

Verse Speaking Classes

Age 5 and Under

'Tiger' by Mary Ann Hoberman, published in The Puffin Book of Fantastic First Poems (Puffin), p. 10.

'The New Day' by Ian McMillan, published in Read Me Out Loud (Macmillan), p. 75.

Age 6

'Spring Cleaning' by Sue Cowling, published in The Works (Macmillan), p. 22.

'A Dragonfly' by Eleanor Farjeon, published in The Puffin Book of Fantastic First Poems (Puffin), p. 4.

Age 7

'Black Cat' by Jack Prelutsky, published in LAMDA Anthology of Verse and Prose vol. 13 (The Bodley Head), p. 12.

'Politeness' by A. A. Milne, published in Winnie the Pooh: The Complete Collection of Stories and Poems (Methuen), p. 286

Age 8

'Farewell, Pete' by Roger Stevens, published in Read Me Out Loud (Macmillan), p. 247.

'The Lonely Dragon' by Theresa Heine, published in Read Me 1: A poem for Every Day of the Year (Macmillan), p. 191

Age 9

'Haunted House' by Jack Prelutsky, published in LAMDA Anthology of Verse and Prose vol. 13 (The Bodley Head), p. 21.

'The Colours Live' by Mary O'Neill, published in LAMDA Anthology of Verse and Prose vol. 15 (Oberon Books), p. 60.

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Age 10

'Sounds Like Magic' by Celia Warren, published The Works (Macmillan), p. 170-171.

'What Happened to Miss Frugle' by Brian Pattern, published in The Oxford Book of Story Poems (Oxford University Press), p. 27.

Age 11

'The Night is Darkening Round Me' by Emily Bronte, published in Read Me Out Loud (Macmillan), p. 443.

'Grandma Was Eaten by a Shark' by Andrea Shavick, published in Read Me and Laugh (Macmillan), p. 245.

Age 12 and 13

'Creative Writing' by Gervase Phinn, published in Read Me Out Loud (Macmillan), p. 45-46

'I Dreamed Last Night' by Jane Mann, published in Read Me Out Loud (Macmillan), p. 175.

Age 14 and 15

'Education for Leisure' by Carol Ann Duffy published in Standing Female Nude (Anvil Press Poetry), p. 11.

'Internally Displaced Persons' by Naseer Ahmed Nasir translated from Urdu by Bina Biswas, published in A Man Outside History: Poems of Naseer Ahmed Nasir (Free Verse))

Age 16 & over

'The Listeners' by Walter de la Mare published in The Nation's Favourite Poems (BBC Books), p. 15

'The Day the World Stood Still' by John Cooper Clarke published in Ten Years in an Open Necked Shirt (Arena, Hutchinson Publishing), p. 52

Age 5 and Under

Tiger

By Mary Ann Hoberman

I'm a tiger
Striped with fur
Don't come near
Or I might Grrr
Don't come near
Or I might growl
Don't come near
Or I might
BITE!

The New Day

By Ian McMillan

The day is so new
You can hear it yawning,
Listen:

The new day
is yawning
and stretching

and waiting to start.

In the clear blue sky
I hear the new day's heart.

Age 6

Spring Cleaning

By Sue Cowling

Time to clean the windows,
Time to sweep the floors,
Time to rolls the rugs up
And beat them out of doors!
Time to wash the curtains
And dust a shelf or two,
Time to shake the duster,
With an A-A-TCHOO!

A Dragonfly

By Eleanor Farjeon

When the heat of the summer
Made drowsy the land,
A dragonfly came
And sat on my hand.

With its blue jointed body
And wings like spun glass,
It lit on my fingers
As though they were grass.

Age 7

Black Cat

By Jack Prelutsky

A cat as black
As blackest coal
Is out upon
His midnight stroll.
His steps are soft,
His walk is slow,
His eyes are gold,
They flash and glow.
And so I run,
And so I duck,
I do not need
His black-cat luck.

Politeness

By A. A. Milne

If people ask me,
I always tell them:
"Quite well, thank you, I'm very glad to say."
If people ask me,
I always answer,
"Quite well, thank you, how are you today?"
I always answer,
I always tell them,
If they ask me
Politely...
But sometimes
I wish
That they wouldn't.

Age 8

Farewell, Pete

By Roger Stevens

I had a little dinosaur
Nothing would it eat
But a chocolate cupcake
And my best mate, Pete

At school it burst the football
It wasn't fond of sports
It gobbled up the goalposts
And Mr Walton's shorts

It chased my Auntie Emma
You should have heard her shout
But it didn't like my granny
In fact, it spat her out

The Lonely Dragon

By Theresa Heine

A dragon is sad
Because everyone thinks
A dragon is fierce and brave,
And roars out flames,
And eats everybody,
Whoever comes near his cave.
But a dragon likes people,
A dragon needs friends,
A dragon is lonely and sad,
If anyone knows
Of a friend for a dragon,
A dragon would be very glad.

Age 9

Haunted House

By Jack Prelutsky

There's a house upon the hilltop
We will not go inside
For that is where the witches
live,
Where ghosts and goblins hide.

Tonight they have their party,
All the lights are burning bright,
But oh we will not go inside
The haunted house tonight.

The demons there are whirling
And the spirits swirl about.
They sing their songs to
Hallowe'en
'Come join the fun,' they shout.

But we do not want to go there
So we run with all our might
And oh we will not go inside
The haunted house tonight.

The Colours Live

By Mary O'Neill

The colours live
Between black and white
In a land that we
Know best by sight.
But knowing best
Isn't everything;
For colours dance,
And colours sing,
And colours laugh,
And colours cry.
Turn off the light
And colours die.
And they make you feel
Every feeling there is
From grumpiest grump
To the fizziest fizz.
And you, and you,
And I know well
Each has a taste,
And each has a smell,
And each has a wonderful
Story to tell.

Age 10

Sounds Like Magic

By Celia Warren

I listened to a sea-shell
and thought I could hear
the rushing of the waves
inside my ear.

I held an empty egg-shell
close against my head
and thought I heard a pecking
chick
hatching from its bed.

I found a hollow coconut
and listened for a sound
and thought I heard horses'
hooves
pounding on the ground.

I took an empty teacup
to see what I might hear
and thought I heard a giant's
voice
booming in my ear.

**What Happened to Miss
Frugle**

By Brian Patten

Stern Miss Frugle always said
To Peter and his sister
'After school you'll stay behind
If you so much as whisper.'

Then one winter afternoon
While skating on thin ice
The children saw it crack and
Miss
Frugle vanish in a trice.

People wondered where she'd
gone,
But no one really missed her,
And she was never found
because
Peter and his sister

Didn't so much as whisper
Didn't so much as whisper.

Age 11

The Night is Darkening Round Me

By Emily Bronte

The night is darkening round me,
The wild winds coldly blow;
But a tyrant spell has bound me
And I cannot, cannot go.

The giant trees are bending
Their bare boughs weighed with
snow.
And the storm is fast descending,
And yet I cannot go.

Clouds beyond clouds above me,
Wastes beyond wastes below;
But nothing drear can move me;
I will not, cannot go.

Grandma Was Eaten by a Shark

By Andrea Shavick

Grandma was eaten by a shark
Dad, by a killer whale
And my baby brother got slurped
up
By a rather hungry sea snail.

A cuttlefish cut my mum to bits
An octopus ate my sister
A jellyfish stung my auntie's toes
Giving her terrible blisters,

A pufferfish poisoned my
grandpa
A dogfish ate my cat
And then a catfish ate my dog!

I was very upset about that.
So you go for a swim if you like
Just don't ask me to come too
I'm staying here with my camera
I can't wait to see what gets you!

Age 12 and 13

Creative Writing

By Gervase Phinn

My story on Monday began:

*Mountainous seas crashed on the cliffs,
And the desolate land grew wetter...*

The teacher wrote a little note: *Remember the capital letter!*

My poem on Tuesday began:

*Red tongues of fire,
Licked higher and higher
From smoking Etna's top...*

The teacher wrote a little note: *Where is your full stop?*

My story on Wednesday began:

*Through the lonely, pine-scented wood
There twists a hidden path*

The teacher wrote a little note: *Start a paragraph!*

My story on Thursday began:

*The trembling child,
Eyes dark and wild,
Frozen midst the fighting...*

The teacher wrote a little note: *Take care – untidy writing!*

My story on Friday began:

*The boxer bruised and bloody lay,
His eye half closed and swollen...*

The teacher wrote a little note: *Use a semi-colon!*

Next Monday my story will begin:

Once upon a time...

Age 12 & 13 (contd)

I Dreamed Last Night

By Jane Mann

I dreamed last night of dinosaurs
Way back in space and time,
In forest ferns and lush green trees,
A land of swamps and slime.

I saw a Diplodocus plod
With long extended neck.
He was as heavy as a bus
And left the plants a wreck.

I saw an Allosaurus grip
His prey with powerful claws.
Eleven meters long he was
With dagger teeth and jaws.

I saw an Ornithomimus.
An athlete, he could run
As fast as any modern horse
And mimic birds in fun.

I saw a huge Triceratops
With three defensive horns.
He charged with these at predators
And dug up trees and thorns.

But then I saw Tyrannos rex,
His eyes on me as prey.
Oh how I ran and was relieved
To wake to light of day!

Age 14 & 15

'Education for Leisure' by Carol Ann Duffy

Today I am going to kill something. Anything.
I have had enough of being ignored and today
I am going to play God. It is an ordinary day,
a sort of grey with boredom stirring in the streets.

I squash a fly against the window with my thumb.
We did that at school. Shakespeare. It was in
another language and now the fly is in another language.
I breathe out talent on the glass to write my name.

I am a genius. I could be anything at all, with half
the chance. But today I am going to change the world.
Something's world. The cat avoids me. The cat
knows I am a genius, and has hidden itself.

I pour the goldfish down the bog. I pull the chain.
I see that it is good. The budgie is panicking.
Once a fortnight, I walk the two miles into town
for signing on. They don't appreciate my autograph.

There is nothing left to kill. I dial the radio
and tell the man he's talking to a superstar.
He cuts me off. I get our bread-knife and go out.
The pavements glitter suddenly. I touch your arm.

Age 14 & 15 (contd)

'Internally Displaced Persons' by Naseer Ahmed Nasir

They leave their homes
Unwillingly forced
And follow their fate
Through fields and trails
Massifs and woods
With all their goods
Love and hate
Mores and tales
All in bales
Carrying their own
Flesh and bones
Feet like stones
Their bodies and souls
Kids and crones
Torn by storms,
Rains and gales
Attacked by guns,
Helis and drones
No role to play
In games of peace
And deadly war
Not a word they say
But a question,
Why? What for?
While we yawn
Sitting at ease
In our climes
They leave their homes
And reside in camps
Strive for a living
Internally displaced and dead
Beg for a drop of water
And a piece of bread!

Age 16 & over

'The Listeners' by Walter de la Mare

'Is there anybody there?' said the Traveller,
Knocking on the moonlit door;
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses
Of the forest's ferny floor:
And a bird flew up out of the turret,
Above the Traveller's head:
And he smote upon the door again a second time;
'Is there anybody there?' he said.
But no one descended to the Traveller;
No head from the leaf-fringed sill
Leaned over and looked into his grey eyes,
Where he stood perplexed and still.
But only a host of phantom listeners
That dwelt in the lone house then
Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight
To that voice from the world of men:
Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark stair,
That goes down to the empty hall,
Harkening in an air stirred and shaken
By the lonely Traveller's call.
And he felt in his heart their strangeness,
Their stillness answering his cry,
While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,
'Neath the starred and leafy sky;
For he suddenly smote on the door, even
Louder, and lifted his head:—
'Tell them I came, and no one answered,
That I kept my word,' he said.
Never the least stir made the listeners,
Though every word he spake
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house
From the one man left awake:
Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,
And the sound of iron on stone,
And how the silence surged softly backward,
When the plunging hoofs were gone.

Age 16 & over (contd)

'The Day the World Stood Still' by John Cooper Clarke

Deafening whispers loud and clear
The sound of nothing meets my ears
I get the message – i know the drill
This is the day the world stood still

The day the world stood still
The day the world stood still
No traffic noise or sparrows trill
From the dead flowers on the window sill
This is the day the world stood still

In the mirror stand and stare
Like i figure nobody there
Time to spare time to kill
This is the day the world stood still

The day the world stood still
The day the world stood still
From the underground to the overspill
No trouble not even at the mill
This is the day the world stood still

Specs of dirt and static flies
In spacelike spots before my eyes
A cup of coffee and a couple of pills
This is the day the world stood still

The day the world stood still
The day the world stood still
The big freeze-up gimme a chill
No sense in feeling ill
This is the day the world stood still

I got the whole town to myself
I clear the drugstore shelf by shelf
I couldn't pay I had my fingers in the till
This is the day the world stood still

The day the world stood still
The day the world stood still
Drink and drugs and a thousand thrills
From now on it's all downhill
This is the day the world stood still

I'm falling from the top of my voice
I wreck the vehicles of my choice
A Rolls-Royce a coupe de ville
This is the day the world stood still

The day the world stood still
The day the world stood still
The last train to Clarkesville
Ran off the rails nobody killed
This is the day the world stood still

I'm driving in a company car
I'm jiving in the tango bar
I'm dining at the luxury grill
This is the day the world stood still

The day the world stood still
The day the world stood still
No trouble not even at the mill
At the end of the day I pay no bills
This is the day the world stood still