

David Zucker:
Poetry in Motion
Educational Guide, Grades PreK-12



About the Performance

Poetry comes to life in David Zucker's masterful performance of acting, mime, vocal gymnastics, humor, audience participation, and a trunk full of costumes, puppets, and props. David's irresistible cast of characters, recreated from poems by such masters as A.A. Milne, Lewis Carroll, Langston Hughes, Shel Silverstein, Edgar Allen Poe, and James Whitcomb Riley, are not to be missed.



About the Artist

David Zucker is an actor, director, playwright, mime and teacher whose unique programs have been delighting, enlightening and inspiring audiences for 45 years. He has performed for over 1 million children in his career! David regularly performs Poetry in Motion as a guest artist for Young Audiences and Arts For Learning chapters across the country. He has been chosen from over 900 ensembles as a National Young Audiences Artist of the Year.

Program Learning Goals

1. To develop an appreciation for poetry as a means of expression.
2. To empower students to perform poetry.
3. To increase understanding of the images, ideas, and feelings that poetry conveys.

Essential Questions

1. How can we use our distinct voices to tell stories?
2. How do poems convey emotion and meaning with fewer words than novels and longer stories?
3. What other art forms are related to, or derived from poetry?

Key Facts and Context for Students

What is a poem?

A **poem** is a piece of writing that uses imaginative words to share feelings, emotions, ideas, or stories. Sometimes poems use patterns in rhyming, syllables, and structure. A person who writes a poem is called a **poet**.

Types of poems:

Haiku

Japanese poem with 3 lines

Five syllables line 1

Seven syllables in line 2

Five syllables in line 3

Tanka

Japanese poem with 5 lines

Five syllables in line 1

Seven syllables in line 2

Five syllables line 3

Seven syllables in lines 4 and 5

Cinquain

A poem with 5 lines

Line 1: **noun**

Line 2: **2 adjectives**

Line 3: **3 verbs**

Line 4: **4 descriptive words**

Line 5: **synonym for noun in line 1**

Diamante

A diamond-shaped poem with 7 lines

Line 1: **noun**

Line 2: **2 adjectives**

Line 3: **3 verbs ending in -ing**

Line 4: **4 nouns**

Line 5: **3 verbs ending in -ing**

Line 6: **2 adjectives**

Line 7: **synonym for noun in line 1**

Limerick

A silly poem with 5 lines

Eight syllables in line 1

Eight syllables in line 2, rhymes with line 1

Five syllables in line 3

Five syllables in line 4, rhymes with line 3

Eight syllables in line 5, rhymes
with lines 1 and 2

Free Verse

*A poem without rhyme scheme or
meter that often follows the
natural rhythm of speech*

Where to find poems:

See page 6 for a list of poems used in the performance

Children's Poetry Archive: <https://childrens.poetryarchive.org>

Poets.org: <https://poets.org/poems-kids>

Poetry Foundation: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/children>

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Pre-Performance Activities

LEARNING GOALS:

- To explore poetry as a form of writing and expression
- To understand the emotional content of poetry

MATERIALS:

Copies of poems (*see pages 2 and 6 for ideas*)

TIPS FOR THE TEACHER:

- Make sure students understand that poetry is frequently emotional and full of feelings
- Pick simple and short poems for students to memorize



ACTIVITY 1: Poetry By Heart

DIRECTIONS:

1. Read several types of poems to the class. What do all of them have in common? Write students' responses on the board.
2. Ask the class if they have ever heard or written poetry before, and if they know what makes written poetry different from writing a story or a report.
3. Memorize a simple poem with the class:
 - Read the poem to the class
 - Write it on the board
 - Spend as much time as you deem necessary memorizing the poem
 - Allow students some time to practice on their own or with a partner
4. Recite the memorized poem (individually or in partners) in front of the class.

ACTIVITY 2: Presenting Poems

DIRECTIONS:

1. Read a poem to the class without any expression.
2. Read the poem a second time with expression. Ask the class what the difference was in the two readings. Which version did they prefer? Which was more enjoyable to listen to?
3. Write a short poem on the board. Have students work with partners to practice reciting the poem with expression.
4. Discuss words in the poem that are particularly expressive and bring images to mind. Make a list of these descriptive words on the board.
5. Choose a subject (or a few) and have students write poetry about this subject. Suggest that students use some of the descriptive words from the board.
6. Share students' poetry with the class.

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Pre-Performance Activity Extensions

1. Discuss the concept of memorization with students. What are some things that they have already memorized, such as song lyrics, sports statistics, etc.? Have volunteers recite anything that they have memorized.
2. Play the word association game. Start with one word on the board. Go around the room and have each student add the first word that comes to their mind.
3. Describe a scene to the class. As you speak, have the students draw a picture of what they imagine this scene to look like.
4. Review words that rhyme. Say a word and ask students to supply ones that rhyme.

Post-Performance Discussion Questions

1. What does "Poetry in Motion" mean?
2. What was David trying to demonstrate about poetry in his performance?
3. How did David move when he recited some of the poems?
4. What was your favorite poem from the performance? Why?

Post-Performance Activities

LEARNING GOALS:

- To understand how poetry can tell a story
- To demonstrate how poetry can be brought to life through movement
- To enhance poetry writing skills
- To expose students to different types of poetry

MATERIALS:

Copies of a variety of types of poems (*see pages 2 and 6 for ideas*)

TIPS FOR THE TEACHER:

- Playing charades will help the students become accustomed to acting out words
- Review the different examples of poems on page 2 with your students

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Post-Performance Activities, continued

ACTIVITY 1: Dramatic Poetry

DIRECTIONS:

1. Play charades with the class. Move your body in a certain way so that it expresses a phrase. Repeat this a few times. Then have a volunteer from the class perform.
2. Divide the class into groups of three or four students. Have a selection of poems written or typed on paper. Give each group a poem to work on. Make sure that you give each group a different type of poem. Give the groups about 15-minutes to decide how they are going to dramatize the poem.
3. Have students perform their poems in front of the class.

ACTIVITY 2: Multicultural Poetry

DIRECTIONS:

1. Read a favorite poem to the class. Tell the class why this is one of your favorite poems.
2. Introduce the idea of different types of poetry. Discuss poetry from other countries (haiku, tanka, cinquain, diamante, etc.). Explain how each type is written.
3. Choose one of the types of poetry to write. Allow students sufficient time to complete the poem. Illustrate the poetry when it is complete. You might suggest that they illustrate the background of the paper first, then write the poem on top.

Post-Performance Activity Extensions

1. Illustrate a poem using one scene, multiple scenes, or perhaps a comic strip format.
2. Choose one of the poems that David performed (*see page 6*) and have students dramatize it their own way.
3. Discuss the rules of haiku, tanka, diamante, limerick, etc. and have students write their own poems and perform them for the class.
4. Study rhyming patterns in poetry (AABB, ABAB, etc.). Have students compose verses that rhyme.



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Poems included in *Poetry in Motion*

- Carrol, Lewis. *Jabberwocky*
- Cullen, Countee. *Incident*
- de Regniers, Beatrice Schenk. *Keep a Poem in your Pocket*
- Dickinson, Emily. *I'm Nobody, Who are You*
- Francis, Robert. *The Base Stealer* ***riddle poem, please don't use in advance***
- Heide, Florence. *Grounded*
- Hughes, Langston. *Poem*
- Hughes, Langston. *Little Lyric of Great Importance*
- Janosco, Beatrice. *The Garden Hose* ***riddle poem, please don't use in advance***
- Kuskin, Karla. *Hughbert and the Glue*
- Kinnell, Galway. *Crying*
- Littledale, Freya. *When My Dog Died*
- Malam, Charles. *Steam Shovel* ***riddle poem, please don't use in advance***
- McCord, D. *Everytime I Climb a Tree*
- Milne, A. A. *The Island*
- Milne, A. A. *The Market Square*
- Milne, A. A. *The King's Breakfast*
- Milne, A. A. *The Four Friends*
- Mitchell, Adrian. *A Speck Speaks*
- Morrison, Lillian. *The Sidewalk Racer* ***riddle poem, please don't use in advance***
- Nash, Ogden. *The Adventures of Isabel*
- Noyes, Alfred. *The Highway Man*
- Prelutsky, Jack. *New Kid on the Block*
- Rauter, Rose. *Peach* ***riddle poem, please don't use in advance***
- Riley, James Whitcomb. *Little Orphan Annie*
- Riley, J.W. *The Raggedy Man*
- Shakespeare, William. Speech "Alas Poor Yorick" from *Hamlet*
- Spilka, Arnold. *Puzzle*
- Thayer, Ernest Lawrence. *Casey At the Bat*
- Watson, Nancy Dingman. *Up in the Pine*
- Whitman, Ruth. *Listening to Grownups Quarreling*

Note: Poems in "Poetry in Motion" are pulled from this list, but not all poems are used in the performance.

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Further Resources

- Berry, James: *Everywhere Faces Everywhere: Poems*, Simon & Schuster, 1997
- Ryan, Margaret: *How to Write a Poem (Speak Out, Write On! Book)*, Franklin Watts, Inc., 1996.
- Shihab Nye, Naomi. *The Same Sky: A Collection of Poems from Around the World*, Aladdin Paperbacks, 1996.

Curricular Connections

English Language Arts and Literacy Anchor Standards

Reading

- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. (R.PK-12.2)
- Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone. (R.PK-12.4)

Writing

- Write narratives to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured sequences. (W.PK-12.3)

Speaking and Listening

- Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. (SL.PK-12.2)
- Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric. (SL.PK-12.3)

Language

- Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening. (L.PK-12.3)
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings. (L.PK-12.5)

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Curricular Connections, continued

Theatre K-12 Standards

Creating

- Organize and develop artistic ideas and work. (T.C.02)

Performing

- Select, analyze and interpret artistic work for presentation. (T.P.04)
- Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation. (T.P.05)
- Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work. (T.P.06)

Responding

- Perceive and analyze artistic work. (T.R.07)
- Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. (T.R.08)
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. (T.R.09)

Connecting

- Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art. (T.Co.10)
- Relate artistic ideas and works to societal, cultural and historical contexts to deepen understanding. (T.Co.11)

