

SHARED READING

The Ready to Read poem cards are a key component of the Ready to Read materials. Right from the first days of school, shared reading of poems provides opportunities for students to behave like readers and enjoy lively reading experiences with texts they are not yet able to read for themselves. Shared reading of poem cards helps students develop a love of reading, an interest in language, and confidence in their abilities as readers.

The oral language foundation that supports children's school reading and writing includes: curiosity about oral language and a willingness to experiment with it, for example, by playing with rhyme and alliteration ... [and] an awareness of rhyme and of words that start with the same sound, along with the ability to hear and distinguish some other phonemes in spoken words.

The Literacy Learning Progressions (Starting school, page 9)

Learning contexts such as shared reading also help build students' awareness of the language of the classroom. They provide opportunities for teachers to build the oral vocabulary for instruction and conversations about texts that students need to participate successfully in classroom learning (see *Learning through Talk – Oral Language in Years 1 to 3*, page 20).

THE POEM CARDS

There are 34 Ready to Read poem cards on A2-sized cards (available from *Down the Back of the Chair*) and as PDF versions on [TKI](#). There are also eight poems in the shared book *Splish-Splash!* (See page 9 for a full list of available poems).

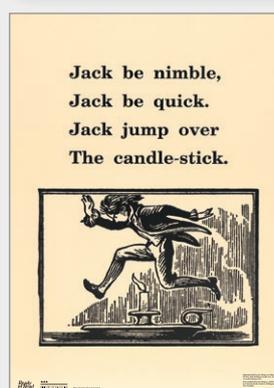
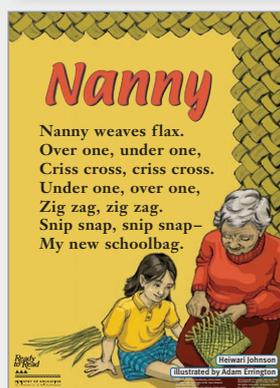
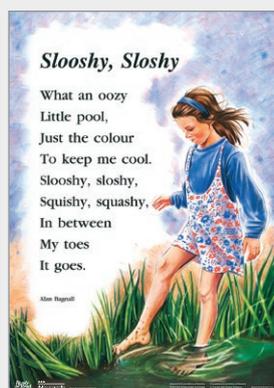
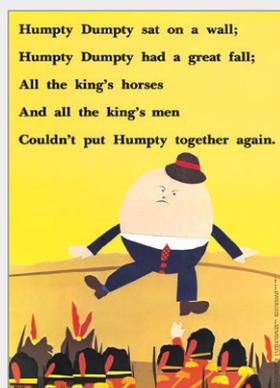
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POEM CARDS

Intriguing and entertaining ideas

Sometimes multiple illustrations

Rich and engaging language – lively verbs, adjectives, compound words, contractions, made-up words, old-fashioned words, onomatopoeia, and alliteration

A variety of sentence structures, including some sentences without verbs



Rhyme, rhythm, and repetition

High-frequency words

Clear spaces between words to support one-to-one matching

Multiple lines, often each line starting with a capital letter

Punctuation and print features such as bold print or upper-case letters to support meaning

HELPING STUDENTS BECOME READERS

Poem cards add to the ongoing talking, reading, and writing in the classroom literacy programme. Reading poems with children (and having them join in when they feel ready to) reinforces the fun and enjoyment of reading. The bright and attractive design of the poem cards and their memorable language (catchy repetition, rhythm, and rhyme) encourage participation. Through this shared reading, the students are expanding their repertoire of vocabulary and language structures. At the same time, they are building the knowledge, understandings, and ways of thinking they will need as independent readers.

The Ready to Read collection includes poems that describe, explore ideas and feelings, ask questions, tell stories, and express opinions. They expand the range of formats, topics, ideas, and writing styles students are exposed to, supporting them to develop flexibility as readers.

In addition to providing lively, enjoyable reading experiences, the poem cards provide many opportunities for explicit instruction. For beginning readers, they play a valuable role in helping build the knowledge and understandings they need before starting guided reading.

The strong support offered by shared reading enables all students to experience success as readers. Shared reading of poetry provides particular support for English language learners in helping them develop control over the prosodic features of English, such as pitch, pace, intonation, and stress.

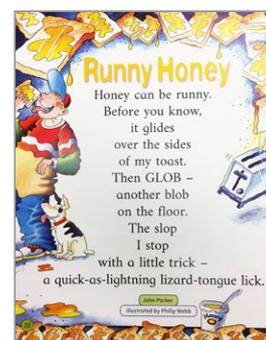
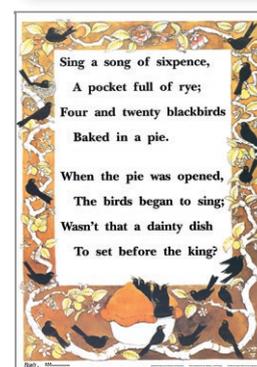
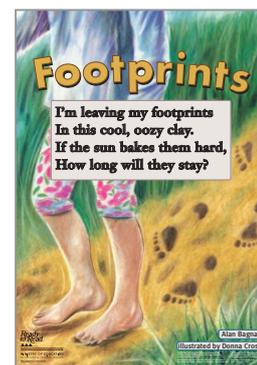
A community of readers

Poem cards help to develop a community of readers in the classroom by quickly building up a “library” of favourite shared texts that students can read with enjoyment and growing independence (alone or with a buddy). For the teacher, they also provide a set of materials that everyone is familiar with. This means the teacher can draw on the known vocabulary and sentence structures of the poem cards when focusing on aspects of language and making links to other reading and writing.

USING THE POEM CARDS

When introducing a poem card, use your knowledge of your students to ensure that your introduction activates their prior knowledge and interest and “primes them” for the reading. Many poems lend themselves to language experience activities, either before or after the reading.

Use the title and/or the illustration to encourage the students to wonder or predict what the poem will be about. As you read the poem, use intonation to emphasise the rhythm and rhyme. Some students may join in even on the first reading. Encourage the students to share their responses to the poem, particularly in relation to their questions or predictions. Reread the poem several times, encouraging the students to join in. You can explore the poem further during subsequent readings.



Teacher talk: Using the poem cards

With my new entrants, I explore a new poem card over a week. On Mondays, we read for enjoyment and meaning. The children feel very proud when they can memorise a poem. We learn it together (I say a line, and then they say it). I find this especially helpful for my English language learners because it helps them so much with intonation and phrasing. (I use the same technique with the class to support their learning of songs.)

Some students don't have background knowledge of nursery rhymes or of some of the poem card topics, for example crabs. So I do several repeated reading sessions (sometimes singing) – building from day to day, and having lots of discussion. We often do language experience activities before or after reading poems as well as acting out, retelling, and innovating on language patterns.

Because there is only one page of text, we can look at a different aspect each day for the rest of the week, such as rhyming words, design features (bold print, line shapes, illustrations), concepts about print, high-frequency words, and so on. On Friday, the poem goes into their poetry books with the students highlighting something we are learning (often an initial letter), and the book goes home to be enjoyed with their family.

Reading poem cards and other shared texts – using a pointer – and reading from their own poetry books are always part of our reading rotation (independent activities while I'm working with groups). Sometimes I cut up sentences with lines from the poems for the children to put back together.

In our classroom, "Buzzy Bee" is a favourite poem. It's dramatic and a familiar context for most children. Other aspects I like are:

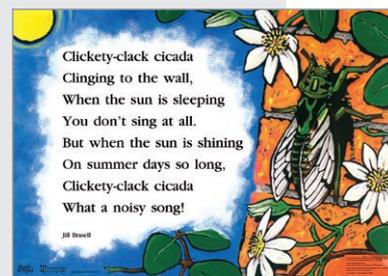
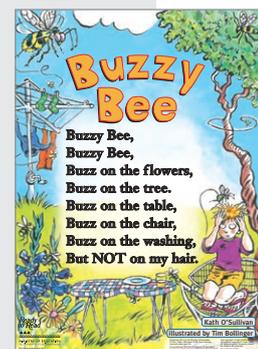
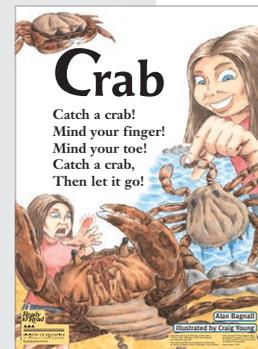
- the repetition
- the clear spacing (for one-to-one matching)
- the detail in the illustrations
- the commas and full stops and the word "NOT" in capital letters that all help to support phrasing and meaning
- the onomatopoeia ("Buzzy", "buzz"), the words starting with "B", and the "y" as an "ee" sound in "Buzzy".

To get started with this poem, I read the title and get the children to look at the bee at the top of the illustration. We talk about what they know about bees and how they feel about them. I get them to explore the illustrations and predict what might happen in the poem. They're often fascinated by the rotary clothes line. I use the pointer as I read the poem, and the students usually join in quite quickly with "Buzz on the". They like the dramatic ending and can easily make links to their own experiences. We read it several times in the first session with the children joining in more and more.

In later sessions, we explore the poem more deeply, as well as focusing on fluency and phrasing. For example, we might discuss who's telling us about the bee. I emphasise "my" when I read the last line to support the students to make connections and link the narrator with the illustration.

Other things we usually explore are:

- why the writer has put the word "NOT" in capital letters and how she wants us to say it
- "zz" as a medial and an end sound – we reread the poem with the students making zigzag lines in the air when they say the "zz" words. We make a list of other "z" words – "fizz", "fuzzy", "dizzy", "oozy", "lazy", and "crazy" and underline the "z" (or "zz")
- the "y" ending in "Buzzy" (listing other words we know that end like this – including some of the words from the "zz" exploration)
- the high-frequency words "on" and "the"
- the noises that other insects (or animals) make. Another favourite poem is "Clickety-clack Cicada", which is also about a New Zealand summer and a noisy insect. We might use the phrase "buzzy bee" as a starter for coming up with other descriptive phrases ("yappy dog", "mooring cow", "chirpy bird").



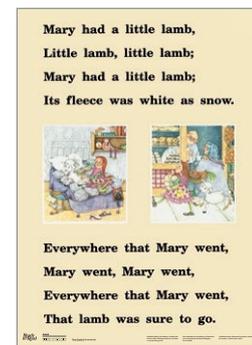
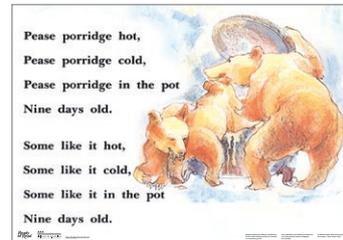
Exploring language

... it is well established, through studies and theories of language learning, that oral language underpins written language; the two are closely interrelated.

– *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, page 19

The rich (and often quirky) language of the poem cards is highly engaging and provides endless opportunities for enjoyment, exploration, and innovation. Some examples are listed below.

- Enjoy the repetitions of repeated phrases or sentence structures. Innovate on the language, for example:
 - “Mary had a little lamb” – “Bobby had a yellow bike ...”
 - Use the warnings in the poem “Crab” (“Mind your finger! Mind your toe!”) as a model to create more examples together that the students can illustrate and reread (for example: “Mind the puddle!” “Watch the cars!”)
 - After reading “Jack Be Nimble”, discuss what the students could jump over (the dirty puddle, the soccer ball, the skipping rope, the long wet grass). You could draw closer attention to the sounds of language by restricting this to the use of phrases with three syllables, as in “candlestick”).
- Explore descriptive language such as:
 - onomatopoeia, for example, in “Clickety-clack Cicada” and “Buzzy Bee”
 - similes, for example, “white as snow” in “Mary Had a Little Lamb”.
- Visualise the pictures created by:
 - made-up words – “puddle-skies” (“Puddle Play”), “Slooshy, sloshy” (“Slooshy Sloshy”), “splish-splash”, “slip-slide” (“A Splish-splash Day” in *Splish Splash!*), “a quick-as-lightning lizard-tongue lick” (“Runny Honey” in *Splish Splash!*)
 - noun phrases: “a one-horse open sleigh” (“Jingle Bells”), “A furry purry hump on my bed ... A cold and lonely howl outside” (“Bedtime Cat”)
 - adjectives – “tall”, “thin”, “silver”, “snuffly”, “prickly” (“Just a Touch”); “oozy”, “Slooshy, sloshy, Squishy, squashy” (“Slooshy, sloshy”). Create class displays of favourite words and use them during shared writing and as inspiration for drama and art.
- Discover the meanings of old-fashioned words (for example, “sixpence” and “rye”, “four and twenty” in “Sing a Song of Sixpence”, or “nimble” and “candlestick” in “Jack Be Nimble”). Find out what “pease porridge” is. (A traditional British dish of boiled and mashed split peas, onions, and carrot.)



Building a foundation for guided reading

For beginning readers, shared reading of poem cards provides opportunities to help build phonological awareness and the important understanding that print contains a message. The condensed form of a poem with all the words together on one page provides many opportunities to focus on aspects of language and reading.

Phonological awareness

Features such as rhyme, rhythm, and alliteration provide many opportunities to develop students' phonological awareness (an overall understanding of the sound systems of a language, for example, awareness that words are made up of combinations of sounds). As you read, pause to encourage the students to come in with the rhyming word, or have them clap the syllables in a word or line or listen for words that start the same way. Enjoy instances of alliteration ("dickory dock", "Wee Willie Winkie", "pease porridge"). Encourage students to make up oral examples such as "puffy potatoes", "salami sandwiches", "slimy slugs," and "jumping jellyfish". Also see Sound Sense - Hearing sounds in spoken words.

Concepts about print

For new readers, layout features (such as large print, wide spacing, short lines, and several lines of text) provide opportunities to learn that print carries a message and to build other important concepts about print. These include directionality and return sweep, the difference between a word and a letter, and one-to-one matching of spoken words to written words.

Point to each word as you read (while maintaining fluency and appropriate intonation). Provide lots of opportunities for students to reread the poems, using the pointer to practise reading left to right and the use of a return sweep.

Use the opportunity to introduce and reinforce the language of reading instruction (terminology such as "word", "letter", "first", "next", "last", "full stop", "question mark"). *Show me the first word. Where is the full stop?*

High-frequency words

As students begin to build their own set of automatically recognised high-frequency words (through shared reading and many other classroom literacy activities), ask individual students, using the pointer, to locate specific words in familiar poems. *Show me the word "the"? Can you find it in another place?* During shared writing sessions, provide opportunities to reinforce these familiar words.

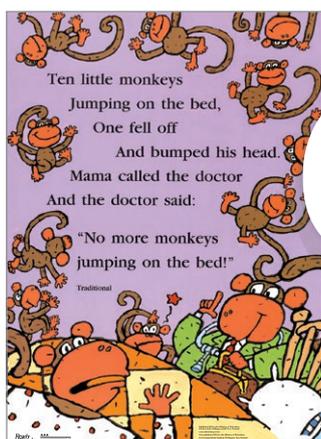
Learning letter names and matching letters and sounds

The large print and clear layout of the poem cards provides opportunities to build letter knowledge and match sounds to letters. This reinforces students' aural recognition of sounds as well as their learning about letters and sounds from other reading and writing activities. The students can locate words beginning with a specific letter or words that start with the same letter (or consonant blend or digraph). Also see Sound Sense – Building alphabet knowledge

Building knowledge of word structure

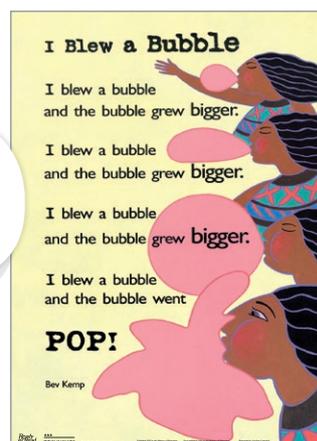
The poem cards provide many opportunities to explore aspects of word structure, such as:

- inflected endings of verbs (“ed”, “ing”, “s”)
- “s” as a plural for nouns
- contractions and what they are short for
- words with “y” endings (for example, “Buzzy”, “oozy”, “Slooshy”, “sloshy”, “Squishy”, “squashy”).



Can you show me where the doctor starts talking? Where does he stop? How do you know?

How does the author want us to read this bit? How do we know? What clues can you see?



Teacher talk

We might put on our “word detective” hats and go on a hunt for a specific ending. *We’re looking for words that make an -ing sound at the end. Can you make that sound? Do you know what it looks like?* I show them an example. *You’ll have to look and listen carefully!* Then I get the kids to put their finger on their nose when they spot one. We go through the poem at the end and write a list or circle them on a printout of the poem.

Thinking like readers

The poem cards provide opportunities, within very short and engaging pieces of text, for students to explore a wide variety of topics, ideas, and writing styles, to build comprehension, and to think critically about texts. Several poems describe personal experiences, which make them ideal for linking to language experience activities and writing.

Through the poem cards, teachers can support students in making connections, predicting (forming and testing hypotheses), inferring, and summarising. The poems lend themselves to identifying main ideas, evaluating ideas and information, and identifying the author's point of view or purpose for writing. (For more information about comprehension strategies, see *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, pages 131–134.)

Support the students to think critically:

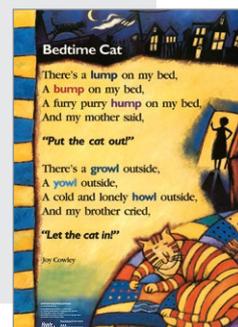
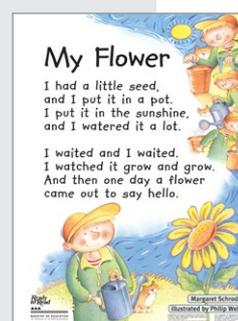
- Humpty Dumpty – Ask the students, *What happened to Humpty Dumpty? Why couldn't they put him together again?*
- Jingle Bells – *Why are the bells jingling?* Encourage the students to look for clues in the illustration.
- Sing a Song of Sixpence – Encourage the students to think about what “a dainty dish” might be.
- Ten Little Monkeys – Explore the cautionary message. *Why did the doctor say, “No more monkeys jumping on the bed!”? Will the monkeys stop?*
- Mice – Discuss words that show feelings and opinions: *What words tell us how the writer feels about mice?* Encourage the students to share their responses to the phrase “no one seems to like them much”.

Teacher talk – Making meaning and thinking critically

I want my students to be active readers, to notice things for themselves and ask questions or make predictions and inferences. The illustrations on the poem cards are really useful for getting the children focused and thinking before we read. I often introduce a poem with the questions: *What do you see? What do you notice?* (This is the same sort of thinking they will need to do in guided reading and personal, independent reading.) The students share their ideas and talk further with a buddy about what they think.

You can use the illustrations to help the children organise their thinking – to make connections and summarise ideas. For example, I can ask them to identify the characters in the illustrations (“Humpty Dumpty” and “Hey Diddle Diddle” are useful for this) or, when there are several illustrations, to match each illustration to the corresponding part of the poem (for example, “My Flower” or “Pat a Cake” – there are also lots of little illustrations around the frame to talk about with this one). I can also use the poem cards to make inferences (for example, with “Wee Willy Winkie”, I might ask: *Is it night-time in this picture? How can you tell?*)

One of my favourite poems is “Bedtime Cat”. There is such a lot to notice in the illustrations that helps to stimulate the children's thinking about their own experiences of cats and what this poem might be about. To get them to look more deeply, I might have to ask them what else they notice and possibly draw their attention to the night, the cat, shadow in the doorway in the illustration. Or I might ask them *What tells you that this poem is about what happens at night-time?* I also might think aloud to encourage them to think about the design features in the text. *I wonder why some words are different colours. How does this help us think about who is talking?* Most of all, the children love the contrast in the opinions about the cat – whether it should come inside or stay out at night. I ask them to think critically about why Mum wants the cat to be put out, and they love sharing their opinions about whether the cat should come in.



Teacher talk – Making meaning and thinking critically

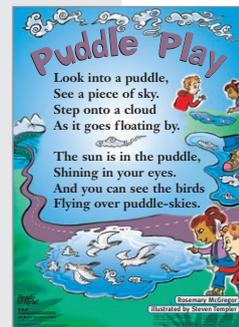
Puddle Play

A poem that has become a favourite in my class is “Puddle Play”. It’s great for getting students to use their imagination. “Puddle Play” describes seeing a reflection in a puddle and it gets the reader to visualise the unusual perspective of the writer.

Before I introduce this poem, I take the class outside to find puddles and then we look for reflections. I ask: *If you look into a puddle, what can you see?* This makes an immediate connection to reading the poem, and it helps them visualise what the writer is describing.

I encourage them to think critically: *Why do you see a piece of sky if you look down into the puddle? Can you really step onto a cloud? What does the writer mean? How can the sun be in the puddle?* This leads to the question: *What are “puddle-skies”?* So where are the birds? Sometimes, it might need further discussion to help the children understand that the birds are NOT in the puddle!

We might also think about why the writer called this poem “Puddle Play”? *Who is she talking to when she says “Look into ... Step onto ... And you can see ...”?*



Knowing the learner

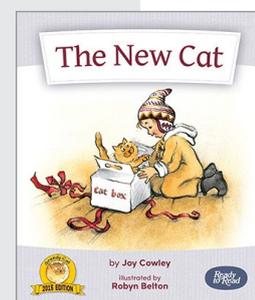
Shared and independent reading of the poem cards add to the opportunities teachers have to observe reading behaviours. For beginning readers, the assessment opportunities provided through shared reading are particularly useful in helping teachers make decisions about when to start students on guided reading.

Teacher talk: Noticing what children can do

Observing my new entrants when they read the poem cards helps me make decisions about when to start them on guided reading. This is the sort of evidence I’m looking for:

- They know that the author wrote the text and it is the same every time you read it.
- They are becoming confident with one-to-one matching and return sweep.
- They are expecting text to make sense and sound right.
- They are building some letter-sound connections and recognising some high-frequency words.
- They are looking for supporting information in the illustrations.

Recently, I made the decision to begin guided reading with a group of my new entrant children on *The New Cat* (Magenta) because I could see they had one-to-one matching, directionality, and could manage multiple lines of text on familiar poem cards, and knew the pictures have clues. By being aware of the behaviours the readers were using with the poem cards, I was able to support a successful first reading of this new story. When they read *The New Cat*, they noticed the change from “the” to “he” but needed help to actually work out “he”. They had to work hard, really look at the words and initial letters. For example, one student said, “I know it’s not ‘the’.” With a little help, he worked out “he”.



THE READY TO READ POEM CARDS

The Ready to Read poem cards can be found on the Ministry's [Instructional Series catalogue](#).

Set 1



Set 2



Available individually



Spish Splash!



The 8 poems in *Spish Splash!* are:

- A Spish-splash Day
- Night Noises
- Michael Apple-Seed
- Catsways
- Caterpillars
- Runny Honey
- Patterns
- Gummy Bubble

REFERENCES

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Ministry of Education (2018). “Sound Sense”. <http://literacyonline.tki.org.nz/Literacy-Online/Planning-for-my-students-needs/Sound-Sense> (accessed 3 August 2018).

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