



# Celebrating poetry: with the CLiPPA and in the classroom

Article Author:

[Charlotte Hacking](#) [1]

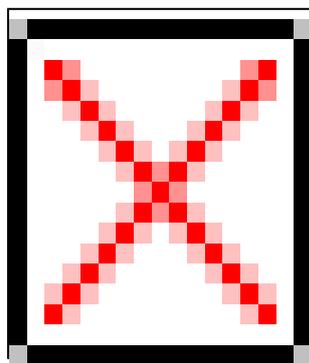
[224](#) [2]

Byline:

The CLiPPA 2017

Poetry is a wonderful medium for engaging children in reading and writing, however it can often be overlooked in favour of more traditional stories or non-fiction in classrooms, bookshops and in the home.

At the **Centre for Literacy in Primary Education**, says **Charlotte Hacking**, we are proud to be the National Poetry Centre for Primary Schools, and our **Centre for Literacy in Primary Poetry Award (CLiPPA)** is the only national award to showcase poetry published for children. This year's shortlist celebrates a broad spectrum of what poetry is and what it can do for children.

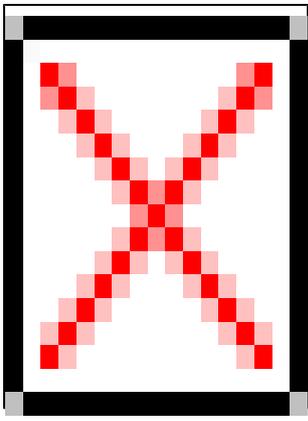


**Zim Zam Zoom!** by James Carter, illustrated by Nicola Colton (Otter Barry Books) is a wonderful example of the joy of early play with rhyme and song. These are the foundations of a quality early reading experience. Joining in with nursery rhymes, jingles and songs are often children's first way in to connecting spoken words to print on the page.

Listening to poems read aloud and re-read, allows them to savour and try out parts of the language before joining in and performing themselves as the language becomes more familiar, such as in the use of onomatopoeia in *Firework Poem*.

The musicality of poems such as the title poem *Zim Zam Zoom!* and the get up and go poem *Splish! Splash! Splosh!* invite children to join in with choral performances and use their whole bodies to engage in the action on the page. Children can also learn, through poems such as *Hullabaloo*, where *'The cow goes Meow'* and *'The mouse goes Moo'*, that language is to be experimented and played with, and that poetry is fun!

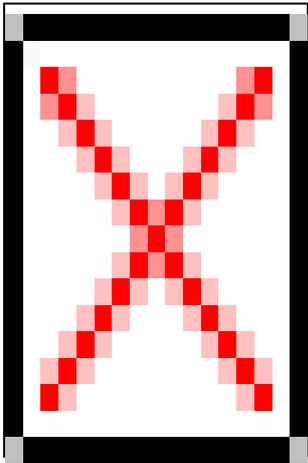
Michael Rosen is a master of language and word play. His collection **Jelly Boots and Smelly Boots**, illustrated by David



Tazyman (Bloomsbury) contains rhymes and laughs aplenty. Word play becomes more sophisticated with the witty *Imagine* and *Birdsong* exploring homographs and their meanings and *To*, which explores words within words and homophones in a tongue twisting tangle.

The poems speak to children directly, encouraging deeper engagement and response. Subjects such as school in *Question Mark* and *The School Trip* and family in *Dad, In Bed* and *My Brother*, relate to children's immediate and prior experience, which allows them to make personal connections with poems. Engaging children in book talk [\[1\]](#) [\[3\]](#) around poems helps them to respond more deeply. Ask children to share their likes and dislikes, ask questions and think about personal connections or familiar experiences that relate to what they have heard. You may then focus on discussing words or phrases that are particularly vivid or memorable or the effect of devices like repetition and rhyme.

The collection also draws attention to the importance of words. We are told in *Words* that '*words are presents that we give to each other*' and poems such as *The STOP Button*, *Metroland* and *Metal Covers on the Pavement* remind us that words are all around us for us to make our own meaning from. The collection also contains a wealth of narrative poetry. Poems such as *The Dam on the Beach*, *Robots* and *The People* place the thought of writing about experiences, happy, sad and familial as an important activity.



Kate Wakeling's debut collection **Moon Juice**, illustrated by El'na Brasli'a (The Emma

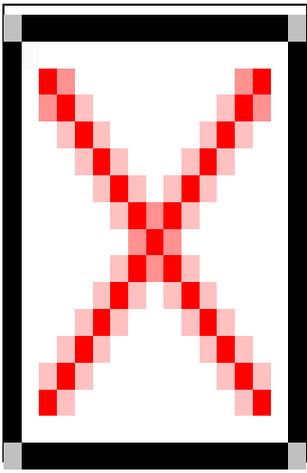
Press) is a wonderful exploration of poetry across a range of forms. As children's reading of poetry develops, they should be encouraged to re-read and look at poems in different ways. Multiple readings will help young readers explore the ideas and feelings at the heart of a poem.

Encourage children to read poems aloud to hear their sounds and musicality. The lyricism of poems like *Hamster Man* and *Dodo* revisit the musicality of poetry and children may be inspired to explore the rhythm and rhyme of such poems by performing to beats and music. They may even be inspired to write lyrics of their own.

They should also look at the way the poem is laid out on the page; the white spaces, the shapes it makes and what this adds to our understanding of the ideas or feelings within the poem or the way it could be performed. The wonderful ode to the *Telescope*, for example, celebrates the form of the object throughout its presentation.

The collection also challenges children to look at what defines poetry. The brilliant *Hair Piece* looks like a narrative recount on the page but contains an array of poetic devices such as assonance, alliteration and rhyme which clearly define this as prose poetry.

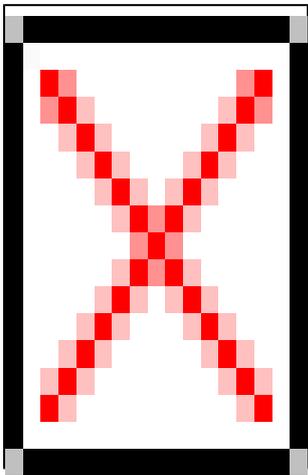
The long history of poetry as a medium and the influence of the classics of yesterday on the poets of tomorrow can be



seen in Michaela Morgan's clever anthology **Wonderland: Alice in Poetry** (Macmillan). The collection not only shares a range of Lewis Carroll's original works but also the poetry that inspired him, such as the familiar *The Star*, more widely known now in its nursery rhyme form *'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star'*. It also brings together a range of new and unique poems by famous names such as Roger McGough and John Agard and inspiring new voices such as Shauna Darling Robertson.

Joshua Seigal's **Read Me**, is a wonderful reflection on the instructions Alice receives in Wonderland and their subsequent results, cleverly enhanced by the presentation of the text on the page in this concrete poem. It is also a powerful and emotive insight into the power of poetry on a reader; *'I am a poem. Read me and you'll grow'*.

Older children could begin to explore poetry as giving them a voice on issues pertinent to themselves and society in poems such as Shauna Darling Robertson's *Violent Vision* and Cheryl Moskowitz's *On Growing Up*. Deeper discussions around personal connections can take place after reading such poems, exploring the more profound messages contained within.



The incredible success of last year's **CLiPPA** and **Carnegie Medal** winner Sarah Crossan has enabled the verse novel to become a more widely profiled form. Kwame Alexander's **Booked** (Andersen Press) is a poignant and expertly crafted narrative in verse, showcasing a variety of poetic forms.

Blackout poetry is an incredibly engaging way of inspiring children to find meaning in language. Alexander uses the technique to great effect in sharing the struggle of his lead character, Nick Hall, with engaging in reading the classic **Huckleberry Finn**, ending up with the words *'Adventures of Huckleberry Finn reads jest (sic) like a funeral orgie I shoved it down the toilet.'* The power of poetry and in particular the verse novel on reluctant or disengaged readers can be seen in the transformation of Nick's attitude at the end of the story and his appreciation of the form. He relishes *'a lot of white space on the page'* and in the poem of the same name, describes Karen Hesse's powerful verse novel **Out of the Dust** as *'unputdownable'*

Readers in upper primary and lower secondary will empathise with the issues Nick faces, not only in the midst of his parent's separation, but also in fitting in at school. Poems such as *Stand Up* and *Back to Life* speak to very real issues that children face on their journey into adulthood and discussions around these can help them reflect on their own

behaviour and others around them through the exploration of issues faced by characters they are emotionally engaged with.

Clever changes in pace and rhythm showcase the highs of Nick's life on the soccer field in poems like *Gameplay* and the title poem *Booked*, against moments of despair in poems like *Chimichangas*. Form choice is used to great effect, illustrating how this helps enhance meaning. The use of Haiku for poems illustrating text messages between Nick and his mother in *Texts to Mom* helps give a sense of the staccato nature of the voice and enhances the sense of detachment between the characters.

Whoever scoops the ultimate prize at the award ceremony at The National Theatre in July, it is clear that we are winning in the drive to publish and celebrate a diverse variety of children's poetry – the best prize of all!

A wide range of resources including videos of shortlisted poets, teaching notes and information and information about poetic forms and devices can be found on CLPE's free [poetryline website](#) [4].

Schools wishing to shadow this year's award and enter the shadowing competition for a chance to perform on the stage of the Olivier Theatre at the award ceremony in July alongside the shortlisted poets can find information about the shadowing scheme [here](#) [5].

A summary of CLPE's findings on Poetry in Primary Schools can be downloaded [here](#) [6].

**Charlotte Hacking** is the Learning Programmes Leader and member of the CLiPPA judging panel at CLPE, an independent UK charity dedicated to helping schools develop literacy learning that transforms lives.

The **CLiPPA** shortlist:

**Booked**, Kwame Alexander, Andersen Press 978-1-7834-4465-6, £7.99 pbk

**Zim Zam Zoom!**, James Carter, illustrated by Nicola Colton, Otter-Barry Books, 978-1-9109-5954-1, £11.99 pbk

**Wonderland; Alice in Poetry**, Michaela Morgan (editor), Macmillan, 978-1-5098-1884-6, £5.99 pbk

**Jelly Boots, Smelly Boots**, Michael Rosen, illustrated by David Tazzyman, Bloomsbury, 978-1-4088-7343-4, £14.99 hbk

**Moon Juice**, Kate Wakeling, illustrated by El'na Brasli'a, The Emma Press, 978-1-9101-3949-3, £8.50

---

[1] [7]

From Tell Me: Children Reading and Talk and The Reading Environment (Thimble Press, 2011)

Page Number:

4

---

**Source URL (retrieved on Nov '20):** <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk-www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/224/childrens-books/articles/celebrating-poetry-with-the-clippa-and-in-the-classroom>

**Links:**

[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk-www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/charlotte-hacking>

[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk-www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/224>

[3] [http://booksforkeeps.co.uk-www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/224/childrens-books/articles/celebrating-poetry-with-the-clippa-and-in-the-classroom#\\_ftn1](http://booksforkeeps.co.uk-www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/224/childrens-books/articles/celebrating-poetry-with-the-clippa-and-in-the-classroom#_ftn1)

[4] <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline>

[5] <https://www.clpe.org.uk/aboutus/news/register-now-free-clippa-2017-shadowing-scheme>

[6] <https://www.clpe.org.uk/library-and-resources>

[7] [http://booksforkeeps.co.uk-www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/224/childrens-books/articles/celebrating-poetry-with-the-clippa-and-in-the-classroom#\\_ftnref1](http://booksforkeeps.co.uk-www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/224/childrens-books/articles/celebrating-poetry-with-the-clippa-and-in-the-classroom#_ftnref1)