

R is for... Reading out loud

A KS1/KS2 activity by the Poetry Society & Southbank Centre

www.southbankcentre.co.uk 
www.poetrysociety.org.uk 

Children often struggle to develop confidence reading poetry out loud. One way to build their confidence is to experiment with reading poems in lots of different ways, and to make it as fun as possible.

With your class, choose some poetry to read. It could be a short poem or just a couple of lines depending on age and ability. It might be a favourite class poem or you could have a look on the **Children's Poetry Archive**. 

Ask your class to repeat the lines, reading aloud or under their breaths until they are familiar with them.

Then ask your class to suggest different ways to read the poem; these can include

- emotions (happy, angry),
- directions (slow motion, as if you were an opera singer),
- actions (performing kung fu moves on each beat, whilst hopping). They should write these on a slip of paper and put them in a hat to be drawn out later. Allow the class to be as imaginative as possible, though it might be an idea to vet some of the suggestions!

If possible get the class to stand in a circle, or where they can all see each other. Each child then takes a slip of paper and will perform the poem in that style.

Go round listening to the performances, but – importantly – after each person reads, the class must perform back to them, copying their actions and intonation. This helps reassure the reader that there's no wrong way to read the poem! The more energetic their reading is, the more energetic the response will be.

After each performance the class can guess the directions that the reader was given.