

Calling all 7th and 8th Grade Students to a poetry challenge!

Bishop Conley has chosen 10 poems for you to read and become familiar with over the upcoming months. You must be thinking, this is so easy! I can read 10 poems in ten minutes! Well...hold on. Let's make this a little more interesting. Of these 10 poems we would like you to attempt to memorize four.

If that sounds a little scary, don't be alarmed. It really isn't so difficult, and you have plenty of time to start working on it.

Here are the four poems we are going to try to memorize to "wow" Bishop Conley. I wonder how many you can memorize. Try to do them all!

1. I Never Saw a Moor by Emily Dickinson
2. There Was a Naughty Boy by John Keats
3. The Destruction of Sennacherib by Lord Byron
4. Casey at the Bat by Ernest Lawrence Thayer

Before you begin memorizing, start with reading all ten of the poems several times to become very familiar with them. Read them aloud so you can hear what they sound like. It would also be great to have someone else read the poems to you. You just relax and soak them in! If you want, you can split the poems and read them at different times.

It is often helpful to get an adult family member or a teacher to help you learn poetry. If there are words that you are unsure of how to pronounce, ask an adult. Your helper could also read lines to you for you to repeat, or just listen to you as you try to remember the lines of a poem, giving you a few hints along the way. Actually, the easiest and most preferable way to memorize a poem is like this, just hearing the poem and repeating the lines. This is the way many of you learned your prayers. However, you may not have a teacher who can do this. In that case, you can still memorize poetry by learning it on your own.

The "Do it Yourself" version of how to memorize a poem.

First, choose a poem and read the whole thing aloud to get a feel for it.

Then read aloud the first line of the poem three times and concentrate on what you are trying to memorize. Next, cover the line, (close your eyes, or look away) and try to say aloud what you have read as best you can from your memory. Look back at the text and check yourself, fixing any mistake(s) you made. And then read the line again, trying until you can successfully remember, without looking, the first line of the poem with no mistakes.

Once you feel confident that you “have it” go to the second line and repeat the same procedure: read thoughtfully aloud three times, cover the text, and repeat from your memory. Sometimes you get it right away, and sometimes you have to keep practicing several times.

When you feel confident that you know the second line, read both lines together and then try to say both of the lines together from memory. Continue by adding additional lines one at a time, following the same sort of procedure. Upon occasion go back and try to put some or all the lines you have been working on together as a whole. You can adjust it for yourself, taking more time to work on parts that give you a little more trouble. It won't take you long to memorize a large “chunk” of poetry.

Let's try it. I'll guide you through memorizing half of our first poem. You can put the actual poem next to these instructions or just follow along here. It won't take us long. Here we go.

I Never Saw a Moor by Emily Dickinson

Read aloud: ***I never saw a moor,*** (repeat that 3 times)

Cover the line and try to repeat it from memory. Yes, actually do it. :)

Got it? If not, go back and read it again. Once you have it then-

Read line 2: ***I never saw the sea,*** (repeat 3 times.)

Perhaps close your eyes as you repeat. Cover the line and repeat it from memory.

Read both lines: ***I never saw a moor,***

I never saw the sea,

Okay, stop now and cover the lines and repeat from memory.

Can you say the two lines without peeking? I bet you can, but if not, no worries. Just go back and repeat the lines. You'll get it.

Then read the 3rd line: ***Yet know I how the heather looks,*** (repeat 3 times)

That line is a little more tricky. Look carefully at the order of the words. Now cover that line and try to repeat from memory. (Time for you to do that.)

If you know the 3rd line, you could go back and attach it to the first two lines and try them all together - or just go on to the next line.

Read: ***And what a wave must be.*** (repeat 3 times)

Say from memory. You could practice the last two lines together and recite them-

Yet know I how the heather looks,

And what a wave must be.

Give that a try...or if you feel confident, read all four lines together paying special attention to what you have learned.

I never saw a moor,

I never saw the sea,

Yet know I how the heather looks,

And what a wave must be.

Cover the text, and see how much you can say. If you get stuck, just take a little peek, and try again. Chances are, you have already memorized half of the poem! You can memorize the second half the same way. When you get tired, stop. You know when you've had enough.

Some of the poems that you are going to memorize are much longer. But all of them are easier to do in bite-sized portions. You can keep your list of poems by your bed or where they are easily accessible, and when you have five or ten minutes work on one of your poems.

Remember, you will need to go back periodically and review, making sure that you have not forgotten anything. But it should only take a moment to refresh and strengthen your memory of the poem.

Congratulations! You are on your way to learning poetry by heart.

Diane Coene



My Heart Leaps Up By William Wordsworth

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.



There Was a Naughty Boy by John Keats

There was a naughty boy,
And a naughty boy was he,
He ran away to Scotland
To see what he could see-
There he found
That the ground
Was as hard,
That a yard
Was as long,
That a song
Was as merry,
That a cherry
Was as red,
That lead
Was as weighty,
That fourscore
Was as eighty,
That a door
Was as wooden
As in England-
So he stood in his shoes
And he wondered,
He wondered,
He stood in his shoes
And he wondered.

Pippa's Song by Robert Browning

The year's at the spring,
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in His Heaven –
All's right with the world!

Wind and the Moon by George McDonald

Said the Wind to the Moon, "I will blow you out;
You stare
In the air
Like a ghost in a chair,
Always looking what I am about –
I hate to be watched; I'll blow you out."

The Wind blew hard, and out went the Moon.
So, deep
On a heap
Of clouds to sleep,
Down lay the Wind, and slumbered soon,
Muttering low, "I've done for that Moon."

He turned in his bed; she was there again!
On high
In the sky,
With her one ghost eye,
The Moon shone white and alive and plain.
Said the Wind, "I will blow you out again."

The Wind blew hard, and the Moon grew dim.
"With my sledge,
And my wedge,
I have knocked off her edge!
If only I blow right fierce and grim,
The creature will soon be dimmer than dim."

He blew and he blew, and she thinned to a thread.
"One puff
More's enough
To blow her to snuff!
One good puff more where the last was bred,

And glimmer, glimmer, glum will go the thread.”
He blew a great blast, and the thread was gone.
In the air
Nowhere
Was a moonbeam bare;
Far off and harmless the shy stars shone –
Sure and certain the Moon was gone!

The Wind he took to his revels once more;
On down,
In town,
Like a merry – mad clown,
He leaped and hallowed with whistle and roar –
“What’s that?” The glimmering thread once more!

He flew in a rage – he danced and blew;
But in vain
Was the pain
Of his bursting brain;
For still the broader the Moon – scrap grew,
The broader he swelled his big cheeks and blew.

Slowly she grew – till she filled the night,
And shone
On her throne
In the sky alone,
A matchless, wonderful silvery light,
Radiant and lovely, the queen of the night.

Said the Wind: “What a marvel of power am I!
With my breath,
Good faith!
I blew her to death –
First blew her away right out of the sky—
Then blew her in; what strength have I!”

But the Moon she knew nothing about the affair;
For high
In the sky,
With her one white eye,
Motionless, miles above the air,
She had never heard the great Wind blare.



Casey at the Bat by Ernest Lawrence Thayer

It looked extremely rocky for the Mudville nine that day,
The score stood four to six with but an inning left to play.
And so, when Cooney died at first, and Burrows did the same,
A pallor wreathed the features of the patrons of the game.
A straggling few got up to go, leaving there the rest,
With the hope which springs eternal within the human breast.
For they thought if only Casey could get a whack at that,
They'd put up even money with Casey at the bat.
But Flynn preceded Casey, and likewise so did Blake,
And the former was a pudding and the latter was a fake;
So on that stricken multitude a death-like silence sat,
For there seemed but little chance of Casey's getting to the bat.
But Flynn let drive a single to the wonderment of all,
And the much despised Blakey tore the cover off the ball,
And when the dust had lifted and they saw what had occurred,
There was Blakey safe on second, and Flynn a-hugging third.
Then from that gladdened multitude went up a joyous yell,
It bounded from the mountain top and rattled in the dell,
It struck upon the hillside, and rebounded on the flat,
For Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat.
There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his place,
There was pride in Casey's bearing and a smile on Casey's face,
And when responding to the cheers he lightly doffed his hat,
No stranger in the crowd could doubt, 'twas Casey at the bat.
Ten thousand eyes were on him as he rubbed his hands with dirt,
Five thousand tongues applauded as he wiped them on his shirt;
And while the writhing pitcher ground the ball into his hip –
Defiance gleamed from Casey's eyes – and a sneer curled Casey's lip.
And now the leather-covered sphere came hurtling through the air,
And Casey stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur there;
Close by the sturdy batsman the ball unheeded sped –
"That ain't my style," said Casey – "Strike one," the Umpire said.
From the bleachers black with people there rose a sullen roar,
Like the beating of the storm waves on a stern and distant shore,
"Kill him! Kill the Umpire!" shouted someone from the stand—
And it's likely they'd have done it had not Casey raised his hand.
With a smile of Christian charity great Casey's visage shone,
He stilled the rising tumult and he bade the game go on;
He signalled to the pitcher and again the spheroid flew,
But Casey still ignored it and the Umpire said, "Strike two."
"Fraud!" yelled the maddened thousands, and the echo answered "Fraud."
But one scornful look from Casey and the audience was awed;
They saw his face grow stern and cold; they saw his muscles strain,

And they knew that Casey would not let that ball go by again.
The sneer is gone from Casey's lip; his teeth are clenched with hate,
He pounds with cruel violence his bat upon the plate;
And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go,
And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow.
Oh! Somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright,
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light.
And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout;
But there is no joy in Mudville—mighty Casey has "Struck Out."



The Destruction of Sennacherib by Lord Byron

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen:
Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved and forever grew still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride;
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beaten surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail:
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

Death Be not Proud by John Donne

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

The World is too Much with Us by William Wordsworth

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers; --
Little we see in nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.



I Never Saw a Moor by Emily Dickinson

I never saw a moor,
I never saw the sea;
Yet know I how the heather looks,
And what a wave must be.

I never spoke with God,
Nor visited in Heaven;
Yet certain am I of the spot
As if the chart were given.

Psalm 8 The Bible

O lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!
Who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength
Because of thine enemies,
That thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man, that thou visitest him?

For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels,
And hast crowned him with glory and honour.

Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands;
Thou hast put all things under his feet;

All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;
The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea,
And whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!