

**BLOW BUBBLES**  
*Eat Gummy Worms*  
**WRITE POETRY**

by Dana Hanley

Thank you so much and please let me know if you have any questions. You can contact me through my blog or via email: [thisunexceptionallife@gmail.com](mailto:thisunexceptionallife@gmail.com)

## **Introducing Poetry**

What is poetry? Many children familiar with poetry will readily identify writing that rhymes as poetry. Most children's poems do rhyme and many children's books are written in rhyming verse but rhyme is not what makes it a poem.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines poetry as "writing that usually involves figurative language and lines that have rhythm and sometimes rhyme." I like the analogy of a juice machine. Think of an idea, an experience or an emotion as the fruit. You put it through the machine and all of the pulp (the extra words and most of the story line) shoot out the back, and juice (the poem) pours out the front. You got rid of everything extra and just have the juice, or the essence, of what the author is trying to convey.

## **Lesson Structure**

For each lesson, I start with a definition. For classes I teach, I just print it off and have them glue it in their journal. At home, I write it out unless they are ready to do it themselves. Then I read a poem and we look for examples of the literary term. After a brief activity, we write our own poem illustrating the concept. I have each child contribute a line (or however many they need to in order to have enough lines to work with.) Older children can write their own poetry. In class, I review the terms we've covered so far at the start of class. At home, we review whenever I notice the concept in a book we are reading. The concepts do not need to be covered in any particular order. I start with parallel structure simply because the poem we write together is sort of like a show and tell lesson and helps draw students into the class. It also gives me an opportunity to review it each week since it is the most difficult concept.

When the children are brainstorming, I let them come up with as much as they can. It is better to have an awkward poem they wrote (dictated) themselves than a polished piece of writing ready to be published. I will however, help them organize the lines into an order that makes more sense and edit sentences to give the poem more rhythm. I also contribute a line to each collaborative poem and it is usually the last line since it is the one that pulls the poem together. If you have a child who is able to do this, by all means let them! When working with young children, however, they usually do best if the lines are formulaic and they just have to come up with examples following a pattern.

The older they are, the more creative they get until they are ready to write their own poetry.

## **Choosing Poetry**

I like to use a variety of poetry in my lessons. The most important thing is to choose poetry your children will enjoy. I like to read some famous poetry, just to allow the children to hear it and to hopefully build an appreciation for more classic forms. Sometimes, I tell them a summary of what the poem is about and then just read a few lines that represent the concept for the day.

Never feel like you have to read the whole poem. If there is one stanza that gets the point across and you know their attention will wane if you try to force any more, let that be good. Sometimes, less really is more if that little bit sparks their imagination but the rest becomes tedious.

I have included examples in these lessons. They were chosen partly for their literary quality and partly because they are either in the public domain or available online. Feel free to simply browse the poetry books at your local library, as well. You will likely find more geared toward children. Poetry you remember from childhood, Robert Louis Stevenson and Shel Silverstein are good places to start. A lot of children's literature is actually written in rhyme and there are numerous poetry books in the poetry section. You can also find poetry that exemplifies a particular literary concept through an internet search (the term + poetry). A love for poetry usually starts by just experiencing it a little at a time and appreciating the beauty and emotion it conveys. I also sometimes give a summary of a longer poem (like Edgar Allen Poe's The Raven) and just read a few lines as an example of the concept we are discussing.

### **Parallel Structure**

Parallel structure is the most difficult to teach young children because it is abstract. It deals with the grammatical similarity between sentences. I introduce it early for two reasons: when teaching a class, this gives me eleven more opportunities to review. This isn't as important when teaching at home, because you can have as many opportunities to review as you need. The activity itself is also a nice introduction to poetry because it is like show and tell.

#### **Define the term**

Things are parallel when they run the same direction. I demonstrate parallel lines by drawing them on the board and then by holding my arms parallel to each other. Then as I define parallel structure, I hold my arms parallel as a sort of visual cue. After 12 weeks, most of my students would hold their arms parallel when I asked them what parallel structure was, even if the concept of parallel structure is still too abstract.

Parallel structure is basically when the author uses the same pattern of words to get his or her point across. The pattern catches your attention and makes you pay more attention to certain parts of the poem (or text).

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of parallel structure is to draw ideas together. Similar grammatical structure gives equal importance to each subject in a passage. It provides a strong connection, even without a direct comparison. Think of the opening lines of Charles Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities,

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times . . .”

I was familiar with the opening line long before I ever finally read the book. Its strong parallel structure joining opposites makes it memorable.

### **Read the Poem**

Read a poem that exemplifies parallel structure. Tell them specifically what they are listening for. If you use the following poem as the example, I would specifically say that William Blake uses parallel structure by asking “What . . . “ over and over. This emphasizes the strength and power of what was able to create the tiger. (Think of God as a blacksmith creating the tiger from the forge.)

The Tyger, by William Blake

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,  
In the forests of the night;  
What immortal hand or eye,  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies.  
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?  
On what wings dare he aspire?  
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,  
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?  
And when thy heart began to beat,  
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,  
In what furnace was thy brain?  
What the anvil? what dread grasp,  
Dare its deadly terrors clasp!

When the stars threw down their spears  
And water'd heaven with their tears:  
Did he smile his work to see?  
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger Tyger burning bright,  
In the forests of the night:  
What immortal hand or eye,  
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

**Write your own poem: Marching in the Toy Parade**

For this poem, have each student choose a favorite toy or stuffed animal. You will want to have four or five lines for your poem, at least, so they may have to choose more than one toy for their parade.

For each toy, help your child come up with one sentence following this pattern:

The (insert toy) is (insert –ing verb)

After all the toys are lined up and have a sentence in the poem, come up with a concluding sentence. For this one, I use, “All marching in the toy parade” but you can adapt as necessary. If you have a child that wants to come up with the final sentence, that is even better, even if it is a little awkward.

## **Onomatopoeia**

Onomatopoeia is one of the favorite lessons every time I teach this class. It is a big word, but the children pick it up quickly because it is so concrete.

### **Define the term**

Onomatopoeia is when a word sounds like what it is. Examples include animal noises (moo, meow) and other words like whoosh, scritch and even giggle. Give each student a chance to come up with an example.

### **Purpose**

Onomatopoeia helps create a soundscape for the poem. It makes the sounds more expressive and more interesting, drawing the reader into the text. Probably the most well-known example is the song Old MacDonald. Singing that song together certainly counts for the reading portion of this lesson!

### **Read the poem**

If you are using the following poem, consider using a small bell to emphasize each example of onomatopoeia.

The Bells  
Edgar Allen Poe

Hear the sledges with the bells -  
Silver bells!  
What a world of merriment their melody foretells!  
How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,  
In the icy air of night!  
While the stars that oversprinkle  
All the heavens seem to twinkle

With a crystalline delight;  
Keeping time, time, time,  
In a sort of Runic rhyme,  
To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells  
From the bells, bells, bells, bells,  
Bells, bells, bells -  
From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

### **Write your own poem: The Sound Poem**

Take the students somewhere with a variety of noises. In a classroom setting, you can take them into the hall or somewhere in the building where people are making noises. You can also just go outside.

Have the children sit down and close their eyes. Instruct them to listen carefully to all the sounds and to try to remember one or two for their poem. Wait long enough for them to all sit quietly for a little bit, but not so long that they get too wiggly and impatient. Then return to where you were working to write your poem.

Have each child describe a sound they heard and add it to the paper. You can decide on the structure based on what the children are coming up with. You can just do sounds, (Shuffle, shuffle, crunch, creak . . . ) or you can identify a noun with each sound to make it more obvious what the poem is about. When everyone has contributed and you have enough sounds to make a poem, talk about the order of the sounds. You can regroup them to improve the poem and then come up with a concluding line to pull them together and give context to the sounds. What you come up with will depend on what you were listening to.

### **Hyperbole**

I generally teach hyperbole near a holiday or special event. Thanksgiving is perfect because there is a lot of feasting. Any theme will work, but it is definitely easy to exaggerate when it comes to Thanksgiving dinner!

#### **Define the term**

Hyperbole is another word for exaggeration, especially when something is REALLY exaggerated. If I say, “I’m so hungry, I could eat a horse!” that’s hyperbole. Everyone knows I couldn’t really eat a horse!

#### **Purpose**

Hyperbole emphasizes what is being described and provides a “larger than life” description.

Tall tales give excellent examples of hyperbole, as does Beowulf if you plan on studying that epic poem. Poems about love are also rife with hyperbole, but are perhaps a bit harder for young children to connect with. Still, W.H. Auden's [\*As I Walked Out One Evening\*](#) is so full of hyperbole, your younger children might enjoy it. They will certainly be able to pick out the exaggeration!

### **Read the Poem**

This poem may be a bit easier for most younger children to connect with. It is about the shot that started the American Revolution and the line in question is of historic significance in its own right. The shot obviously wasn't heard round the world in a literal sense. You could also use this to discuss figurative language and in what ways that shot was "heard" round the world.

#### The Concord Hymn

Ralph Waldo Emerson

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,  
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,  
Here once the embattled farmers stood  
And fired the shot heard round the world.

The foe long since in silence slept;  
Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;  
And Time the ruined bridge has swept  
Down the dark stream which seaward creeps.

On this green bank, by this soft stream,  
We set today a votive stone;  
That memory may their deed redeem,  
When, like our sires, our sons are gone.

Spirit, that made those heroes dare  
To die, and leave their children free,  
Bid Time and Nature gently spare  
The shaft we raise to them and thee.

### **Write your own poem: An Exaggerated Event**

Choose a theme and encourage them to exaggerate. We've had mountains of mashed potatoes, whole rivers of gravy and turkeys large enough to feed an army. Have fun with it and be as silly as you can. That's the point of hyperbole and it is often used to bring humor into a poem. This is why holidays and special events work well. If your child likes any sports, try applying hyperbole to his or her favorite game.

## Alliteration

### Define the term

Alliteration is when the same sound is repeated over and over. Choose a tongue twister as an example. (She sells sea shells by the sea shore.) Ask what sound is repeated. If your child knows any tongue twisters, have them recite it and identify which sound is repeated.

### Purpose

Alliteration brings a musical quality to poetry and prose. It makes a poem more pleasant to recite and to listen to. Many people have a line or two of various poems memorized and frequently, these are the lines with good alliteration.

### Read the poem

Examples of alliteration abound, particularly in children's books and poetry. If your child has a favorite nursery rhyme (or tongue twister) with alliteration, feel free to use that instead.

#### Little Boy Blue

Little Boy Blue  
Come blow your horn  
The sheep's in the meadow  
The cow's in the corn.  
Oh where is the boy who looks after the sheep?  
Under the hay stack, fast asleep.

You could also listen to [The Siege of Belgrade](#) by Alaric Alexander Watts. The poet uses alliteration for every letter of the alphabet.

### Write your own poem: A Walk in the Wild

Take the children on a walk outside and hunt for words and verbs that have the same sounds in them. "The grass grows, the bee buzzes, the wind wooshes, etc." Some children will need more help than others, so give them a chance to think, but be ready to help them be successful. After giving an example, try giving them a noun and encouraging them to think of a verb that has the same sound in it (it may be easier for them to work with beginning sounds, but the sound can occur anywhere in the word). After everyone has a chance to think of an example, return to where you are writing your poem.

Include everyone's examples and come up with a concluding line to help pull the poem together.

## Personification

## **Define the term**

Personification is when an author gives an animal or object human qualities (makes an animal or thing sound like it is human).

## **Purpose**

Personification brings writing to life, making the reader relate more easily with objects and animals by giving them human qualities.

## **Read the Poem**

Oftentimes, personification is seen only in a single line or even just the choice of verb in a poem. Leaves dance, brooks babble and birds chatter in the trees. In the following poem, however, the entire poem is an example of personification. Try reading it and talking about it without telling your child what the poem is about.

She Sweeps With Many Colored Brooms  
Emily Dickenson

She sweeps with many-colored brooms,  
And leaves the shreds behind;  
Oh, housewife in the evening west,  
Come back, and dust the pond!

You dropped a purple ravelling in,  
You dropped an amber thread;  
And now you've littered all the East  
With duds of emerald!

And still she plies her spotted brooms,  
And still the aprons fly,  
Till brooms fade softly into stars -  
And then I come away.

After the first reading, your child will probably see a woman sweeping. Draw attention to the “housewife of the west” and help them see her as the sun. What other clues can you find that she is actually writing about the sunset? Reread the poem, looking for the examples of personification.

## **Write your own poem: Dancing Bubbles**

Go outside with bubbles. After just having fun with the bubbles, try to get as many floating in the air as you can and just watch them with your child. What do they do? How

do they move? Where do they go? If each of the bubbles were a person, what could you imagine them doing?

They may be playing tag, or dancing or anything else your child thinks of. Help your child describe the bubbles in human terms. Have your child come up with a couple of lines for the poem.

Alternatively, invite your child's favorite stuffed animal or toy to a tea party and imagine what the toy would do. This steps more into anthropomorphism, but may be easier for a young children to grasp and therefore add original lines to his or her poem.

What is the difference between personification and anthropomorphism? It is subtle, but personification gives human characteristics to objects and animals to produce imagery whereas anthropomorphism makes objects and animals humanlike. It is the difference between describing the gentle sound of a creek as "babbling" and actually having the creek speak in the poem or story.

## **Perspective**

### **Define the term**

Perspective is the point of view the author takes in a poem.

### **Purpose**

The author may try to encourage the reader to look at familiar objects from a new perspective.

### **Read the poem**

[Point of View](#), by Shel Silverstein, shows us how different our favorite meals are if we consider it from the point of view of the main dish.

### **Write your own poem: Explore a different perspective**

What other things do your children enjoy that they might feel differently about if they looked at it from another perspective? What if you were a baseball? A door being slammed?

You can take any of these examples and use it to explore the world from a new perspective. In class, I brought a toy stegosaurus and we wrote a fun poem about the stegosaurus wandering into Lincoln, Nebraska.

## **Repetition**

### **Define the term**

Repetition is when a word, phrase or line is repeated.

### **Purpose**

Repetition is used to provide emphasis, strength or unity to the writing.

### **Read the poem**

This poem is told from the perspective of an entire race, tracing their heritage down through the rivers of Africa and the United States. Look for the repetition. What does it do for the poem?

The Negro Speaks of Rivers  
Langston Hughes

I've known rivers:  
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the  
flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.  
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.  
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above  
it.  
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln  
went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy  
bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:  
Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

### **Write your own poem: Family is . . .**

This poem is heavily formatted and contains a special kind of repetition called anaphora (which just means that the words or phrases repeated occur at the start of the lines). It is common in the Psalms.

Have your child come up with several things his or her family does. Encourage them to include their favorite things, the boring things, the exciting things and the bad things (like arguing or sharing when you don't want to). Then start each line with "Family is . . ." and include one suggestion for each line. If you have less savory aspects (like fighting or

arguing) to what it means to be family, “hug” those in the middle between the other lines.

Don’t forget “Family is forgiving” and close with a line that sums up what family is to you.

## **Simile**

### **Define the term**

Simile is a comparison using like or as. “The lake was as smooth as glass.”

### **Purpose**

Similes make writing more interesting and lyrical. They can describe something unfamiliar to the reader by comparing it to something familiar to the reader or encourage the reader to think of something familiar in a new way by comparing it to something else.

### **Read the poem**

Probably the most famous example of simile is in a nursery rhyme sung by English speaking children everywhere.

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

Twinkle, twinkle, little star  
How I wonder what you are  
Up above the world so high  
Like a diamond in the sky  
Twinkle, twinkle little star

What does the poem compare a star to? How are stars like diamonds?

### **Write your own poem: Night is like . . .**

Talk about the night. Think about the moon, the stars, the darkness and the noises. It can be about the beauty of the night sky or fear of the dark or a time you went camping.

Start out by collecting thoughts and then help them make comparisons. Write down their ideas and then help them organize them into an order that makes sense with an introductory or concluding line which helps tie it together.

## **Imagery**

### **Define the term**

Imagery is created by visually descriptive language in the five senses. There are actually

five types of imagery, corresponding to the five senses: visual, kinesthetic, olfactory, gustatory and auditory.

### Purpose

The purpose of imagery is make descriptions more vivid by engaging multiple senses.

### Read the poem

I wandered lonely as a cloud  
William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and  
hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the  
trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

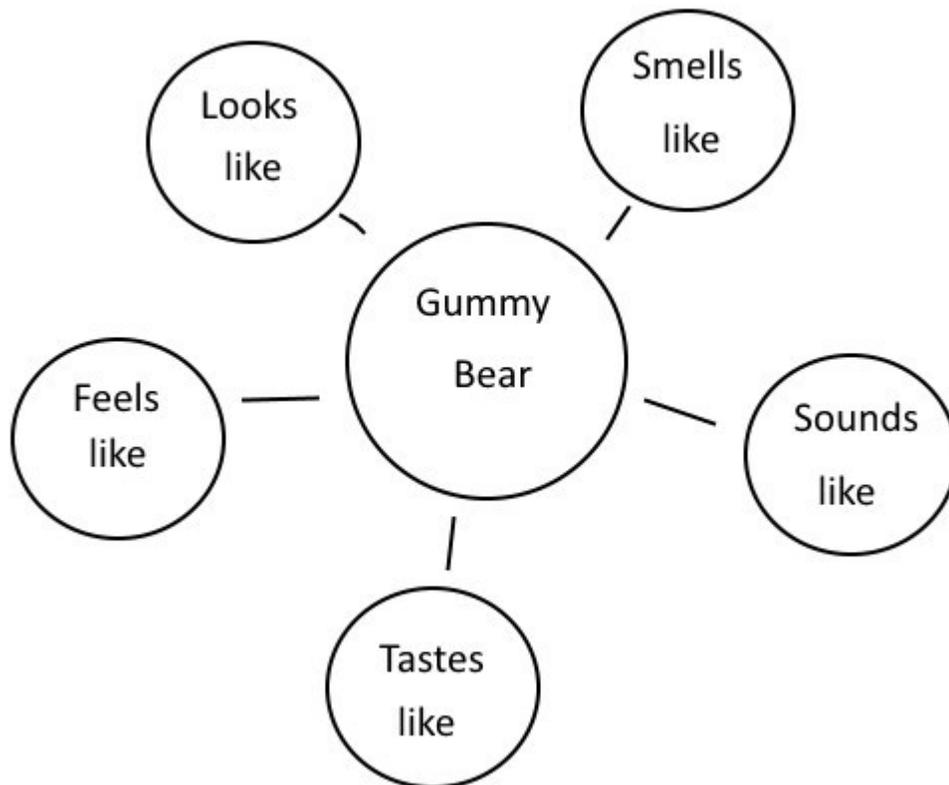
Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the milky way,  
They stretched in never-ending  
line Along the margin of a bay:  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but  
they Out-did the sparkling waves in  
glee:  
A poet could not but be gay,  
In such a jocund company:  
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had  
brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward  
eye Which is the bliss of  
solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.

### Create your own poem: Gummy Bear Imagery

For this poem, you just need a gummy bear for each child. Instruct them not to eat it quite yet. Talk about the five senses and make a sunburst diagram to help organize the descriptions.



Write the poem, using the descriptions. Decide an order that makes sense. You could, for example, start by looking at the gummy bear in the package, proceed through the sound of opening the bag and finally to eating it. You can also just include the descriptions (Chewy, fruity, slippery, etc.) and conclude with a line that lets you know you are writing about a gummy bear.

### Metaphor

Metaphor is very similar to simile. For this reason, I try not to introduce them next to each other. Don't worry if your children confuse the terms. Older children do, too, but introducing them early and pointing out examples when you notice them will make these concepts easier to distinguish later.

### Define the term

Metaphor describes something by referring to an object that has similar traits. It is like simile, but without the “like” or “as” to signify the comparison.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of metaphor is to create imagery. The comparisons made are stronger than when simile is used. Instead of a star being “like a diamond in the sky,” the star is a diamond in the sky.

### **Read the poem**

What does Emily Dickenson compare hope to? What metaphors can you find that strengthen this comparison?

Hope is the thing with feathers

Emily Dickenson

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -  
That perches in the soul -  
And sings the tune without the words -  
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -  
And sore must be the storm -  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm -

I’ve heard it in the chillest land -  
And on the strangest Sea -  
Yet - never - in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb - of me.

### **Write your own poem: Friends are treasures**

How are friends like treasures? List ideas and then use those ideas to write a series of metaphors about friends as treasures.

### **Meter**

Meter is probably the most important concept in teaching poetry, but can be difficult for young children to grasp. It’s all about finding the rhythm, or the beat, of a poem.

### **Define the term**

Meter is the rhythm of stressed and unstressed syllables.

### **Purpose**

Meter gives poetry rhythm and a beat, contributing to a melodious sound.

### **Read the poem**

If your child is not yet familiar with what a syllable is, start with a quick lesson. A basic definition would be that a syllable is a piece of a word. Then give some examples of one, two and three syllable words. Clap out the syllables and encourage your children to do that same.

For this lesson, we are going to use a super simple poem with a super simple meter.

Roses are red  
Violets are blue  
Sugar is sweet  
And so are you

Each line has four syllables, but the number of syllables isn't as important as the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.

After reading the poem, have your children clap out the syllables. Have them clap along as you read and see if you can notice the meter, or the beat, of the poem. You can exaggerate the meter as you read to help them, but the claps should begin to fall into a definite rhythm. The last line is emphasized because the pattern changes. You can see this more clearly if you replace the words with stressed and unstressed syllables.

DAduh DAduh  
DAduh DAduh  
DAduh DAduh  
duhDA duhDA

At least that's the way I've always said it so the "you" is emphasized!

### **Write your own poem: My Pet is So . . .**

To make this as simple as possible, start by choosing an animal with a single syllable. If you have a dog, cat, fish, etc., that is perfect. Otherwise, you can just use the word pet or choose an imaginary pet to write about.

Copy this pattern:

My            is    so

My            is   so  
My            is   so  
And I love it so.

Then fill in the blanks. The first blank is for the pet and the second blank is for a single syllable word to describe the animal. Feel free to get more creative, but this builds success by giving your child a basic pattern to start with.

## Setting

Setting is probably one of the simplest concepts because your children will already be familiar with it from their favorite stories and it is concrete. It can become much more symbolic in poetry, but young children won't understand the symbolism as well as the simple where and when the poem takes place. I introduce this last because it is a good opportunity to pull in the other concepts your children have been learning!

### Define the term

The setting is where and when a poem (or story) takes place. It also includes the mood. Because most poetry is symbolic, the setting is tied more closely to the mood than it is in most stories.

### Purpose

Setting gives a poem a time and a place. These work together to give the poem its mood (dark, cheerful, nostalgic).

### Read the poem

Start by asking children to listen to clues about the setting. They mention it as you read or wait until the end (it really depends on how many children you are working with). Consider using a Venn diagram to show the similarities and differences between the two paths. After discussing the differences, talk about what the poet is trying to say by his description of the setting of these two paths.

### The Road Not Taken Robert Frost

TWO roads diverged in a yellow  
wood, And sorry I could not travel  
both And be one traveler, long I  
stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better  
claim

Because it was grassy and wanted  
wear; Though as for that, the passing  
there Had worn them really about the  
same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.

Oh, I marked the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to  
way I doubted if I should ever come  
back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the  
difference.

### **Write your own poem: Field Trip!**

Choose a place you have been (or go on a trip especially for this poem). If you are teaching this in a class, choose a place everyone has been or at least has some idea of. Have them start describing a trip there. Ask them to think about what they would see, hear, feel and think. Try to encourage some good descriptive writing (or dictating, as the case may be). After you have enough material to work with, have them help you organize the descriptions into the poem. If you see places where you can squeeze in any of the other concepts learned about, encourage them to think how to edit and add other literary devices into their poem.

### **Continuation**

Remember these terms and point them out as you come across them in the books you read with your children. Good writing is full of literary devices to keep the writing fresh and interesting. Find opportunities to review what you have learned and remember to keeping having fun with language!