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Ten of the best: New Children's Poetry

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Ten of the Best

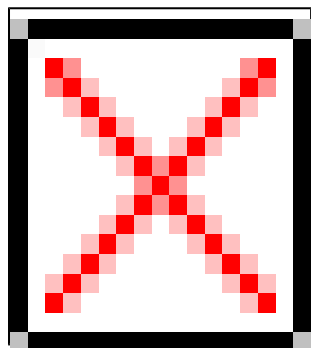
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As **National Poetry Day** approaches, Charlotte Hacking chooses ten of the best new poetry books for children

As **National Poetry Day** [3] 4 October approaches, Charlotte Hacking explains why children's poetry is worth celebrating and chooses ten recent collections to inspire a lifelong love of the form.

There are so many reasons to be optimistic about the future of children's poetry. Not only are we seeing an increasing amount of children's poetry being published, but there has also been a significant shift in the quality of the production values in recent years. This has made choosing only ten books for this list a virtually impossible task. I'm cheating slightly here by making a couple of extra recommendations for some other wonderful books that link with other texts I've recommended. I hope that there will be something here for everyone.

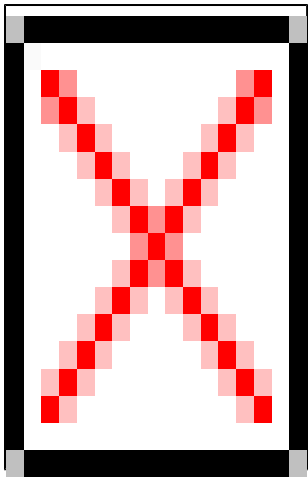
A Great Big Cuddle



Michael Rosen, illustrated by Chris Riddell Walker 978-1406373462 £10.99 pbk

I cannot think of a more perfect collection to introduce for the youngest children to the joys of poetry. Beautifully produced by Walker, its oversized pages make it ideal for sharing with an adult or in a group. Sumptuous illustrations from the unmistakable hand of Chris Riddell add depth to the reader's engagement with the text. A rich mix of poems that play with words and sounds, engage young readers with rhythms and rhymes and show that poetry can tell a story or share our feelings. Poems that children will want to join in with, move to and talk about.

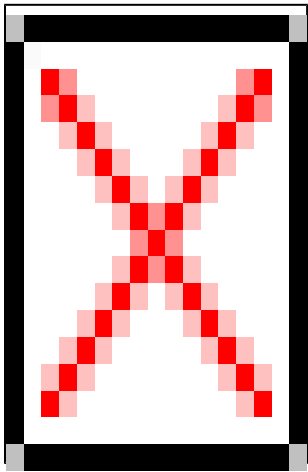
[The Dragon with a Big Nose](#) [4]



Kathy Henderson Frances Lincoln 978-1847803658 £6.99

This is a collection I have come back to time and time again. It's a rare commodity, a single poet collection for younger children that explores a range and breadth of forms and styles, taking them from the familiar comfort of rhythm and rhymes to the idea that poetry doesn't always have to rhyme and introducing more sophisticated poetic devices such as assonance, imagery and metaphor. The focus on familiar themes; environment, people, animals, the lure of fantasy in dragons and monsters in a voice that is authentic means that there are poems in this collection for every child to enjoy.

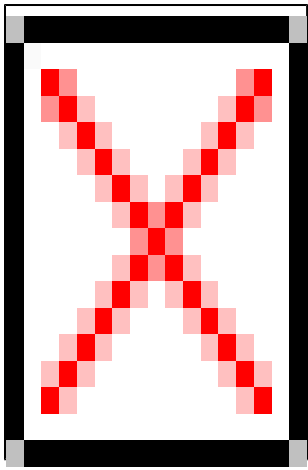
[A Kid in My Class](#) [5]



Rachel Rooney, illustrated by Chris Riddell Otter-Barry Books, 978-1910959879 £10.99 hbk

Rachel Rooney gives a masterclass of her own in poetic form throughout this unique collection. As the poems all centre around different children, children will quickly see themselves or parts of themselves in one or a combination of the carefully crafted characters. The poems cover a range of characters and, in turn, emotions, so there's plenty in here to make children, laugh, cry, consider and empathise. The collection has added appeal due to the distinctive and captivating illustrations of Chris Riddell, which work with the poems to make us feel like we know the children; like they really are just kids in our class.

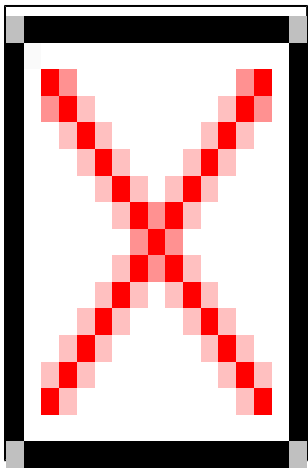
[Moon Juice](#) [6]



Kate Wakeling, illustrated by El?na Brasli?a The Emma Press 978-1910139493 £8.50 pbk

Kate Wakeling?s musicality flows throughout the poems in this collection, showing a consistent sensitivity to the rhythm and power of language. There is a fantastic range of subject matter, style and form, giving subtle insight into the interests of the poet and her fascination with language. Throughout the collection, children are introduced to colourful characters, familiar experiences, powerful imagery, rich and descriptive language and themes from the familiar, to the traditional to the emotive and the fantastical. What is also wonderful is that as much thought has been given to given to how the words work on the page as off. For younger readers, this musicality is also central to the poems in James Carter's **Zim Zam Zoom** (Otter-Barry Books).

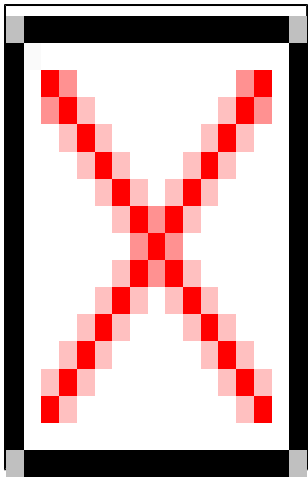
Rhythm and Poetry



Karl Nova, illustrated by Joseph Witchall Caboodle 978-0995488540 £5.99

Karl Nova, a hip-hop artist, won the CLiPPA this year with this unique collection of poems infused with the lyrical rhythms of his music, bringing the buzz of the rich spoken word YA scene to a younger audience. Children love to read and perform his work, but this is also a book that could inspire many to take up writing themselves. The poems are rooted in everyday experiences which readers can easily connect with and use as inspiration. For younger readers, **Thinker, My Puppy Poet and Me** (Tiny Owl) also introduces these ideas, alongside captivating illustrations by Ehsan Abdollahi.

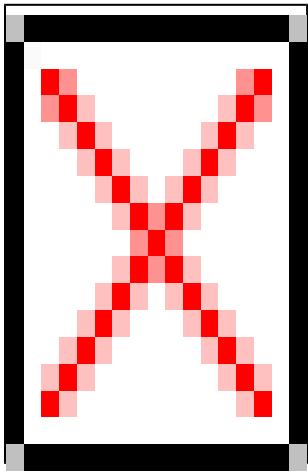
The Rainmaker Danced



John Agard, illustrated by Satoshi Kitamura Hodder Children's Books 978-1444932607 £6.99 pbk

As children grow with poetry, they learn that poetry can give them licence to have an opinion and a voice and use this to communicate with an audience. John Agard is a master of this in his poetry. Never patronising to his audience, his voice is powerful yet subtle, and encourages a deeper level of thought and discussion. Rich and lyrical poems, set against striking illustrations by Satoshi Kitamura, invite us to consider our own impact on each other and the environment and to question, challenge and reflect. In the current climate of fake news, poetry such as this is essential in every classroom.

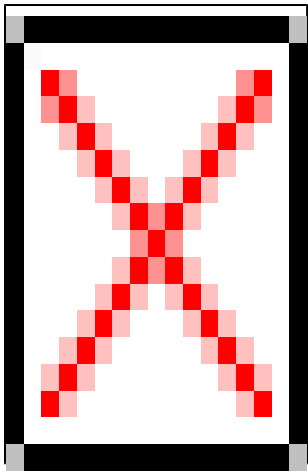
[Werewolf Cub Rules](#) [7]



Joseph Coelho Frances Lincoln 978-1847804525 £6.99 pbk

Joseph Coelho embodies what we need in a new generation of children's poets. **Werewolf Club Rules**, his first collection burst onto the scene in 2015, with its refreshing voice and depth of style. From the playful and humorous to the deeply reflective, tender and emotional, Joe's poetry shows what can be achieved and enjoyed under the broad spectrum of poetry. For older readers, **Overheard in a Tower Block**, illustrated by Kate Milner (Otter-Barry Books) offers us glimpses into the life of the main character as he grows, from young boy through adolescence to adulthood. The poems illuminate the challenges of this young man's life, but ultimately conclude in moments of joy and possibility, offering readers at the transitional stage from primary to secondary experiences to reflect on and connect with.

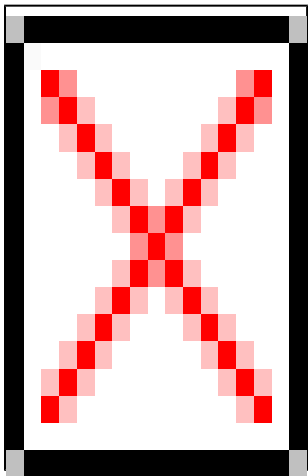
Everything All at Once



Steven Camden Macmillan 978-1509880034 £6.99pbk

A large number of the teachers on **CLPE's Power of Poetry** course described being put off poetry at secondary school, when the focus shifted from reading, performance and enjoyment to a heavy focus on analysis. It's important as children move through secondary that we continue to find and recommend collections they can engage with and enjoy on a personal and emotional level. Steven Camden's debut is a perfect example of such a collection, speaking directly to teens about their own lives through a series of poignant and emotive poems.

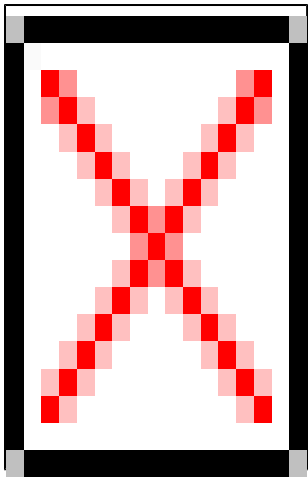
[Moonrise](#) [8]



Sarah Crossan Bloomsbury 978-1408867815 £7.99pbk

Before Bloomsbury published [The Weight of Water](#) [9], verse novels hadn't entered into the consciousness of many in the UK; unless they knew of Sharon Creech's [Love That Dog](#) [10] or Karen Hesse's powerful **Out of the Dust**. This form allows the reader to gain so much with its unique space for the reader to really get underneath the story. Sarah Crossan is a master of the form; using a rich variety of poetic techniques and always managing to embody her characters so authentically that the reader cannot help but be engaged and empathise - two key skills we need to continue promoting with our young adult readers. **Moonrise** is a personal and highly emotional narrative that explores the injustices of the penal system and life's inequalities. For upper primary readers Kwame Alexander's [The Crossover](#) [11] and [Booked](#) [12] (Andersen Press) are fantastic examples of verse novels for this age.

A Poem for Every Day of the Year / A Poem for Every Night of the Year



Allie Esiri Macmillan 978-1509860548, 978-1509813131 £16.99

For adult readers of children's poetry, these handsome anthologies are perfect to dip in to or to give a flavour of the wide landscape of children's poetry across eras, forms and styles. The musicality of poetry is explored through lullabies and rhymes, the lyrical language of Shakespeare and the more modern lyricism of George the Poet and Kate Tempest. Classic poetry from Keats, Rossetti and Causley sits alongside poets who shaped a generation such as Brian Patten and Roger McGough and new poets like Shauna Darling Robertson and Matt Goodfellow. Humorous poetry from the likes of Spike Milligan and Edward Lear is juxtaposed with emotive poetry from Derek Walcott and Imtiaz Dharker. The poems and poets are thoughtfully chosen, reflecting a wide range of cultures and styles, so whether you are a poetry novice or expert, there is something in here to draw you in, inspire, entertain or reflect on.

Many of the books on this list have been shortlisted for or have won **Centre for Literacy in Primary Poetry Award (CLiPPA)**. Find out [more about the award](#) [13] and access materials including videos of poet performances.

Charlotte Hacking is Learning Programme Manager at the **Centre for Literacy in Primary Education**, a charity working to improve literacy in primary schools.

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