

## READING POETRY

This unit offers students the opportunity to explore poets and poems from a variety of literary traditions, time periods, and areas of the world. Although some poems early in the unit resemble nursery rhymes or fairy tales, the lessons present students with increasingly nuanced texts, including poems readers of many ages enjoy.

Because listening comprehension surpasses reading comprehension for most 4th and 5th grade students, we recommend reading each poem aloud to the class. Students often hear what they do not yet see, so active listening best equips them to engage with poetry's rhyme, meter, and rhythm. You may wish to share with your students some facts about poetic traditions, particularly the fact that some poems predate writing and that poets, often called bards, would publicly sing or recite their work.

The audio component of "Reading Poetry" includes several examples of poems you may wish to play for students. We have selected them from the grades 4 and 5 CKLA Poetry units to represent a range of poetic styles. Walt Whitman aimed to represent the voice of common people by using long, conversational lines. Emily Dickinson's poetry uses short, dense lines containing striking images. Carl Sandburg's poem features vivid descriptions of everyday events and things. Heard in succession, these examples demonstrate to students the different ways poems can sound.

Students who associate poetry with sing-song rhythms and obvious rhymes may be surprised to hear these poems. They may also initially struggle to read poems aloud, so throughout the unit increase the opportunities they have for reading poetry, encouraging them to read aloud in unison, in pairs, and eventually individually. As you model reading aloud for them, remind students of the following guidelines for reading a poem aloud.

### Guidelines for Reading Poetry Aloud

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1. Read through the poem a few times silently. Imagine what it might sound like when spoken.
2. Look up or try to sound out any words you do not know how to pronounce.
3. When reading aloud, you should not rush through the words. Poets use punctuation such as a comma, period, or question mark to show you where to pause briefly.
4. Once you try reading the poem aloud, practice a few times. As you do, you may notice new things such as rhyming or repeated words. Poets often use these things to add emphasis to certain parts of the poem.
5. Once you feel comfortable reading the poem aloud, share it with a friend or family member!