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POETRY EXERCISES

JENNIE HALL

Poetry is an ally of music in the lightening and brightening of the morning exercise. It plays its part in several ways. One rôle is the introductory reading. The teacher in charge of the exercise will choose an appropriate piece of verse to follow the opening song. Happy is he, indeed, if he can find one that will add a touch of fancy to the topic of the morning—Miss Mulock's "Green Things Growing," for an exercise about the school garden; "The Sandpiper," when "Birds" is the subject. Most often, however, he must take something on an unrelated theme, chosen for its general appeal, its enduring beauty, its inspiring message—Stevenson's "Celestial Surgeon," Wordsworth's sonnet beginning "The world is too much with us." Repetition here is a virtue, for by rehearing well-selected pieces of verse, the school gradually comes into possession of part of its poetical heritage. A seventh grade once printed a little book of morning-exercise readings which had proved to be favorites with children or teachers.

The present class has printed a revised edition. The table of contents runs thus:

<i>Bible</i>	
	Beatitudes, Matthew, Chapter 5
	I Corinthians, Chapter 12
	I Corinthians, Chapter 13
	Psalm 23
	Psalm 24
	Psalm 90
<i>St. Francis, of Assisi</i> 1182-1226	
	Canticle of the Sun
<i>Blake, William</i> 1757-1827	
	The Piper and the Child
	The Shepherd
<i>Brown, Sir Thomas</i> 1605-1682	
	My Garden
<i>Browning, Robert</i> 1812-1889	
	Home Thoughts from Abroad
	A Song from Pippa Passes
	Epilogue to Asolando
<i>Burns, Robert</i> 1759-1796	
	For A' That and A' That
	To a Mountain Daisy
	To a Mouse
	Up in the Morning Early
<i>Carmen, Bliss</i> 1861	
	A Vagabond Song
<i>Carroll, Lewis</i> 1832-1890	
	Jabberwocky

- Cunningham, Allan* 1784-1842
A Sea Song
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo* 1803-1882
Forbearance
Duty
- Kipling, Rudyard* 1865
From a Song of the English
Recessional
- Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth* 1807-1882
Nature, the Old Nurse
- Martin, William* 1834-1896
An Apple Orchard in the Spring
- Milton, John* 1608-1674
Song on May Morning
- Mulock, Dinah Maria* 1826-1887
Green Things Growing
- Nashe, Thomas* 1567-1601
Spring
- Rands, William Brighty* 1823-1882
The Wonderful World
- Riley, James Whitcomb* 1853-1916
When the Frost is on the Punkin
- Scott, Sir Walter* 1771-1832
My Native Land, from *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*
- Shakespeare, William* 1564-1616
Ariel's Song, from "The Tempest"
Puck and the Fairy, from "A Midsummer Night's Dream"
Polonius to Laertes, from "Hamlet"
Under the Greenwood Tree, from "As You Like It"
The Quality of Mercy, from "The Merchant of Venice"
- Stevenson, Robert Louis* 1850-1894
A Camp
The Celestial Surgeon
The Land of Story Books
- Tennyson, Alfred* 1809-1892
Flower in the Crannied Wall
The Eagle
From *The Golden Year*
- Whitman, Walt* 1819-1892
Captain, My Captain
From the Song of the Rolling Earth
I Hear America Singing
- Wordsworth, William* 1770-1850
The Daffodils
The Rainbow
The World
- Yeats, William Butler* 1865
The Lake Isle of Innisfree

During the year every grade is studying poetry in the class room—the first, Mother Goose, perhaps; and the twelfth, Milton. This

study, like history and geography and all others, finds its forum in the morning exercises. After a class has become acquainted with several poems that they like, they generally want to present them to the school, for verse is song and must be vocalized to be completed, and people who are trained into social feeling must share what they find good. Perhaps the program is quite heterogeneous, with each child giving his favorite—"Charge of the Light Brigade," "The Daffodils," "A Sea Song," "Ariel's Song," "The Destruction of Sennecherib." Or a class in the seventh grade has been reading Scotch ballads. On one morning, the children show pictures of Scotch costumes, Scotch peels, and Scotch scenery, and describe the border life and border feuds of three centuries ago. Before this background, on the following morning, they read "Kinmont Willie," "Chevy Chase," "The Douglas Tragedy," and sing "Lord Randal" to a tune of their own making. Or the fifth grade, hearing Burns' "To a Mouse," becomes interested in the Scotch dialect and asks for more. After a month, the study eventuates in their reading before the school, "To a Mouse," "To a Mountain Daisy," "Up in the Morning Early," "I Love My Jean," "A Rosebud by My Early Walk," "The Highland Lassie," "Bannocks of Barley," "Bannockburn," "Here's a Health to Them That's Awa," "Auld Lang Syne." Or a teacher of the sixth grade has called upon the poets to aid her in lifting into a clearer air the childish hunger for wandering, for adventurous travel, that she finds among her boys. The children, finding their own dumb emotions expressed, throw themselves with ardor into the rendering of another's verse. There results a morning exercise in which pupils of the grade read Gerald Gould's "Wander Thirst," "The Buccaneer," Kipling's "Explorer," Björnson's "Over the Mountain High." As a part of the same program the boys of the high school sing Schubert's "Wandering" and a buccaneering song to an air composed by one of themselves, and a mother of one of the pupils sings Eleanor Smith's "Flying Kite." Or in another class there accumulates about "Paul Revere's Ride," as a nucleus, a small collection of famous rides—"Sheridan's Ride," "The Diverting History of John Gilpin," "The Ride from Ghent to Aix." The class, having enjoyed these stories, gives them again at morning exercise. Perhaps on the other hand, a grade becomes interested in an author, his personality as well as his poetry—a second grade in Stevenson, a seventh in Scott, a fourth in Blake. Such an exercise is reported among "Exercises Showing Types of Preparation" (page 11). As May Day approached, a fifth grade once read a sheaf of spring poems that they themselves had made. The following one was a favorite of the class:

SPRING

With May Day comes the lovely spring,
The ground is ready for the seed,
The father-bird begins to sing;
The mother-bird her young does feed.

The robin redbreast, fat and round,
Is tapping softly on the ground,
The foolish worm the signal hears,
And from the ground he soon appears.

—LEONARD M.

All the exercises thus far described were planned by grades and were carefully prepared. At other times we have mornings open to the school. There is no preparation by the pupils, except such as individuals may make voluntarily after an announcement the day before that, "Tomorrow will be a 'Favorite-Poems Morning'." The leader, however, must prepare very carefully. He ransacks his memory and written grade-reports to find what pieces of verse certain classes learned in certain years. At the morning exercise he gives the first line of a poem and says, "Who in the tenth grade can finish that?" If he has chosen wisely, and if the Muse of Memory is propitious, a pupil rises and finishes the poem, or perhaps goes on for a few lines, and then must give over and let some one else continue. Next, the teacher will perhaps start a nursery-rhyme for the first grade to finish; for it is more diverting if the exercise is a potpourri of young and old, of beauty and nonsense. Sometimes the leader will call for any poem by a certain author—Scott, Longfellow, Stevenson, Shakespeare. Or he will ask that some one in the audience start a poem. Perhaps there will be given a sonnet of Milton, learned the week before in the high-school class; or the "Jabberwocky," brought from home reading, or some old favorite remembered from a primary grade. The idea is by any means to make the recalling and reciting of verse a pleasure.

An exercise in which poetry is given lovingly and joyfully is possible only, be it observed, when the teaching of it has been right, when children have been free to like or to dislike, when they have not been permitted to read aloud unless they have had something to express, when they have had an interested audience wanting to get something new from their reading, when a rich background of imagery and emotion has been built up, when imagination has been stimulated and then has been given liberty to grow after its own manner.