Together with our friends at the Poetry Society, Disney Junior has created a guide to help parents introduce their kids to the beauty of poetry, based on our hit show, A Poem Is. This guide is packed with hints and tips that are fun, relevant, engaging, and most of all, useful for you and your children. We also have a few games and activities at the end of the guide that show how poetry can be brought to life in playtime and the fun you can have tackling it together with your child.

A Poem Is on Disney Junior showcases poetry set to iconic moments from some of Disney’s best-loved animated films such as Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Cinderella, Aladdin, Beauty and the Beast, Pinocchio and Alice in Wonderland. Designed to encourage fond memories of Disney classics for parents and create new ones for young kids, featured poems include works by David Henry Souter, Clement Moore, Eliza Lee Follen, Langston Hughes, William Wise and Mary Ann Hoberman among others. Matt Smith, David Walliams, Richard Briers, CBE, Jessica Hynes and Michelle Dockery are among the all star cast of British celebrities who have teamed up with us to narrate the second season of A Poem Is.

If you are inspired by the series and our guide, why not try reading some of the featured poems? We’ve included a selection for you to try at the back of the guide. You can discover even more poems and ways to bring poetry to life in our next steps section, which you will find on the final page. We hope you have fun!

Disney Junior and the Poetry Society

P.S. You can also watch a selection of A Poem Is episodes in full. Just head to DisneyJunior.co.uk.
Boel Ferguson, General Manager, Disney Channels UK & Ireland

We are thrilled to be announcing the launch of this poetry guide in association with The Poetry Society to celebrate the second season of *A Poem is*. Our research shows that there is a real appetite amongst children and parents for poetry. The same principles have been applied to developing the guide as we do to our shows on Disney Junior so all the content is fun and interactive in a way that engages our audience. We hope it will be a genuinely useful resource for parents and help more families enjoy the beauty of a poem.

Roger McGough, President of the Poetry Society

The Poetry Society is delighted to be partnering with Disney Junior to create this guide for the second season of *A Poem is*. The series wholeheartedly supports our mission of promoting the appreciation and enjoyment of poetry for all ages. We believe it is important for parents to share poetry with their children at a young age in order to build their foundation for learning to read and present them with a great vehicle for individual expression as they grow older. We hope that this guide will help children make a good first connection with poems and literature that will last a lifetime.
**SOUND** is important to the poet, and so most poems will offer the opportunity for you and your child to play with sound. Your child was born with the capacity to make 40 sounds, and you will encourage their speech development through sound play.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

- Emphasise sounds with your child, as you read a poem.
- Read nonsense verse, where sound is more important than meaning. The poet Edward Lear is a perfect example of this type of poetry. His verse plays with sound in fun and mischievous ways; great for preschoolers!
- Use alliterative verse, where the same sound is repeated in series. This helps develop certain speech sounds in young children. Some Disney films contain spell sequences, which play with alliteration, for example in *Cinderella’s Bippety, Boppety Boo*. Another great example of alliteration can be found in the work of Spike Milligan, such as his poem *On the Ning Nang Nong*.
- Emphasise rhyming words as you read poems aloud. When you listen to one of our celebrities perform a poem in *A Poem Is*, play a matching pairs game, orally. Perhaps your child can raise their hand each time they hear a rhyme, or press your nose like a button! The poem, *And the Roo Jumped Over the Moon* is ideal for this, as it’s written in rhyming couplets, so the pairing is clear to see for a young child.
- Point out, and move to the cadence of the lines you hear our *A Poem Is* narrators say, so your child can catch the rhythmic flow of a sound sequence.
A child’s imagination is developing all the time, and they will soon ‘see’ many things in their imagination. Visual cues are so important for preschoolers, because they fill in gaps and keep them engaged. The film clips in A Poem Is could help them develop their word-picture connections.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

After listening to our narrators in A Poem Is, why not try reading your favourite poem to your child in a position where they can see the shapes your mouth makes? They will enjoy mimicking your movements, particularly if they’re exaggerated. Go on, be a fool for your child!

Children of all ages love a bit of drama, so hone your acting skills, and live the words dramatically and visually! This Fantastic World offers a lot of scope to do exactly this. Facial expression is important, as you illustrate a poem physically.
Poetry is the most physical form of writing. Our bodies work in rhythms; our hearts beat, our pulses find a pattern, we even walk to a regular timing! Poetry, especially English poetry, delights in the rhythm of lines and verses. Poetry had much to do with making patterns with sound, and even visual patterns on the page.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- You can explore and illustrate old nursery rhymes with actions, as well as inventing actions for the poems you hear on A Poem Is.
- You can invent your own actions to other poems your child enjoys, and to songs in their favourite Disney movies, so the words come alive physically. April Rain Song lends itself nicely to actions; notice the words ‘kiss’, ‘beat’, ‘sing’, ‘still’, ‘running’, ‘sleep’. all words that suggest simple actions for a child to copy.
- Preschoolers of all ages will enjoy clapping, stamping, dancing, jumping, as they really feel the rhythms of the spoken word. Get physical!
By the time your toddler has reached their third birthday, they will be using speech as they explore their environment and the activities they’re engaged in. Reading poetry is an ideal way for you to do this with them. Poems are written as ‘small bites’ for young children, and often isolate a specific subject for imaginative examination, e.g. a rabbit.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

- Find other poems on the same subject as the poem performed in *A Poem Is*. For example, listen to the poem *Ducks*, then find out about ducks from factual books or from other duck poems. After listening to *When I Grow Up*, your child might enjoy watching *Dumbo* or *Pinocchio*, as the characters encounter a few challenges with growing up! Why not make up a poem together on what they’d like to be or do when they are older?

- Help your child to find out about their own experience of the world and extend their vocabulary through poetry. There are many sorts of poems that explore the world of young children. For example, instruction poems, naming poems, counting poems or parts of the body poems. In *De Colores*, your child will be introduced to the idea of favourite colours. Perhaps you can write a poem together about their favourite colours, or about a rainbow?

- Use the poems in *A Poem Is* to explore the subjects written about, that relate to your child’s current experiences. For example, *April Rain Song* could be used as a starting point to talk about rain. You will find other poems about rain and water in poetry anthologies. Another good poem to hunt out is *The River* by Valerie Bloom.

- There are poems in *A Poem Is* that explore a wider world, that might be new to your child. Take the exploration further, and read other poems about those subjects. For example, listen to *Once They All Believed in Dragons*, then collect, orally if your child is too young to read and write, some dragon words, like ‘fire’, extending their vocabulary. Perhaps you could read some other other poems about exciting creatures, like William Blake’s *The Tyger*.

- Also, explore the world of the imagination. *This Fantastic World* will help you do this, and may even encourage your child to write a poem, about their favourite Disney character.

- Remember, there’s information on the final page to help you find out about poems mentioned in this guide.
After reading **Once They All Believed in Dragons**, why not encourage your child to colour in this picture of a dragon?
In De Colores, your child will be introduced to the idea of favourite colours. Why not colour in this rainbow together?
And The Roo Jumped Over The Moon
By David Henry Souter

The kangaroo is a splendid jumper:  
Short forelegs, but its tail is a thumper.  
Whether it be a girl or a boy  
A baby ’roo is always a joey.  
Its Ma has a pocket in front of her tum  
For baby to lie in, sucking its thumb  
Of all the babes that are born, but few  
Have a pram like the baby kangaroo
Once they all believed in dragons
When the world was fresh and young,
We were woven into legends,
Tales were told and songs were sung,
We were treated with obeisance,
We were honored, we were feared.
Then one day they stopped believing--
On that day, we disappeared.

Now they say our time is over,
Now they say we’ve lived our last,
Now we’re treated with derision
Where once we ruled unsurpassed.
We must make them all remember.
In some way we must reveal
That our spirit lives forever--
We are dragons! We are real!
April Rain Song
By Langston Hughes

Let the rain kiss you.
Let the rain beat upon your head with silver liquid drops.
Let the rain sing you a lullaby.
The rain makes still pools on the sidewalk.
The rain makes running pools in the gutter.
The rain plays a little sleep-song on our roof at night –
    And I love the rain.
De Colores

Traditional Folk Song

All the colors.
The countryside dressed up in springtime array
All the colors.
The birds who sing outside my window all day
All the colors.
The arch of the rainbow that shines up above
And the joy that the colors all bring
Makes my heart want to sing
Of the colors I love

All the colors.
Awake in the morning at first light of dawn.
All the colors.
Moving and changing as day carries on
All the colors.
The world is aglow as the sun sets above.

And the joy that the colors all bring
Makes my heart want to sing
Of the colors I love
**NEXT STEPS:** Discover even more ways to bring poetry to life!

There is a huge array of fantastic poetry books out there for young children. Your [local library](http://www.library.gov.uk) will often have a special section filled with poems that you can explore with your child.

Now that *A Poem Is* has got you started, why not discover more poems by the poets you’ve got to know through the series. Here are a few suggestions of more wonderful books that will help your child delight in sounds, rhymes and imagery.

**Anthologies for young children**

Poems mentioned in this guide can be found in the pages of these books, including work by William Blake, Edward Lear, Spike Milligan, Roger McGough, Jack Prelutsky, Langston Hughes, Mary Ann Hoberman and Valerie Bloom.

- [Poems for the Very Young](http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/content/youngpeople/parents), selected by Michael Rosen
- [Here’s a Little Poem: A Very First Book of Poetry](http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/content/youngpeople/parents), selected by Jane Yolan and Andrew Fusek Peters
- [This Little Puffin: A Treasury of Nursery Rhymes, Songs and Games](http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/content/youngpeople/parents), compiled by Elizabeth Matterson
- [The Usbourne Book of Poems for Young Children](http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/content/youngpeople/parents), chosen by Philip Hawthorne
- [The Puffin Book of Nonsense Verse](http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/content/youngpeople/parents), selected and Illustrated by Quentin Blake
- [The Oxford Book of Children’s Poetry](http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/content/youngpeople/parents), selected by Michael Harrison and Christopher Stuart-Clark
- [Twinkle Twinkle Chocolate Bar](http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/content/youngpeople/parents), by John Foster

**Picture books (these are especially good for under 5’s)**

Many of the best-loved picture books also tell their stories through rhythm, rhyme, repetition and evocative sounds. You can use the hints in this guide when sharing books like these.

- [Each Peach Pear Plum](http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/content/youngpeople/parents), by Janet and Allan Ahlberg
- [Night Monkey, Day Monkey](http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/content/youngpeople/parents), by Julia Donaldson and Lucy Richard
- [Slinky Malinki](http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/content/youngpeople/parents), by Lynley Dodd
- [We’re Going on a Bear Hunt](http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/content/youngpeople/parents), by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury

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**Online Resources**

For further information and resources to inspire your child with poetry go to the Poetry Society’s information page for parents and carers at [www.poetrysociety.org.uk/content/youngpeople/parents](http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/content/youngpeople/parents)