

Getting the most from the poems of
Trevor Millum

troika



The Poetry Guide: 'Absolutely essential reading' — Ian McMillan

“If you are a teacher or a librarian, or even a poet looking for ideas of how to teach poetry to classes or groups, this is the book for you! There are sections on every type of question you may have from 'How to do poetry with pre-readers/writers', to 'How to use audio/video as an aid', and other things covered include 'performance', 'reading aloud', 'music and poetry', 'imagery, similes and metaphors' and even 'how to answer difficult questions'. I really recommend this!”

—Liz Brownlee
PoetryRoundabout.com

About the author

Trevor is a writer of poetry for children and adults, short stories, a novel, books of local interest, and education resources whose work offers enjoyment and critical guidance in schools around the world.

Hiding his academic achievements beneath his hat (along with a packet of viennese whirls), Trevor continues to write and perform poetry with a vibrancy children adore.

His latest book, with Bernard Young, is *The Poetry Guide*. It contains so many lively, practical and fully-tested ways to write, share and perform poetry that teachers and children will quickly find themselves fizzing with ideas.

Spring in the Yarm Fard

The mat keowed
The mow cooed
The bog darked
The kigeon pooed

The squicken chalked
The surds bang
The kwuk dacked
The burch rels chang

And then, after all the dacking and the changing
The chalking and the banging
The darking and the pooing
The keowing and the kooing
There was a mewtiful beaumont
Of queace and pie-ate.



Say it

Read the poem aloud with a friend, taking a line each. Then try doing it without giggling. If you can get together in a larger group, learn one line each and perform the poem with straight faces.

Talk about it

The poem works by swapping the first letters of words so that instead of Farm Yard, you have Yarm Fard. (These are called 'Spoonerisms'). Try making up some of your own, like Ted Heacher for Head Teacher, or Biting Rook for Writing Book.

Write it

Write your own Spooner poem. It could be a list of things you like to eat. You'll find that some things work well (like Beans on Toast) and others don't (like Toasted Teacake).

Draw it

What kind of animal might a kwuk be? Or a squicken? Draw any of the animals from the poem – or things from your own poem.

WATCH & LISTEN

Trevor Millum reads 'Spring in the Yarm Fard' at www.youtube.com/watch?v=TEkPculxG4Q

Sad I Ams

I am
the ring
from an empty soda can
the scrapings
from an unwashed porridge pan
the severed arm
of last year's Action Man

I am
the envelope
on which the gum is gone
the sticky tape
where you can't find the end
the toothless stapler, the inkless pen
the dried-up liquid paper
that mars instead of mends
the stamped addressed reply
that you forgot to send

I am
a garden
overgrown with weeds
a library book
that no one ever reads
a stray
which no one thinks to feed
the piece of good advice
which no one seems to need



Say it

The poem could be read by a group, taking turns with each of the different items. Or it could be performed by one voice which perhaps gets sadder and sadder. If you want to burst into tears at the end, that's fine.

Talk about it

What do all of the items have in common? See if you can come up with some other things which would fit in as Sad I Ams. A few of you could get together and see how many different kinds of things might be made into another verse. If you get stuck, think of items of clothing, sporting equipment, types of transport, for example.

Write it

Now is the time to gather those thoughts together and create a verse of your own. But remember, this is a poem about being sad, not terribly miserable. So a tyre with a puncture would be okay, but a crashing jet would not! (What I do is to jot down all my ideas in a big jumble and then sort out the bits that I like best.) My poem has a rhyme but yours might not. Definitely do not force a rhyme if it doesn't want to be there!

WATCH & LISTEN

Trevor Millum reads 'Sad I Ams' at www.youtube.com/watch?v=VazA4qb98qo

Ten little schoolchildren

Ten little schoolchildren
Standing in a line.
One opened her mouth too far
And then there were nine.

Nine little schoolchildren
Trying not to be late.
One missed the school bus
And then there were eight.

Eight little schoolchildren
In the second eleven.
One twisted an ankle
And then there were seven.

Seven little schoolchildren
Trying out some tricks.
One went a bit too far
And then there were six.

Six little schoolchildren
Hoping teacher won't arrive.
One flicked a paper dart
And then there were five.

Five little schoolchildren
Standing by the door.
One tripped the teacher up
And then there were four.

Four little schoolchildren
Longing for their tea.
One was kept in after school
And then there were three.

Three little schoolchildren
Lurking by the loo.
Teacher saw a puff of smoke
And then there were two.

Two little schoolchildren
Think that fights are fun.
One got a bloody nose
And then there was one.

One little schoolchild
Playing in the sun.
Whistle blew, buzzer went,
Then there were none!



Say it

This is a long poem so it needs more than one reader. A really enjoyable way of doing it is to have ten of you read to begin with and then one person drops out at the end of each verse.

Talk about it

TEach verse has a very definite pattern. What is it?

Secondly, this is a poem that really needs to rhyme. Luckily there are lots of rhymes for all the numbers up to ten – apart from seven! However, don't let that put you off. Near rhymes are just as good. Think 'raven', 'forgiven', 'woven' and many more.

Write it

Your poem doesn't have to be about schoolchildren. I've written different versions of the poem about astronauts, dinosaurs and sportspersons. Nor do you have to start at ten; you could start at five, six or seven.

Stick to the pattern:

Five little _____

_____ (what are they doing? Needs to rhyme with four)

One _____ (What did one of them do?)

And then there were four.

WATCH & LISTEN

Trevor Millum reads 'Ten little schoolchildren' at www.youtube.com/watch?v=obSEOMQq0OY

We hope you enjoy exploring this resource

If you use these ideas, we'd love to know how. Why not share your work with us by tagging [@TroikaBooks](https://twitter.com/TroikaBooks) on Twitter

This book can be purchased from www.troikabooks.com/the-poetry-guide



Find out more: www.troikabooks.com

Trevor Millum - mouseandmuse.co.uk - [@MillumTrevor](https://twitter.com/MillumTrevor)

This resource is based on a model developed by Manchester Children's Book Festival and Manchester Poetry Library at Manchester Metropolitan University. Text: Trevor Millum / Design: Dom Conlon.