastened on so tight
 They even held up through an Indian fight.

That's how to this day we've come to know
 The old stagecoach of long ago.

--Dick S., Grade 5

Seasonal topics are perennial favorites among children who write verse.

One girl alone was responsible for many. Among them were these:

When Santa Comes

When it's very late,
Very late at night;
When it's very dark
And isn't very light,
Santa comes.

When I'm not awake,
When I'm fast asleep,
When the snow is falling
And is piled deep,
Santa comes.

--Emma Lee A., Grade 3

First Day of Spring

'Cheerup, cheerup!' sings Robin Gay.
'Get up, get up! 'Tis break of day!'

'Come out and play. Today 'tis Spring,'
And away goes Robin all on wing.

Everyone is bright and gay
For Lady Spring comes in today.

--Emma Lee A., Grade 4

Indian Summer

Indians come back in the fall
From the Happy Hunting Ground.
The pumpkins are their brownish heads,
The fodder shocks, tepees round.

When the harvest comes again
Indian spirits dance and play
Like they did so long ago
When they danced here all the day.

--Emma Lee A., Grade 4

Creative verse can and should be enjoyable. It is even better if the teacher can include teaching the elements of good poetry. Some children are incapable of doing any exceptional verse, but most children, with enough interest and help from the teacher, can go much farther than they would otherwise do. Often there will be someone in the class who shows marked ability. There might even be a child now and then who shows a real spark of genius.

But no matter what their abilities, it is the teacher's responsibility to encourage good poetic thought and form without quenching the fire of creativeness. Even the rare teacher who lacks an ear for music (and there are some who are so unfortunate), if she has a genuine interest in poetry, interprets it with understanding so that her reading of it is well done, and if she steeps her class in good poetry, may find that her children, too, wish to try creative writing of verse. If she herself is not able to help them with the rhythmic patterns of poetry, at least she can help them to understand the importance of the poetic thought. Children under the guidance of such a teacher were responsible for these short poems.

Thankful

We are thankful for our food, and our home.
 We are thankful for our heat.
 We are thankful for our pets we are allowed to keep.
 We are thankful for our school
 And for our water.
 We are thankful for our Mother
 And for our Father.
 We are thankful for Thanksgiving Day.
 We try to be thankful in every way.

--Phillip C., Grade 4

Hunting

When Dad and I go hunting,
 We often get a rabbit.
 Dad shoots the gun,
 And has all the fun.
 When there is no rabbit
 Dad says, 'Dagnabbit!'

Hunting is fun,
 If you have a gun.
 But I have none.

--Jack O., Grade 4

One child in this same teacher's class set herself a goal of writing a book of poems. She started it in the third grade, and being a child with rare ability, she continued through the next two or three years to add poems to her collection. It was interesting to see her growth, both in thought and ability. One of her first poems went as follows.

Writing Poetry

Good rhyming
 And good timing
 Makes the best of poetry.

But bad rhyming
 And bad timing
 Make the worst that you can see.

--Emma Lee A., Grade 3

Within a short time she came to realize that rhyming and timing were "only the skeletons" and that content and thought were "the meat." Soon she turned up with "The Little Butterfly."

Flittery, fluttery, little white butterfly,
 You keep going to flowers as I'm walking by.
 You are graceful at wing and your beauty
 is best,
 But it looks like you'd stop. Quit your
 flying and rest.

--Emma Lee A., Grade 3

Her poems showed marked improvement, and there was no denying that within the next two years she had a collection of original poems which any child could be proud of calling her own. Among those written in fourth grade were "The Peddler" and "Reverse."

The Peddler

'Beans and peas, beans and peas,'
The peddler cries all day.
'Come buy me theengs, they're such good theengs,
No buy me theengs today?'

Poor peddler, poor peddler,
I'm one who never buys
For if the peddler knew it
Within my garden lies

The very best of beans and peas
And all good things to eat.
So of course I never buy
From the peddler on the street.

--Emma Lee A., Grade 4

Reverse

At night stars dot the skies for hours.
Of daytime grass is dotted by flowers.

And while we sleep in our beds so soft
The night owl watches from aloft.

--Emma Lee A., Grade 4

Among the poems which she wrote in the fifth grade was "Doctor Gray," which has been a favorite of the many classes to whom it has been read.

There is an old doctor they call 'Doctor Gray.'
His beard, it comes down to his chest.
He smokes a stub pipe, wears blue trousers and coat,
And wears a red hat and red vest.

He has a black cane and a little black dog,
And his heart's like a big valentine.

He has a round face and a little red nose
Not at all like yours or mine.

He's a kind sort of man, very jolly and blithe,
And he'll bring joy to all he will see.
The world would be much better off, I do think,
If there were more men such as he.

--Emma Lee A., Grade 5

One class, as a result of a pioneer unit in their reading texts and a great liking for the song, "Sweet Betsy from Pike," decided to write a new set of words for the song, telling the story of the reading-book family, telling what happened to them as they moved west. This gave the children practice in making the words fit a rhythmic pattern; at the same time they strove to include the many incidents which could happen to the Taylor family. Some of this work was done during class time, but most of it was written outside of school hours and then put together as a unit when the verses were returned to school. Some of their favorites were these:

The whole Taylor fam'ly heard tales of the West
From a tall, dark-haired stranger who thought that
land best.
The stories brought pictures of a great new life
So different from worn-out soil and strife.

--Joanne H., Grade 5

The Taylors decided their crops were too poor.
Of good, fertile soil they needed far more.
Pa went to town and he got him a deed--
A great deal of land for a-planting his seed.

--Diane R., Grade 5

The Taylors bought land in Kentucky one day.
Two dollars an acre is what they did pay.
Ma felt encouraged, the children were glad,
So they started packing the goods that they had.

--Elaine B., Grade 5

The Taylors from Virginia to Kentucky would go.
 The road would be rough and they would travel slow,
 With Jonathan, James, and Matthew, too,
 And Ella, and Joy, and Margaret Sue.

--Kip W., Grade 5

O, they packed up their gear and their trusty old dog,
 And lit out a-grinning to follow the fog.
 Long weeks of riding were surely to come,
 So they ate up the bread and drank up the rum.

--Robert W., Grade 5

At last they were ready to start one fine day.
 A guide was hired to show them the way.
 The women and children on horses did ride,
 The men and boys did walk by their side.

They clucked to their horses and checked all their gear.
 They left their old homestead and didn't shed a tear.
 Some of the furniture they had to sell,
 Some gave to a widow--or so we hear tell.

--Kip W., Grade 5

When it was dry they were happy and gay,
 As they went along on their merry way.
 But sometimes they went through the mud and the rain;
 When a wagon got stuck it held up the whole train.

--Edwin L., Grade 5

They drove their cattle and shouldered a gun.
 Wild animals and Injuns they kept on the run.
 They slept 'neath the stars; they camped by the streams
 And ate their meals out of sowbelly and beans.

--Kip W., Grade 5

They bounced and rolled 'til the wagon broke down.
 Then they walked and walked for miles around,
 'Til their feet were burning--their children all cried--
 And all of a sudden the Indians they spied.

Their war whoops were gallant, their arrows were sleek.
 But they took it standing upon their feet.
 They fought to the end with their rifle and fist--
 Gunpowder was rationed, so they seldom missed.

Robert W., Grade 5

They had many pack horses to carry their goods;
They walked many miles over hills and through woods.
But when they had reached there, the soil looked so black,
They knew in that moment they'd never go back.

--Linda W., Grade 5

Teaching of creative verse can be very rewarding for both the teacher and the pupil, even though the verse itself is far from perfect. Through it the teacher can learn much about her students, and through it, also, the student can gain much enjoyment and confidence. The children should learn to be critical of their own work, to seek constantly to improve it. The teacher can help by giving friendly criticism. At the same time she should realize the limitations of the student and praise him highly when she is certain he is really doing his best, even though that best may be poor. For children with normal ability the teacher will have to criticize little, especially if she has made poetry lovers of the children by giving them much poetry to love. The better acquainted the children are with good poetry, the more natural will be their own poetry. They will be able to read their poems aloud and find their own flaws in cadence and rhyme, if they desire rhyme. Most children feel that rhyme is an essential part of poetry, no matter what any teacher may say to them. If they feel that way, and think their poetry cannot be enjoyable poetry without rhyme, then the least the teacher can do is help them find rhyme patterns to make their poetry better. If the class is one which freely discusses poetry, they may wish to devote some study to the elements of expression which make good poetry. In such a class atmosphere some of the less expressive children may find themselves as interested as the more forward or out-spoken pupils. There will probably always be

some who do not wish to do any such "sissy thing" as writing poems-- but once the class gets into the project with great enthusiasm, usually the most antagonistic opponent eventually joins in and makes an effort to write poetry, too. Such children, however, should not be forced. A teacher might find it wise, if the majority of the class wishes to take class time especially for the writing of poetry, to encourage the others to write prose. Sometimes a poetry-conscious class can spot in the prose articles a line or phrase which they think is poetic and thus encourage the prose writer to try some more of the same until he, too, finds himself writing "real poetry!" The verses may be jingles--they may not even make sense at first--but patience and effort can make the children understand that a good beginning is to have a thought they wish to express; then they can worry about rhythm and rhyme.

The teacher of any class will have to feel her way to a large extent. Even if all classes were much alike so that the teacher could count upon a certain response in a given situation, a teacher seeking help would have difficulty in getting it from books or magazines, for there is very little material available upon the subject of creative verse for children, and most of it is old. However, the teacher who feels that she must have help can find some aid in various language books, in teachers' guide books, and occasionally in a book or magazine to be found at a library. One really complete booklet on the subject, and one which is full of suggestions which the teacher can use, although she may not wish to follow it letter for letter, is Laretta J. Robinson's Creative Verse Writing, which was published in 1931 by the Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University. This is an account of steps actually used in classrooms and

found successful, and although the book is old, it has many suggestions which I believe a teacher might find useful. It can make a basis upon which to build a creative-verse-writing program. Another book which may help in the teaching of creative writing is They All Want to Write, by Alvina Treut, June D. Ferebee, Doris C. Jackson, and Dorothy Olton Saunders. This book was published by the Bobbs-Merrill Company of Indianapolis in 1939. Although the book is primarily concerned with creative prose writing, many suggestions are adaptable to poetry writing. But whether the teacher relies upon help from other sources or upon her own judgment and experiences, it is important that she remember that all the children will not be interested and that even among those who are interested in writing verse, not all will be equally able to do so.

Those children who do write poetry will like nothing better than to see those verses go into a collection of their own. Perhaps they would wish to make a book compiling the poems written by all the members of the class. On the other hand, some children may prefer having books of their own verses. Their creative writing may be the culmination of their study. Putting their work into books, either to leave at school or to take home, or both, makes the children feel proud of their achievements. Here is concrete evidence that to them, at least, poetry is worthwhile, and poetry is fun.

Not only original verse, but other poetry which the children have enjoyed may be put into collections, for children who enjoy poetry often wish to have their favorites within easy accessibility. If the class is fortunate enough to have several poetry books in their room, this desire

is comparatively well satisfied; but if there are only two or three poetry books--or worse yet, none at all--some other means needs to be provided to compensate for this lack and to provide poetry lovers with copies of their favorites. Scrapbooks are an obvious answer to this problem. The scrapbook may be purchased for almost any price or constructed of any material which will meet the needs of the children. But whether the books are made of construction paper, or whether the children use loose-leaf notebooks, fancy wooden-backed books, or old wallpaper books will make little difference to the children who collect the poems from papers or magazines, or copy poems from other books, or dig out old mimeographed or duplicated papers the children or their families have salvaged through the years. Such scrapbooks which are class projects have the added value of being the outgrowth of a group of boys and girls' working together; but some of the children will want individual scrapbooks--poetry books of their very own--and for some of our more underprivileged poetry lovers, that is an equally worthy objective.

The children's scrapbooks may simply contain copies of their favorite poems, but let the boys and girls add their own illustrations to these poems and watch the interest level jump several degrees higher. Such scrapbooks can become a powerful incentive toward further interest in poetry.

In some classrooms the situation may arise in which a number of children are interested enough in poetry to form a poetry club. Here, the interested children are able to go ahead and pursue poetry to greater lengths. Here, they are encouraged to read more poetry, both for their own pleasure and for the enjoyment of others. Here, they are encouraged

to browse through much poetry and to choose those poems which appeal to these youngsters most. Here, too, the children's wide experience with poetry extends their appreciation through reading and critical discussion. The teacher's part in this situation is chiefly that of counselor and adviser, guiding their interests toward good poetry, whether it is in the reading of poetry, in verse choirs, or creative writing. A poetry club, with the aid of an interested and capable teacher, can be of great value to the children.

However, most classes will not have the organizational ability to create a poetry club, and it is generally up to the teacher to provide interesting ways to help our children enjoy poetry. Some teachers find that having a poetry shelf or poetry center where all the books can be found provides greater incentive for the children to explore poetry on their own. A poetry corner on the chalkboard is another effective method of fostering the children's interest in poetry. The poem on the board does not necessarily have to be pointed out to a class. They will soon discover it on their own, and when they do, most of them will certainly read it. Usually the reappearance of an old favorite will bring smiles of recognition and nods of approval--and perhaps even the desire to memorize.

Although forced memorization has become one of the chief objections to the study of poetry, children who enjoy poetry find memorization an easy process. From early childhood an innate love of rhythm and rhyme makes it simple and natural for some children to learn nursery rhymes; and later to turn their thoughts to the rope-jumping and ball-bouncing

jingles, memory-book rhymes, and name-calling couplets. The same child who lisped, "Hey, diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle,"⁶⁹ may become the freckle-faced, pigtailed tomboy who breathlessly intones, "Johnny over the ocean, Johnny over the sea. Johnny broke a milk bottle and blamed it onto me." Or in a temper over her treatment at the hands of a playmate, call, "Johnny, Johnny, sitting on a fence, Can't tell a nickel from fifteen cents!" And yet, this same demonic tangle of arms, legs, and pigtails may suddenly take a fancy to some small bit of true poetry and with the face of a cherub ask one day, "Do you know what my most favorite poem is?" and without waiting for an answer, in a voice full of awe and reverence, recite,

The Day Before April

The day before April
 Alone, alone,
 I walked in the woods
 And sat on a stone.

I sat on a broad stone
 And sang to the birds.
 The tune was God's making
 But I made the words.

--Mary Carolyn Davies⁷⁰

It is usually the child's complete approval and enjoyment of a poem which brings about the true desire for memorization. It is true that children can be made to learn a poem which they do not like, but if the memorization of a poem is to be a pleasant experience, it should be done because the children wish to do it. Short poems usually constitute the

69. Arbuthnot, Time for Poetry, p. 258. See Appendix, no. 42.

70. Barrows, p. 125.

first attempts made by children of almost any age toward memorization. Many of them want to learn a poem but have little or no confidence in themselves. The successful learning of a small poem gives the necessary impetus toward learning a larger or more complicated one. Of course, there are those children who set their goals very high, indeed, such as the ten-year-old boy of rather limited mental ability who announced that he was going to learn "Paul Revere's Ride"⁷¹ because it was "great!" He learned it. The task occupied most of his spare time at school for almost the full nine months, but he succeeded and was justifiably proud of his accomplishment.

But let us not force the children to learn specific poems. It is commonly acknowledged among the collectors of most modern anthologies, and among the teachers, that forced memorization has been one of the main reasons why children learn to dislike poetry. Let us encourage through our interest in poetry, and perhaps, through our examples. With some children direct suggestion might be effective; but let it be because of the children's interest alone that they go ahead with the actual memorization of any poem, and let that poem be one of their own choosing.

Sometimes, after children have listened to a poem which appeals to them, especially one which they have asked to be repeated, or one they have heard for the second or third time, the teacher may see lips moving in unison with her own. Let us not be discouraging at this point! Let us suggest, "Perhaps you know this poem well enough so that you would like to say it with me." Or if the classroom atmosphere is even more

71. Hornby, pp. 30-31. See Appendix, no. 43.

informal, the children may feel free enough to join in softly and spontaneously. Then the time is ripe for choral speaking. Let us not pass by the opportunity!

It might even be that interest in choral speaking, or verse choirs, should happen solely on the initiative of some of the children. "Last year we visited another room to see a program and they said some poems together. It was good! Why can't we try that?" And why not indeed?

Or, perhaps they like to read poetry. If they find a book such as Louis Untermeyer's Stars to Steer By and turn to his introduction to the section on speaking together,⁷² they might even go ahead and organize a choir of their own.

But normally it will be the work of the teacher to pave the way toward the organization of such a group. This usually is best accomplished through a concentrated program of hearing all types of poetry until poetry in general is appreciated by the children, and liked well enough that they like to say old favorites with her.

The use of choral speaking is really an old art, dating back to the days of Greek drama when a chorus accompanied the ancient plays.

In Europe in the days of the minstrels, troubadours, and minnesingers, verse refrains to the tales of these wandering bards were recited by the assembled groups. These groups sat about the hearths of the rich and the poor, or gathered about the inn tables. . . . Not only the people of the early Greek civilization and the bards and minstrels of medieval Britain had brought this form of rhythmic expression to a high stage, but we find it even among our contemporary primitive people. Here the physical rhythmic response to vocal and crude musical accompaniment is very common. The measured chant of the American Indian at his various festivals,

72. Untermeyer, pp. 297-298.

is an illustration. He sways to the sound of the tom-tom, or to the chant of the group, in a primitive form of choral speech.⁷³

Among our English-speaking peoples, however, it has its revival through England and has now become more and more popular in our American schools. This art is looked upon with favor by both pupils and teachers. The children like it because it is fun, but the teachers approve of it because it has several values. Marjorie Gullan, who is generally credited with being the leader of its modern revival, pointed out that its main purpose is to offer everyone in the group a chance for oral expression of the imagination,⁷⁴ and it is this opportunity for speech expression which is generally considered as its greatest value. Here several voices work together to create one impression. Here those who are timid or shy can speak more boldly, for they have support. Here those who are loud or forward are not given the opportunity for "showing off" but must match their voices to those of others. Here those with foreign accents can more accurately learn to accent their new language more properly and easily. Not only do verse choirs aid speech habits and decrease personality problems, but group recitation also tends to increase the understanding of the poem being studied, for the poem is being shared. Everyone in the group is interpreting the poem--together. Sometimes the leader finds it more convenient and better done if she decides ahead of time upon her own interpretation and has the choir follow her suggestions. Better under-

73. Elizabeth E. Keppie, The Teaching of Choric Speech. (Boston: Expression Company, Publishers, no date), p. 10.

74. Marjorie Gullan, The Speech Choir. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1937), pp. 21-22.

standing is often developed by having individuals in the choir give their own interpretations, then by discussing the various interpretations and deciding which one they will all use. Often merely hearing what another person thinks about a poem or passage helps to stimulate the minds of the others or give them confidence in their own thoughts. A group working together seems to react more rapidly and also to feel more keenly the sense of the poem.

However, although such analysis is possible, generally children in fourth or fifth grades do not care to analyze a poem, or if they do they cannot go to great depths. They are more inclined to use the teacher's interpretation as a matter of course, especially if the beginning of their choral work is the outgrowth of joining in as the teacher repeats a favorite poem. In the beginning, then, the chief concern of the teacher will probably be that of getting the class to speak in correct tempo and with clarity. This is not always as simple as it may sound. Many children do not have the agility of tongue to keep up with light, fast verse, and many have lazy speech habits which they may not realize until an activity such as this brings them to their attention. Short poems and nursery rhymes can provide drill which will not be tedious work for the children. Many poems or rhymes stress certain sounds or rhythms. These can be chosen as needed or desired. If the teacher has enough training, or a good natural ear, she can find her own choir's needs, but an untrained teacher may prefer to use one of the several choral speaking booklets which are available and provide a guided study of the sounds which may need particular attention.

But no matter how the teacher goes about choosing the poems for drill and practice, they must hold the interest of the children. Galloping rhythms or marching rhythms are great favorites among the boys and girls. They enjoy experimenting with accented or muted beats and can derive much pleasure from a simple verse which they may already know. One chorus group was especially proud of a recitation of "Three Blind Mice" which started out with a simple repetition of "Three blind mice. . . three blind mice. . . three blind mice. . ." beginning softly as though the mice were approaching from the distance, and growing louder until the children suddenly broke into a recitation of the entire verse, then letting their voices fade into the distance again, repeating "Three blind mice. . . three blind mice. . . three blind mice. . ."

After some practice on familiar pieces or short drills to do away with their problems in speech and tempo, the children will enjoy working on poems or "songs" with refrains. A solo voice, at first the teacher, recites the verse or main lines; then the choir comes in with the refrain. Such a poem is Laura Richards's "The Umbrella Brigade." The children delightedly join together in

But let it rain
Tree-toads and frogs
Muskets and pitchforks,
Kittens and dogs!
Dash away! plash away!
Who is afraid?
Here we go,
The Umbrella Brigade!⁷⁵

To achieve the best results it is soon apparent in this type of work that the refrain must not become obtrusive, but that it must echo and

75. Arbuthnot, Time for Poetry, p. 373. See Appendix, no. 44.

enrich the theme of the poem. Some children especially enjoy having the solo parts in the poems, but they soon discover that rhythm and tone control are vital and that a soloist who does not keep a strict tempo can throw the performance of the entire group out of time. It is sometimes surprising to find that the same child who can work so well with a group in unison cannot seem to keep the same tempo when set off in a solo part.

It is this same problem which adds to the difficulty of the "line-a-child" rendition of verse, where each child has one or two lines to recite and maintains silence the rest of the time. One poem of this type which the children like is "Days of Birth."

Monday's child is fair of face,
 Tuesday's child is full of grace,
 Wednesday's child is full of woe,
 Thursday's child has far to go,
 Friday's child is loving and giving,
 Saturday's child works for its living,
 And a child that's born on the Sabbath day
 Is fair and wise and good and gay.

--Unknown⁷⁶

The children enjoy doing this type of verse; but they have more difficulty in doing it successfully because each child must not only come in at exactly the right beat and proceed in exactly the right tempo, but must also continue the thread of thought in the poem and yet give the precise shade of meaning which his single line holds.

Poems written as a simple two-part dialogue make a pleasant time possible for the verse choirs, and the children seem to love such dialogues. This type gives all the children a chance to speak often, yet provides a

76. Hazel Felleman, The Best Loved Poems of the American People. (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1936), p. 616.

definite pattern and some variety. Besides, many of the dialogue poems have a "punch line" which almost invariably makes them great favorites. Such a verse is "Spin, Spin," which is a Pennsylvania Dutch folk song.

'Spin, spin, my dear daughter,
I'll buy you a dress.'
'Will it have a pocket?'
'Oh yes, daughter, yes!'

'My finger is swelling,
It really is sore,
I cannot spin any more.'

—English version by Jane Flory⁷⁷

True unison speech is the most difficult of all because this involves the sustained speaking of the entire group. It requires a large number of children to stay together for a long period of time, causing small mistakes to build up into greater imperfections. Unison speeches are also more difficult to memorize for many of the children. Most teachers feel that when working with children it is better to avoid much use of long unison speeches--especially if the group plans to perform before an audience, since prolonged unison tends to become monotonous.

To keep the interest level high at all times with the verse choirs, it is important to have variety in the type of work done. The children enjoy all the different methods of delivery whether it is unison work, line-a-child, dialogue, or refrains; but they enjoy all of them more if they do not concentrate too long a time on one method only.

After working with the children speaking together for a while, it will become evident that various voices are outstandingly high or low

77. Marie Westervelt, It's Festival Time. (New York: Belwin, Inc., 1956), pp. 16-17. See Appendix, no. 45.

in pitch. Many teachers who work with choral speaking like to divide the group into smaller groups according to their voices. Usually three smaller groups are preferred, arranged so that high, medium, and low voices are separated. There are several good ways to decide upon which group a child should be in, but careful listening and comparison to other voices or to musical pitch with the aid of a piano usually prove successful. But regardless of method, the children generally find it interesting and often are able to help; and after everyone has been assigned to a group, they thrill to the sounds of their own voices blending together harmoniously. If there happens to be an unfortunate child whose voice stands out noticeably unsuited to any group, it is far more important to let that child practice softly with the group than to damage his social relations or mental state by fussing over him too much. For extremely important programs, the announcer's job might easily be the solution toward preserving his ego and still not detracting from the performance of the choir as a whole.

Whether the choir is expecting to perform only for its own pleasure, or whether it wants to produce a polished performance for an audience, the performance of the group should be as professional as possible. In order to succeed in this work, it is necessary to keep the children interested. The first problem is to find suitable poems for the group to use. It is regrettable that most anthologies of verses especially chosen for choral speaking are collected for high school age children or adults. However, collections of verses suitable for children's choral speaking groups are being made available now, and large numbers of collections of very good poetry exist which contain many poems easily adapted to choral speaking.

In choosing suitable poetry, a teacher should keep in mind first of all that the poetry chosen should be good poetry—not mediocre verse. A great deal of good poetry is available which meets all the requirements of pronounced rhythm, distinct tonal contrasts, or poetry with refrains or repetitive phrases. But the quality of the verses is not the only consideration. The teacher should consider the group itself. The fact that a specific poem worked well for one group does not necessarily mean that it will work well with another group. Different groups have different interests and abilities. Their tongues may not be so agile, their speech, so clear as those of another group. But the children are more likely to have success if they are fond of the poem. Children also do better sometimes if the poem has a marked rhythm. Then, too, change of mood or rhythm within the poem makes it more adaptable for choric speech, minimizing the chances for monotony, and adding interest both for the choir, because of the challenge, and for the audience, because of the variety. Some poems are too delicate for work with most children's choirs, but seem to call for a single voice to give them the color, depth, or delicacy these poems need. Such poems need to be avoided by the choir. Although some verse choirs are able to present such imaginative, subtle poetry well, normally children need easier-to-understand, less delicate poetry. The children tend to prefer the slightly humorous, rollicking or narrative poetry with just enough of the excellent lyric poetry to add variety—although the teacher, of course, is usually thinking in terms of providing the children with the pleasant experiences which good poetry can give. When the group does not respond willingly to a poem, even though the teacher may have great fondness for it, it is better to forego

any work on that particular poem with that particular group and turn to some poem more suited to them.

After the poem has been chosen, the next step is to "cast" it--to decide upon how it should be read or spoken. Some books and magazines may be found which provide plans already carefully thought out. Row, Peterson and Company, for example, has a series of booklets called Let's-Read-Together Poems especially arranged for choral reading through all the grades. Every poem in each booklet has specific suggestions for its use. The teacher's guidebook for use with this series has added suggestions for teachers interested in choral speaking and a most interesting arrangement for Eugene Field's "The Night Wind" which children love doing.⁷⁸

These booklets and others will be of help in casting a poem, but they will not provide all the answers. A group may choose a poem for which no arrangement can be found. In that instance the trial-and-error method becomes a necessity. The poem can be tried one way, and if that does not seem to be quite right, it can be tried another way. Most children like to try a poem in various ways, making the decisions themselves as to which casting they think is best. The teacher can keep in mind that gradation of tones proves very successful for some poems; she can let the tone build up to a climax, if the poem has a definite climax. The end of the poem also needs to be definite. In addition,

78. Helen A. Brown and Harry J. Heltman, Teacher's Guidebook for use with Let's-Read-Together Poems, Seven Anthologies of Verse Selected and Arranged for Choral Reading in Kindergarten through Grade Eight. (Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson and Company, 1954), pp. 3-4, 6-8. See Appendix, no. 46.

the choir needs to be careful not to have too many sharp contrasts between low and high voices and not to break the lines into too many short phrases making the presentation choppy.

Choral speech has several pitfalls. The first and greatest is that of singsong. Children invariably have a tendency to singsong their poetry, and in choral speaking where it is important to keep together, singsong is the natural result of hitting the metrical beat too heavily in the effort to preserve the tempo. The most logical solution is to turn the thoughts of the children to the story or idea of the poem, trying to make them speak as naturally as possible, with the emphasis on the ideas rather than upon the rhythm. Thinking of the meaning of the poem rather than thinking of the rhythm or the performance of the choir will not only help eliminate singsong, but also make the poem more meaningful to both the choir and the audience, if there be one.

Over-dramatization and the use of gestures among children in the middle grades is another serious pitfall. It is true that an occasional gesture may seem spontaneous and natural. It is also true that some groups of children will enjoy doing a "stunt" piece "for fun." But generally speaking, such gestures as waves, pointed fingers, marching feet, or rolling eyeballs detract from the performance and embarrass the ten-to-twelve-year olds. Such activities seldom have a logical and natural spot in choral speaking, where one of the main objectives is to let the children enjoy speaking poetry together.

Of course their enjoyment of choral speech can also lead to pitfalls. When they grow excited they are quite likely to find the volume of their voices raised alarmingly or the speed with which they are speaking in-

creased so that both words and meanings are blurred. Loud or runaway voices can do much to destroy the good performance of a choir. Most children's voices are naturally light when soft. Rather than let voices become loud and unpleasant, it is better to soften other phrases or add voices to those parts of the poem where intensity of feeling would normally call for loudness. For best results with a verse choir, the children's voices should be kept light and pleasant.

Much of the difficulty concerning these pitfalls seems to stem from the fact that the children do not really hear themselves as a group. Sometimes the teacher may ask two or three of the children to step out of the group and be listeners—to listen to the rest of the group, checking for clarity and for meaning. In many classrooms tape recorders are put to use in this way, and are far less personal. The tape recorder leaves the children without any doubts about their speech when it picks up an obtrusive, hissing S, and many classes have listened in surprise to their own voices, only to discover that they could not understand the words they had spoken. When the children themselves hear their faults, they are anxious to correct them.

The teacher, of course, will be judging the work of the choir on other bases. She, too, will be considering the speech and voice qualities, looking for pure vowels, clear consonants, good breathing and tone quality. But she will be thinking of other criteria, too. She will consider whether the children are enjoying poetry and will look for signs indicating that they are. She will notice whether the children voluntarily join the group, search on their own for poetry their choir can use, have suggestions

for casting poems, memorize poems with little or no urging, constantly seem to be choosing and enjoying more good poetry rather than doggerel, or want to try difficult pieces which are beautiful. The teacher will also notice whether or not the children are becoming more adept at understanding the poetry they use, interpreting more and more on their own rather than relying upon the teacher's judgment. She will check to see if her choir is natural and simple, relying upon their own enthusiasm and interest in their work to bring enjoyment through their verse speaking rather than relying upon tricks of costume, lighting, or music. The teacher, too, will consider each child as an individual; she will think about what his experience in the choir has done for him. She looks to see if the timid ones have come to speak out with the others, decisively, without fear or hesitation. She checks to find out if the show-off has ceased to think so much of himself and has developed a sense of pride in the accomplishment of the group. She watches while her group performs, considering those who are so lost in the poem that they have forgotten the audience, or the lack of an audience.

It is true that some teachers do not like to work with choral speaking. Perhaps they feel a lack of training or ability; or perhaps they have had unpleasant experiences with verse choirs. Perhaps they feel that it is too much work and not worth the effort.

Some teachers, on the other hand, like the work and love the children. Such teachers may work hard and make the children work hard, trying to make every sound as perfect as possible to please a potential audience. These teachers find it advisable to have the children do their practicing

under conditions as nearly like those which would exist during a performance before an audience as is possible. Especially, she should have the children stand in an erect position. This, of course, contributes to any choir as it causes the children to be more alert and to breathe more easily; but for a group who plans to perform before an audience, such practice has the added advantage of being their customary method and enables them to learn to relax in those positions. But many teachers do not even plan to have the children perform for an audience. Instead these teachers work purely for the enjoyment the children gain from the experience, these teachers wanting only for a group to learn to appreciate and love good poetry for the personal satisfaction they can derive from it. Sometimes choral speaking has proved to be the one doorway to poetry through which children would willingly enter, having previously turned away from poetry in any form. Perhaps the interest in poetry is increased through choral speaking because the children have a personal part in the poetry. But it is generally found that no matter whether the choir was formed for personal pleasure or whether it had the added incentive of public performance, those children who are fortunate enough to have capable leaders love the work. A successful choir creates a real feeling of accomplishment in both the teacher and the members of the choir.

There are many ways in which poetry can be presented to children, and many ways in which they can take that poetry to their hearts and make it their own. Some care only to hear it. Some want to say it. Some wish to write it. The teacher is in the enviable position of being one of the persons best able to treat the children to poetry. She should accept this responsibility with pleasure.

Poetry is fun. It has rhythm, rhyme, imagery, and exciting stories. Poetry is powerfully alive. It can cry, it can sing, it can dance. It can be delightfully happy or beautifully misty-eyed. It can give the children words for emotions which they feel, but cannot put into words as a true poet can--or it can help the poetic nature of their own souls to put their emotions into words. Poetry is an expression of joys, longings, and experiences which the children can recognize as their own. Poetry is full of human understanding. This is why our children should know poetry. This is why poetry has a definite place in the school rooms of our country.

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APPENDIX

1. Pat-a-Cake

Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker's man,
Bake me a cake as fast as you can;
Pat it and prick it and mark it with T.
Put it in the oven for Tommy and me.

--Mother Goose

2. Ride a Cock Horse

Ride a cock horse
To Banbury Cross
To see a fair lady upon a white horse;
With rings on her fingers,
And bells on her toes,
She shall have music wherever she goes.

--Mother Goose

3. Missing

Has anybody seen my mouse?

I opened his box for half a minute,
Just to make sure he was really in it,
And while I was looking, he jumped outside!
I tried to catch him, I tried, I tried. . . .
I think he's somewhere about the house.
Has anyone seen my mouse?

Uncle John, have you seen my mouse?

Just a small sort of mouse, a dear little brown one.
He came from the country, he wasn't a town one,
So he'll feel all lonely in a London street;
Why, what could he possibly find to eat?

He must be somewhere. I'll ask Aunt Rose:
Have you seen a mouse with a woffelly nose?
Oh, somewhere about--
He's just got out. . . .

Hasn't anybody seen my mouse?

--A. A. Milne

4. Hoppity

Christopher Robin goes
Hoppity, hoppity,
Hoppity, hoppity, hop.
Whenever I tell him
Politely to stop it, he
Says he can't possibly stop.
If he stopped hopping, he couldn't
go anywhere,
Poor little Christopher
Couldn't go anywhere. . .
That's why he always goes
Hoppity, hoppity,
Hoppity,
Hoppity,
Hop.

--A. A. Milne

5. Little Charlie Chipmunk

Little Charlie Chipmunk was a talker. Mercy me!
He chattered after breakfast and he chattered after tea!
He chattered to his father and he chattered to his mother!
He chattered to his sister and he chattered to his brother!
He chattered till his family was almost driven wild!
Oh, little Charlie Chipmunk was a very tiresome child!

--Helen Cowles LeCron

6. The Mysterious Cat

I saw a proud, mysterious cat,
I saw a proud, mysterious cat
Too proud to catch a mouse or rat--
Mew, mew, mew.

But catnip she would eat, and purr,
But catnip she would eat, and purr,
And goldfish she did much prefer--
Mew, mew, mew.

The Mysterious Cat (continued)

I saw a cat--'twas but a dream,
I saw a cat--'twas but a dream,
Who scorned the slave that brought her cream--
Mew, mew, mew.

Unless the slave were dressed in style,
Unless the slave were dressed in style,
And knelt before her all the while--
Mew, mew, mew.

Did you ever hear of a thing like that?
Did you ever hear of a thing like that?
Did you ever hear of a thing like that?
Oh, what a proud mysterious cat.
Oh, what a proud mysterious cat.
Oh, what a proud mysterious cat.
Mew . . . Mew . . . Mew.

--Vachel Lindsay

7. The Pirate Don Durk of Dowdee

Ho, for the Pirate Don Durk of Dowdee!
He was as wicked as wicked could be,
But oh, he was perfectly gorgeous to see!
The Pirate Don Durk of Dowdee.

His conscience, of course, was as black as a bat,
But he had a floppety plume on his hat
And when he went walking it jiggled--like that!
The plume of the Pirate Dowdee.

His coat it was crimson and cut with a slash,
And often as ever he twirled his mustache.
Deep down in the ocean the mermaids went splash,
Because of Don Durk of Dowdee.

Moreover, Dowdee had a purple tattoo,
And stuck in his belt where he buckled it through
Were a dagger, a dirk and a squizzamaroo,
For fierce was the Pirate Dowdee.

So fearful he was he would shoot at a puff,
And always at sea when the weather grew rough
He drank from a bottle and wrote on his cuff,
Did Pirate Don Durk of Dowdee.

The Pirate Don Durk of Dowdee (continued)

Oh, he had a cutlass that swung at his thigh
And he had a parrot called Pepperkin Pye,
And a zigzaggy scar at the end of his eye
Had Pirate Don Durk of Dowdee.

He kept in a cavern, this buccaneer bold,
A curious chest that was covered with mould,
And all of his pockets were jingly with gold!
Oh jing! went the gold of Dowdee.

His conscience, of course, it was crook'd like a squash,
And both of his boots made a slickery slosh,
And he went through the world with a wonderful swash,
Did Pirate Don Durk of Dowdee.

It's true he was wicked as wicked could be,
His sins they outnumbered a hundred and three,
But oh, he was perfectly gorgeous to see,
The Pirate Don Durk of Dowdee.

--Mildren Plew Meigs

8. Snow

The fenceposts wear marshmallow hats
On a snowy day;
Bushes in their night gowns
Are kneeling down to pray--
And all the trees have silver skirts
And want to dance away.

--Dorothy Aldis

9. Dandelion

O little soldier with the golden helmet,
What are you guarding on my lawn?
You with your green gun
And your yellow beard,
Why do you stand so stiff?
There is only the grass to fight!

--Hilda Conkling

10. Eletephony

Once there was an elephant,
Who tried to use the telephant--
No! no! I mean an elephone
Who tried to use the telephone--
(Dear me! I am not certain quite
That even now I've got it right.)

Howe'er it was, he got his trunk
Entangled in the telephunk;
The more he tried to get it free,
The louder buzzed the telephee--
(I fear I'd better drop the song
Of elephop and telephong!)

--Laura E. Richards

11. Windy Nights

Whenever the moon and stars are set,
Whenever the wind is high,
All night long in the dark and wet,
A man goes riding by.
Late in the night when the fires are out,
Why does he gallop and gallop about?

Whenever the trees are crying aloud,
And ships are tossed at sea,
By, on the highway, low and loud,
By at the gallop goes he.
By at the gallop he goes, and then
By he comes back at the gallop again.

--Robert Louis Stevenson

12. Yesterday in Oxford Street

Yesterday in Oxford Street, oh, what d'you think, my dears?
I had the most exciting time I've had for years and years;
The buildings looked so straight and tall, the sky was blue between,
And, riding on a motor-bus, I saw the fairy queen!

Sitting there upon the rail and bobbing up and down,
The sun was shining on her wings and on her golden crown;
And looking at the shops she was, the pretty silks and lace--
She seemed to think that Oxford Street was quite a lovely place.

Yesterday in Oxford Street (continued)

And once she turned and looked at me, and waved her little hand;
But I could only stare and stare--oh, would she understand?
I simply couldn't speak at all, I simply couldn't stir,
And all the rest of Oxford Street was just a shining blur.

Then suddenly she shook her wings--a bird had fluttered by--
And down into the street she looked and up into the sky;
And perching on the railing on a tiny fairy toe,
She flashed away so quickly that I hardly saw her go.

I never saw her any more, altho' I looked all day;
Perhaps she only came to peep, and never meant to stay:
But oh, my dears, just think of it, just think what luck for me,
That she should come to Oxford Street, and I be there to see!

--Rose Fyleman

13. The Creation

And God stepped out on space,
And he looked around and said:
I'm lonely--
I'll make me a world.

As far as the eye of God could see
Darkness covered everything,
Blacker than a hundred midnights
Down in a cypress swamp.

Then God smiled,
And the light broke,
And the darkness rolled up on one side,
And the light stood shining on the other,
And God said: That's good!

Then God reached out and took the light in his hands,
And God rolled the light around in his hands
Until he made the sun;
And he set that sun a-blazing in the heavens.
And the light that was left from making the sun
God gathered it up in a shining ball
And flung it against the darkness,
Spangling the night with the moon and stars.
Then down between the darkness and the light
He hurled the world;
And God said: That's good!

The Creation (continued)

Then God himself stepped down--
And the sun was on his right hand,
And the moon was on his left;
The stars were clustered about his head,
And the earth was under his feet.
And God walked, and where he trod
His footsteps hollowed the valleys out
And bulged the mountains up.

Then he stopped and looked and saw
That the earth was hot and barren.
So God stepped over to the edge of the world
And he spat out the seven seas--
He batted his eyes, and the lightnings flashed--
He clapped his hands, and the thunders rolled--
And the waters above the earth came down,
The cooling waters came down.

Then the green grass sprouted,
And the little red flowers blossomed,
The pine tree pointed his finger to the sky,
And the oak spread out his arms,
And lakes cuddled down in the hollows of the ground,
And the rivers ran down to the sea;
And God smiled again,
And the rainbow appeared,
And curled itself around his shoulder.

Then God raised his arm and he waved his hand
Over the sea and over the land,
And he said: Bring forth! Bring forth!
And quicker than God could drop his hand,
Fishes and fowls
And beasts and birds
Swam the rivers and the seas,
Roamed the forests and the woods,
And split the air with their wings.
And God said: That's good!

Then God walked around,
And God looked around
On all that he had made.
He looked at his moon,
And he looked at his little stars;
He looked on his world
With all its living things,
And God said: I'm lonely still.

The Creation (continued)

Then God sat down--
On the side of a hill where he could think;
By a deep, wide river he sat down;
With his head in his hands,
God thought and thought,
Till he thought; I'll make me a man!

Up from the bed of the river
God scooped the clay;
And by the bank of the river
He kneeled him down;
And there the great God Almighty
Who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky,
Who flung the stars to the most far corner of the night,
Who rounded the earth in the middle of his hand;
This Great God,
Like a mammy bending over her baby,
Kneeled down in the dust
Toiling over a lump of clay
Till he shaped it in his own image;

Then into it he blew the breath of life,
And man became a living soul.
Amen. Amen.

--James Weldon Johnson

14. The Star

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.

When the blazing sun is gone,
When he nothing shines upon,
Then you show your little light,
Twinkle, twinkle, all the night.

Then the traveler in the dark
Thanks you for your tiny spark,
How could he see where to go,
If you did not twinkle so?

In the dark blue sky you keep,
Often through my curtains peep
For you never shut your eye,
Till the sun is in the sky.

The Star (continued)

As your bright and tiny spark
Lights the traveler in the dark,
Though I know not what you are,
Twinkle, twinkle, little star.

--Jane Taylor

15. The Jumblies

They went to sea in a sieve, they did;
In a sieve they went to sea:
In spite of all their friends could say,
On a winter's morn, on a stormy day,
In a sieve they went to sea.
And when the sieve turned round and round,
And every one cried, 'You'll all be drowned!'
They called aloud, 'Our sieve ain't big;
But we don't care a button, we don't care a fig:
In a sieve we'll go to sea!'
Far and few, far and few,
Are the lands where the Jumblies live:
Their heads are green, and their hands are blue;
And they went to sea in a sieve.

They sailed away in a sieve, they did,
In a sieve they sailed so fast,
With only a beautiful pea-green veil
Tied with a ribbon, by way of a sail,
To a small tobacco-pipe mast.
And every one said who saw them go,
'Oh! won't they be soon upset, you know?
For the sky is dark, and the voyage is long;
And, happen what may, it's extremely wrong
In a sieve to sail so fast.'
Far and few, far and few,
Are the lands where the Jumblies live:
Their heads are green, and their hands are blue;
And they went to sea in a sieve.

The water it soon came in, it did;
The water it soon came in:
So, to keep them dry, they wrapped their feet
In a pinky paper all folded neat;
And they fastened it down with a pin.
And they passed the night in a crockery-jar;
And each of them said, 'How wise we are!

The Jumblies (continued)

Though the sky be dark, and the voyage be long,
Yet we never can think we were rash or wrong,
While round in our sieve we spin.'
Far and few, far and few,
Are the lands where the Jumblies live:
Their heads are green and their hands are blue;
And they went to sea in a sieve.

And all night long they sailed away;
And when the sun went down,
They whistled and warbled a moony song,
To the echoing sound of a coppery gong,
In the shade of the mountains brown.
'O Timballoo! How happy we are
When we live in a sieve and a crockery-jar!
And all night long, in the moonlight pale,
We sail away with a pea-green sail
In the shade of the mountains brown.'
Far and few, far and few,
Are the lands where the Jumblies live:
Their heads are green, and their hands are blue;
And they went to sea in a sieve.

They sailed to the Western Sea, they did,--
To a land all covered with trees:
And they bought an owl, and a useful cart,
And a pound of rice, and a cranberry-tart,
And a hive of silvery bees;
And they bought a pig, and some green jackdaws,
And a lovely monkey with lollipop paws,
And forty bottles of ring-bo-ree,
And no end of Stilton cheese.
Far and few, far and few,
Are the lands where the Jumblies live:
Their heads are green, and their hands are blue;
And they went to sea in a sieve.

And in twenty years they all came back,--
In twenty years or more;
And everyone said, 'How tall they've grown!
For they've been to the Lakes, and the Terrible Zone,
And the hills of the Chankly Bore.'
And they drank their health, and gave them a feast
Of dumplings made of beautiful yeast;
And every one said, 'If we only live,
We, too, will go to sea in a sieve,
To the hills of the Chankly Bore.'
Far and few, far and few,
Are the lands where the Jumblies live:
Their heads are green, and their hands are blue;
And they went to sea in a sieve.

16. There was an Old Man with a Beard

There was an old Man with a beard,
Who said, 'It is just as I feared!--
Two Owls and a Hen,
Four Larks and a Wren,
Have all built their nests in my beard.'

--Edward Lear

17. Foreign Lands

Up into the cherry tree
Who should climb but little me?
I held the trunk with both my hands
And looked abroad on foreign lands.

I saw the next door garden lie,
Adorned with flowers, before my eye,
And many pleasant places more
That I had never seen before.

I saw the dimpling river pass
And be the sky's blue looking-glass;
The dusty roads go up and down
With people tramping in to town.

If I could find a higher tree
Farther and farther I should see,
To where the grown-up river slips
Into the sea among the ships,

To where the roads on either hand
Lead onward into fairy land,
Where all the children dine at five,
And all the playthings come alive.

--Robert Louis Stevenson

18. At the Sea-side

When I was down beside the sea
A wooden spade they gave to me
To dig the sandy shore.
My holes were empty like a cup;
In every hole the sea came up
Till it could hold no more.

--Robert Louis Stevenson

19. Where Go the Boats?

Dark brown is the river,
Golden is the sand.
It flows along forever,
With trees on either hand.

Green leaves a-floating,
Castles of the foam,
Boats of mine a-boating--
Where will all come home?

On goes the river
And out past the mill,
Away down the valley,
Away down the hill.

Away down the river,
A hundred miles or more,
Other little children
Shall bring my boats ashore.

--Robert Louis Stevenson

20. The Swing

How do you like to go up in a swing,
Up in the air so blue?
Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing
Ever a child can do!

Up in the air and over the wall,
Till I can see so wide,
Rivers and trees and cattle and all
Over the countryside--

Till I look down on the garden green,
Down on the roof so brown--
Up in the air I go flying again,
Up in the air and down!

—Robert Louis Stevenson

21. The Land of Counterpane

When I was sick and lay a-bed,
I had two pillows at my head,

The Land of Counterpane (continued)

And all my toys beside me lay
To keep me happy all the day.

And sometimes for an hour or so
I watched my leaden soldiers go,
With different uniforms and drills,
Among the bed-clothes, through the hills;

And sometimes sent my ships in fleets
All up and down among the sheets;
Or brought my trees and houses out,
And planted cities all about.

I was the giant great and still
That sits upon the pillow-hill,
And sees before him, dale and plain,
The pleasant land of counterpane.

--Robert Louis Stevenson

22. My Shadow

I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,
And what can be the use of him is more than I can see.
He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head;
And I see him jump before me, when I jump into my bed.

The funniest thing about him is the way he likes to grow--
Not at all like proper children, which is always very slow;
For he sometimes shoots up taller like an india-rubber ball,
And he sometimes gets so little that there's none of him at all.

He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to play,
And can only make a fool of me in every sort of way.
He stays so close beside me, he's a coward you can see;
I'd think shame to stick to Nursie as that shadow sticks to me!

One morning, very early, before the sun was up,
I rose and found the shining dew on every buttercup;
But my lazy little shadow, like an errant sleepyhead,
Had stayed at home behind me and was fast asleep in bed.

--Robert Louis Stevenson

23. Nancy Hanks
(1784-1818)

If Nancy Hanks
Came back as a ghost,
Seeking news
Of what she loved most,
She'd ask first
'Where's my son?
What's happened to Abe?
What's he done?

'Poor little Abe,
Left all alone
Except for Tom,
Who's a rolling stone;
He was only nine
The year I died.
I remember still
How hard he cried.

'Scraping along
In a little shack,
With hardly a shirt
To cover his back,
And a prairie wind
To blow him down,
Or pinching times
If he went to town.

'You wouldn't know
About my son?
Did he grow tall?
Did he have fun?
Did he learn to read?
Did he get to town?
Do you know his name?
Did he get on?'

—Rosemary Carr and
Stephen Vincent Benet

24. Disobedience

James James
Morrison Morrison
Weather George Dupree
Took great
Care of his Mother,
Though he was only three.

Disobedience (continued)

James James
Said to his Mother,
'Mother,' he said, said he;
'You must never go down to the end of the town, if
you don't go down with me.'

James James
Morrison's Mother
Put on a golden gown,
James James
Morrison's Mother
Drove to the end of the town.
James James
Morrison's Mother
Said to herself, said she:
'I can get right down to the end of the town and be
back in time for tea.'

King John
Put up a notice,
'LOST or STOLEN or STRAYED!
JAMES JAMES
MORRISON'S MOTHER
SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN MISLAID.
LAST SEEN
WANDERING VAGUELY:
QUITE OF HER OWN ACCORD,
SHE TRIED TO GET DOWN TO THE END OF THE TOWN--FORTY
SHILLINGS REWARD!'

James James
Morrison Morrison
(Commonly known as Jim)
Told his
Other relations
Not to go blaming him.
James James
Said to his Mother,
'Mother,' he said, said he;
'You must never go down to the end of the town without
consulting me.'

James James
Morrison's mother
Hasn't been heard of since.
King John
Said he was sorry,
So did the Queen and the Prince.
King John
(Somebody told me)
Said to a man he knew:
'If people go down to the end of the town, well, what
can anyone do?'

Disobedience (continued)

(Now then, very softly)

J. J.

M. M.

W. G. Du P.

Took great

C/o his M*****

Though he was only 3.

J. J.

Said to his M*****

'M*****,' he said, said he:

'You-must-never-go-down-to-the-end-of-the-town-if-you-
don't-go-down-with ME!'

--A. A. Milne

25. The King's Breakfast

The King asked

The Queen, and

The Queen asked

The Dairymaid:

'Could we have some butter for

The Royal slice of bread?'

The Queen asked

The Dairymaid,

The Dairymaid

Said, 'Certainly,

I'll go and tell

The cow

Now

Before she goes to bed.'

The Dairymaid

She curtsied,

And went and told

The Alderney:

'Don't forget the butter for

The Royal slice of bread.'

The Alderney

Said sleepily:

'You'd better tell

His Majesty

That many people nowadays

Like Marmalade

Instead.'

The Dairymaid

Said 'Fancy!'

The King's Breakfast (continued)

And went to
Her Majesty.
She curtsied to the Queen, and
She turned a little red:
'Excuse me,
Your Majesty,
For taking of
The liberty,
But marmalade is tasty, if
It's very
Thickly
Spread.'

The Queen said
'Oh!'
And went to
His Majesty:
'Talking of the butter for
The Royal slice of bread,
Many people
Think that
Marmalade
Is nicer.
Would you like to try a little
Marmalade
Instead?'

The King said,
'Bother!'
And then he said,
'Oh, deary me!'
The King sobbed, 'Oh, deary me!'
And went back to bed.
'Nobody,'
He whimpered,
'Could call me
A fussy man;
I only want
A little bit
Of butter for
My bread!'

The Queen said,
'There, there!'
And went to
The Dairymaid.
The Dairymaid
Said, 'There, there!'
And went to the shed.
The cow said,
'There, there!
I didn't really
Mean it;

The King's Breakfast (continued)

Here's milk for his porringer
And butter for his bread.'

The Queen took
The butter
And brought it to
His Majesty;
The King said,
'Butter, eh?'
And bounced out of bed.
'Nobody,' he said,
As he kissed her
Tenderly,
'Nobody,' he said,
As he slid down
The bannisters,
'Nobody,
My darling,
Could call me
A fussy man--
BUT

'I do like a little bit of butter to my bread!'

--A. A. Milne

26. Bad Sir Brian Botary

Sir Brian had a battleaxe with great big knobs on;
He went among the villagers and blipped them on the head.
On Wednesday and on Saturday, but mostly on the latter day,
He called at all the cottages, and this is what he said:

'I am Sir Brian!' (ting-ling)
'I am Sir Brian!' (rat-tat)
'I am Sir Brian, as bold as a lion--
Take that!--and that!--and that!'

Sir Brian had a pair of boots with great big spurs on,
A fighting pair of which he was particularly fond.
On Tuesday and on Friday, just to make the street look tidy,
He'd collect the passing villagers and kick them in the pond.

'I am Sir Brian!' (sper-lash)
'I am Sir Brian!' (sper-losh!)
'I am Sir Brian, as bold as a lion--
Is anyone else for a wash?'

Bad Sir Brian Botary (continued)

Sir Brian woke one morning, and he couldn't find his battleaxe;
He walked into the village in his second pair of boots.
He had gone a hundred paces, when the street was full of faces,
And the villagers were round him with ironical salutes.

'You are Sir Brian? Indeed!
You are Sir Brian? Dear, dear!
You are Sir Brian, as bold as a lion?
Delighted to meet you here!'

Sir Brian went a journey, and he found a lot of duckweed;
They pulled him out and dried him, and they blipped him on the head.
They took him by the breeches, and they hurled him into ditches,
And they pushed him under waterfalls, and this is what they said:

'You are Sir Brian--don't laugh,
You are Sir Brian--don't cry;
You are Sir Brian, as bold as a lion--
Sir Brian, the lion, good-bye!'

Sir Brian struggled home again, and chopped up his battleaxe,
Sir Brian took his fighting boots, and threw them in the fire.
He is quite a different person now he hasn't got his spurs on,
And he goes about the village as B. Botary, Esquire.

'I am Sir Brian? Oh, no!
I am Sir Brian? Who's he?
I haven't got any title, I'm Botary--
Plain Mr. Botary, (B).'

--A. A. Milne

27. In the Fashion

A lion has a tail and a very fine tail,
And so has an elephant, and so has a whale,
And so has a crocodile, and so has a quail--
They've all got tails but me.

If I had sixpence I would buy one;
I'd say to the shopman, 'Let me try one';
I'd say to the elephant, 'This is my one.'
They'd all come round to see.

Then I'd say to the lion, 'Why, you've got a tail!
And so has the elephant, and so has the whale!
And, look! There's a crocodile! He's got a tail!
'You've all got tails like me!'

--A. A. Milne

28. Vespers

Little Boy kneels at the foot of the bed,
Droops on the little hands little gold head.
Hush! Hush! Whisper who dares!
Christopher Robin is saying his prayers.

God bless Mummy. I know that's right.
Wasn't it fun in the bath to-night?
The cold's so cold, and the hot's so hot.
Oh! God bless Daddy—I quite forgot.

If I open my fingers a little bit more,
I can see Nanny's dressing-gown on the door
It's a beautiful blue, but it hasn't a hood.
Oh! God bless Nanny and make her good.

Mine has a hood, and I lie in bed,
And pull the hood right over my head,
And I shut my eyes, and I curl up small,
And nobody knows that I'm there at all.

Oh! Thank you, God, for a lovely day.
And what was the other I had to say?
I said 'Bless Daddy,' so what can it be?
Oh! Now I remember it. God bless Me.

Little Boy kneels at the foot of the bed,
Droops on the little hands little gold head.
Hush! Hush! Whisper who dares!
Christopher Robin is saying his prayers.

--A. A. Milne

29. Sneezles

Christopher Robin
Had wheezles
And sneezles,
They bundled him
Into
His bed.
They gave him what goes
With a cold in the nose
And some more for a cold
In the head.
They wondered
If wheezles
Could turn
Into measles,

Sneezles (continued)

If sneezles
Could turn
Into mumps;
They examined his chest
For a rash,
And the rest
Of his body for swellings and lumps.

They sent for some doctors
In sneezles
And wheezles
To tell them what ought
To be done.

All sorts of conditions
Of famous physicians
Came hurrying round
At a run.
They all made a note
Of the state of his throat,
They asked if he suffered from thirst;

They asked if the sneezles
Came after the wheezles,
Or if the first sneeze
Came first.
They said, 'If you teazle
A sneeze
Or wheeze,
A measle
May easily grow.
But humor or pleazle
The wheeze
Or sneeze,
The measle
Will certainly go.'

They expounded the reazles
For sneezles
And wheezles,
The manner of measles
When new.
They said, 'If he freezles
In draughts and in breezles,
The Phtheezles
May even ensue.'

Christopher Robin
Got up in the morning,
The sneezles had vanished away.
And the look in his eye
Seemed to say to the sky,
'Now, how to amuse them today?'

30. Rice Pudding

What is the matter with Mary Jane?
She's crying with all her might and main,
And she won't eat her dinner--rice pudding again--
What is the matter with Mary Jane?

What is the matter with Mary Jane?
I've promised her dolls and a daisy-chain,
And a book about animals--all in vain--
What is the matter with Mary Jane?

What is the matter with Mary Jane?
She's perfectly well, and she hasn't a pain;
But, look at her, now she's beginning again!--
What is the matter with Mary Jane?

What is the matter with Mary Jane?
I've promised her sweets and a ride in the train,
And I've begged her to stop for a bit and explain--
What is the matter with Mary Jane?

What is the matter with Mary Jane?
She's perfectly well and she hasn't a pain,
And it's lovely rice pudding for dinner again!--
What is the matter with Mary Jane?

--A. A. Milne

31. Before Tea

Emmeline
Has not been seen
For more than a week. She slipped between
The two tall trees at the end of the green . . .
We all went after her. 'Emmeline!'
'Emmeline,
I didn't mean--
I only said that your hands weren't clean.'
We went to the trees at the end of the green . . .
But Emmeline
Was not to be seen.

Emmeline
Came slipping between
The two tall trees at the end of the green.
We all ran up to her. 'Emmeline!'
Where have you been?
Where have you been?
Why, it's more than a week!' And Emmeline
Said, 'Sillies, I went and saw the Queen.
She says my hands are purfickly clean!'

--A. A. Milne

32. Choosing Shoes

New shoes, new shoes,
Red and pink and blue shoes.
Tell me, what would you choose,
If they'd let us buy?

Buckle shoes, bow shoes,
Pretty pointy-toe shoes,
Strappy, cappy low shoes;
Let's have some to try.

Bright shoes, white shoes,
Dandy-dance-by-night shoes,
Perhaps-a-little-tight shoes,
Like some? So would I.

But

Flat shoes, fat shoes,
Stump-along-like-that-shoes,
Wipe-them-on-the-mat shoes,
That's the sort they'll buy.

--Frida Wolfe

33. Little John Bottlejohn

Little John Bottlejohn lived on the hill,
And a blithe little man was he.
And he won the heart of a pretty mermaid
Who lived in the deep blue sea.
And every evening she used to sit
And sing on the rocks by the sea,
'Oh! little John Bottlejohn, pretty John Bottlejohn,
Won't you come out to me?'

Little John Bottlejohn heard her song,
And he opened his little door.
And he hopped and he skipped, and he skipped and he
hopped,
Until he came down to the shore.
And there on the rocks sat the little mermaid,
And still she was singing so free,
'Oh! little John Bottlejohn, pretty John Bottlejohn,
Won't you come out to me?'

Little John Bottlejohn (continued)

Little John Bottlejohn made a bow,
And the mermaid, she made one too;
And she said, 'Oh! I never saw any one half
So perfectly sweet as you!
In my lovely home 'neath the ocean foam,
How happy we both might be!
Oh! little John Bottlejohn, pretty John Bottlejohn,
Won't you come down with me?'

Little John Bottlejohn said, 'Oh yes!
I'll willingly go with you.
And I never shall quail at the sight of your tail,
For perhaps I may grow one, too.'
So he took her hand, and he left the land,
And plunged in the foaming main.
And little John Bottlejohn, pretty John Bottlejohn,
Never was seen again.

--Laura E. Richards

34. Pocahontas
1595? - 1617

Princess Pocahontas
Powhatan's daughter,
Stared at the white men
Come across the water.

She was like a wild deer
Or a bright, plumed bird,
Ready then to flash away
At one harsh word.

When the faces answered hers,
Paler yet, but smiling,
Pocahontas looked and looked,
Found them quite beguiling.

Liked the whites and trusted them,
Spite of kin and kith,
Fed and protected
Captain John Smith.

Pocahontas was revered
By each and every one.
She married John Rolfe;
She had a Rolfe son.

Pocahontas (continued)

She crossed the sea to London Town
And must have found it queer,
To be Lady Rebecca
And the toast of the year.

'La Belle Sauvage! La Belle Sauvage!
Our nonpareil is she!'
But Princess Pocahontas
Gazed sadly toward the sea.

They gave her silk and furbelows.
She pined, as wild things do
And, when she died at Gravesend
She was only twenty-two.

Poor wild bird--
No one can be blamed.
But gentle Pocahontas
Was a wild thing tamed.

And everywhere the lesson runs,
All through the ages:
Wild things die
In the very finest cages.

--Rosemary Carr and
Stephen Vincent Benet

35. From a Railway Carriage

Faster than fairies, faster than witches,
Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches;
And charging along like troops in a battle,
All through the meadows the horses and cattle;
All of the sights of the hill and the plain
Fly as thick as driving rain;
And ever again, in the wink of an eye,
Painted stations whistle by.

Here is a child who clambers and scrambles;
All by himself and gathering brambles;
Here is a tramp who stands and gazes;
And there is the green for stringing the daisies!
Here is a cart run away in the road
Lumping along with man and load;
And here is a mill and there is a river;
Each a glimpse and gone forever!

--Robert Louis Stevenson

36. Black and Gold

Everything is black and gold,
Black and gold, tonight:
Yellow pumpkins, yellow moon,
Yellow candlelight;

Jet-black cat with golden eyes,
Shadows black as ink,
Firelight blinking in the dark
With a yellow blink.

Black and gold, black and gold,
Nothing in between--
When the world turns black and gold,
Then it's Halloween!

--Nancy Byrd Turner

37. Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight
in Springfield, Illinois

It is portentous, and a thing of state
That here at midnight, in our little town
A mourning figure walks, and will not rest,
Near the old court-house pacing up and down,

Or by his homestead, or in shadowed yards
He lingers where his children used to play,
Or through the market, on the well-worn stones
He stalks until the dawn-stars burn away.

A bronzed, lank man! His suit of ancient black,
A famous high top-hat and plain worn shawl
Make him the quaint great figure that men love,
The prairie-lawyer, master of us all.

He cannot sleep upon his hillside now.
He is among us:--as in times before!
And we who toss and lie awake for long,
Breathe deep, and start, to see him pass the door.

His head is bowed. He thinks of men and kings,
Yea, when the sick world cries, how can he sleep?
Too many peasants fight, they know not why;
Too many homesteads in black terror weep.

The sins of all the war-lords burn his heart.
He sees the dreadnaughts scouring every main.
He carries on his shawl-wrapped shoulders now
The bitterness, the folly and the pain.

Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight (continued)

He cannot rest until a spirit-dawn
Shall come:--the shining hope of Europe free:
A league of sober folk, the Workers' Earth,
Bringing long peace to Cornland, Alp, and Sea.

It breaks his heart that things must murder still,
That all his hours of travail here for men
Seem yet in vain. And who will bring white peace
That he may sleep upon his hill again?

--Vachel Lindsay

38. Jonathan Bing

Poor old Jonathan Bing
Went out in his carriage to visit the King,
But everyone pointed and said, 'Look at that!
Jonathan Bing has forgotten his hat!'
(He'd forgotten his hat!)

Poor old Jonathan Bing
Went home and put on a new hat for the King,
But up by the palace a soldier said, 'Hi!
You can't see the King; you've forgotten your tie!'
(He'd forgotten his tie!)

Poor old Jonathan Bing,
He put on a beautiful tie for the King,
But when he arrived an Archbishop said, 'Ho!
You can't come to court in pyjamas, you know!'

Poor old Jonathan Bing
Went home and addressed a short note to the King:
'If you please will excuse me I won't come to tea,
For home's the best place for all people like me!'

--B. Curtis Brown

39. Little Orphant Annie

Little Orphant Annie's come to our house to stay,
An' wash the cups and saucers up, an' brush the crumbs away,
An' shoo the chickens off the porch, an' dust the hearth,
an' sweep,
An' make the fire, an' bake the bread, an' earn her board-
an'-keep;
An' all us other children, when the supper things is done,
We set around the kitchen fire an' has the mostest fun

Little Orphant Annie (continued)

A-list'nin' to the witch tales 'at Annie tells about,
An' the Gobble-uns 'at gits you

Ef you
Don't
Watch
Out!

Onc't they was a little boy wouldn't say his pray'rs--
An' when he went to bed at night, away upstairs,
His mammy heerd him holler, an' his daddy heerd him bawl,
An' when they turn't the kivvers down, he wasn't there at all!
An' they seeked him in the rafter-room, an' cubby-hole, an' press,
An' seeked him up the chimbley flue, an' ever'wheres, I guess;
But all they ever found was thist his pants an' round about!
An' the Gobble-uns 'll git you

Ef you
Don't
Watch
Out!

An' one time a little girl 'ud allus laugh an' grin,
An' make fun of ever'one an' all her blood-an'-kin;
An' onc't when they was 'company,' an' ole folks was there,
She mocked 'em an' shocked 'em and said she didn't care!
An' thist as she kicked her heels, an' turn't to run an' hide,
They was two great big Black Things a-standin' by her side,
An' they snatched her through the ceilin' 'fore she knowed what she's
about!

An' the Gobble-uns 'll git you

Ef you
Don't
Watch
Out!

An' little Orphant Annie says, when the blaze is blue,
An' the lampwick sputters, an' the wind goes woo-oo!
An' you hear the crickets quit, an' the moon is gray,
An' the lightnin'-bugs in dew is all squenched away--
You better mind yer parents, an' yer teachers fond an' dear,
An' churish them 'at loves you, an' dry the orphant's tear,
An' he'p the pore an' needy ones 'at cluster all about,
Er the Gobble-uns 'll git you

Ef you
Don't
Watch
Out!

--James Whitcomb Riley

40. There was a Young Lady of Norway

There was a Young Lady of Norway,
Who casually sat in a doorway;
When the door squeezed her flat,
She exclaimed, 'What of that?'
This courageous Young Lady of Norway.

--Edward Lear

41. The Gardener's Song

He thought he saw an Albatross
That fluttered around the lamp;
He looked again, and found it was
A Penny-Postage-Stamp.
'You'd best be getting home,' he said;
'The nights are very damp!'

He thought he saw a Banker's-Clerk
Descending from the bus;
He looked again, and found it was
A Hippopotamus.
'If this should stay to dine,' he said,
'There won't be much for us!'

He thought he saw a Buffalo
Upon the chimney-piece;
He looked again, and found it was
His Sister's-Husband's-Niece.
'Unless you leave this house,' he said,
'I'll send for the police!'

He thought he saw a Kangaroo
That worked a coffee-mill;
He looked again, and found it was
A Vegetable-Pill.
'Were I to swallow this,' he said,
'I should be very ill!'

He thought he saw a Rattlesnake
That questioned him in Greek;
He looked again, and found it was
The Middle-of-Next-Week.
'The one thing I regret,' he said,
'Is that it cannot speak!'

--Lewis Carroll

42. Hey, Diddle, Diddle

Hey, diddle, diddle!
The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon;
The little dog laughed
To see such sport,
And the dish ran away with the spoon.

--Mother Goose

43. Paul Revere's Ride

Listen, my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
On the eighteenth of April, in seventy-five;
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year.
He said to his friend, 'If the British march
By land or sea from the town tonight,
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry arch
Of the North Church tower as a signal light,--
One, if by land, and two, if by sea;
And I on the opposite shore will be,
Ready to ride and spread the alarm
Through every Middlesex village and farm,
For the country folk to be up and to arm.'

Then he said, 'Good night!' and with muffled oar
Silently rowed to the Charlestown shore,
Just as the moon rose over the bay,
Where swinging wide at her moorings lay
The Somerset, British man-of-war;
A phantom ship, with each mast and spar
Across the moon like a prison bar,
And a huge black hulk, that was magnified
By its own reflection in the tide.

Meanwhile, his friend, through alley and street,
Wanders and watches with eager ears,
Till in the silence around him he hears
The muster of men at the barrack door,
The sound of arms, and the tramp of feet,
And the measured tread of the grenadiers,
Marching down to their boats on the shore.

Then he climbed the tower of the Old North Church
By the wooden stairs, with stealthy tread,
To the belfry-chamber overhead,
And startled the pigeons from their perch

Paul Revere's Ride (continued)

On the somber rafters, that round him made
Masses and moving shapes of shade,--
By trembling ladder, steep and tall,
To the highest window in the wall,
Where he paused to listen and look down
A moment on the roofs of the town,
And the moonlight flowing over all.

Beneath in the churchyard, lay the dead,
In their night-encampment on the hill,
Wrapped in silence so deep and still
That he could hear, like a sentinel's tread,
The watchful night-wind, as it went
Creeping along from tent to tent,

And seeming to whisper, 'All is Well!'
A moment only he feels the spell
Of the place and the hour, and the secret dread
Of the lonely belfry and the dead;
For suddenly all of his thoughts are bent
On a shadowy something far away,
Where the river widens to meet the bay,--
A line of black that bends and floats
On the rising tide, like a bridge of boats.

Meanwhile, impatient to mount and ride,
Booted and spurred, with a heavy stride
On the opposite shore walked Paul Revere.
Now he patted his horse's side,
Now gazed at the landscape far and near,
Then, impetuous, stamped the earth,
And turned and tightened his saddle-girth;
But mostly he watched with eager search
The belfry-tower of the Old North Church,
As it rose above the graves on the hill,
Lonely and spectral and somber and still.
And lo! as he looks, on the belfry's height
A glimmer, and then a gleam of light!
He springs to the saddle, the bridle he turns,
But lingers and gazes, till full on his sight
A second lamp in the belfry burns!

A hurry of hoofs in a village street,
A shape in the moonlight, a bulk in the dark,
And beneath, from the pebbles, in passing, a spark
Struck out by a steed flying fearless and fleet:
That was all! And yet, through the gloom and the light,
The fate of a nation was riding that night;
And the spark struck out by that steed, in his flight
Kindled the land into flame with its heat.

He has left the village and mounted the steep,
And beneath him, tranquil and broad and deep,

Paul Revere's Ride (continued)

Is the Mystic, meeting the ocean tides;
And under the alders that skirt its edge,
Now soft on the sand, now loud on the ledge,
Is heard the tramp of his steed as he rides.

It was twelve by the village clock,
When he crossed the bridge into Medford town.
He heard the crowing of the cock,
And the barking of the farmer's dog,
And felt the damp of the river fog,
That rises after the sun goes down.

It was one by the village clock,
When he galloped into Lexington.
He saw the gilded weathercock
Swim in the moonlight as he passed.
And the meeting-house windows, blank and bare,
Gaze at him with a spectral glare,
As if they already stood aghast
At the bloody work they would look upon.

It was two by the village clock,
When he came to the bridge in Concord town.
He heard the bleating of the flock,
And the twitter of birds among the trees,
And felt the breath of the morning breeze
Blowing over the meadows brown.
And one was safe and asleep in his bed
Who at the bridge would be first to fall,
Who that day would be lying dead,
Pierced by a British musket-ball.

You know the rest. In the books you have read,
How the British Regulars fired and fled,--
How the farmers gave them ball for ball,
From behind each fence and farmyard wall,
Chasing the red-coats down the lane,
Then crossing the fields to emerge again
Under the trees at the turn of the road,
And only pausing to fire and load.

So through the night rode Paul Revere;
And so through the night went his cry of alarm
To every Middlesex village and farm,--
A cry of defiance and not of fear,
A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,
And a word that shall echo forevermore!
For, borne on the night-wind of the Past,
Through all our history, to the last,

Paul Revere's Ride (continued)

In the hour of darkness and peril and need,
The people will waken and listen to hear
And hurrying hoof-beats of that steed,
And the midnight message of Paul Revere.

--Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

44. The Umbrella Brigade

'Pitter patter!' falls the rain
On the school-room window-pane.
Such a plashing! such a dashing!
Will it e'er be dry again?
Down the gutter rolls a flood,
And the crossing's deep in mud;
And the puddles! oh, the puddles
Are a sight to stir one's blood!

Chorus: But let it rain
Tree-toads and frogs,
Muskets and pitchforks,
Kittens and dogs!
Dash away! splash away!
Who is afraid?
Here we go,
The Umbrella Brigade!

Pull the boots up to the knee!
Tie the hoods on merrily!
Such a hustling! such a jostling!
Out of breath with fun are we.
Clatter, clatter, down the street,
Greeting every one we meet,
With our laughing and our chaffing,
Which the laughing drops repeat.

Chorus: So let it rain
Tree-toads and frogs,
Muskets and pitchforks,
Kittens and dogs!
Dash away! splash away!
Who is afraid?
Here we go,
The Umbrella Brigade!

--Laura E. Richards

45. Spin, Spin

'Spin, spin, my dear daughter,
I'll buy you a dress.'
'Will it have a pocket?'
'Oh yes, daughter, yes.'

'My finger is swelling, it really is sore,
I cannot spin any more.'

'Spin, spin, my dear daughter;
I'll buy you some shoes.'
'They must have bright buckles
And red satin bows!

'My finger is swelling, it really is sore,
I cannot spin any more.'

'Spin, spin, my dear daughter;
An apron I'll buy.'
'It must have white ruffles
And ribbons that tie.

'My finger is swelling, it really is sore,
I cannot spin any more.'

'Spin, spin, my dear daughter;
A cow you'll receive.'
'If she has no calf,
Your daughter will grieve.

'My finger is swelling, it really is sore,
I cannot spin any more.'

'Spin, spin, my dear daughter;
A husband I'll find.'
'Oh that, my dear mother, 's been
Long on my mind!'

'Oh, Mother, dear Mother, I can spin again,
For my finger gives me no pain!'

--translated from Pennsylvania
Dutch by Jane Flory

46. The Night Wind

Teacher
Have you ever heard the wind go All
'Yooooooooo'?

Teacher
'Tis a pitiful sound to hear.

Solo I
It seems to chill you through and through
With a strange and speechless fear.

Boys
'Tis the voice of the night that broods outside

Girls
When folks should be asleep,

All
And many and many's the time I've cried
To the darkness brooding far and wide
Over the land and deep:

Girls
'Whom do you want, O lonely night,
That you wail the long hours through?'

Boys
And the night would say in its ghostly way:

All
'Yooooooooooo!' Yooooooooooo! Yooooooooooo!'

- a. First ask which pupils can make a low, mournful whistle; select six or seven to a room of thirty pupils. Have them repeat it loudly and then softly.
- b. Have a similar number (row 1 for convenience) make a swishing sound through their teeth. Repeat it loudly and then softly.
- c. Another row may make a low 'ooooooooo' moan. Repeat it loudly and then softly.
- d. The rest of the class speak the long-drawn-out word, 'Yoooooooooo.' Repeat it loudly and then softly.
- e. Practice all four groups together three times: first subdued; second, louder; third, softly.
- f. Then teacher asks, using the first line of the poem: 'Have you ever heard the wind go-----'
- g. The pupils finish the line by all four groups joining together simultaneously, each making its assigned sound for the word 'Yoooooooooo.'