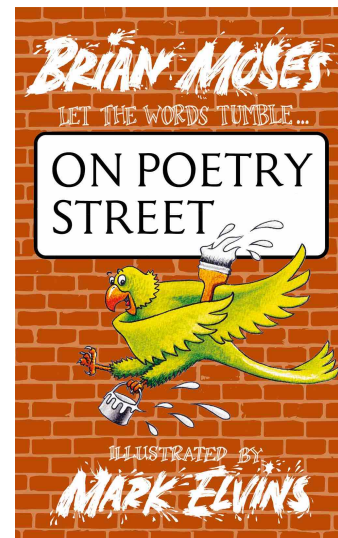


**Lesson ideas based on  
ON POETRY STREET  
by Brian Moses, illustrated by Mark Elvins**

Here are 5 lesson ideas for KS2 (lesson 5 can also be used with Year 2s), each based on a different poem. The opening lines from each poem are here – the full poems are to be found in the book.



**Lesson 1**

***In Any City***

*There was one who did a dance,  
a shuffle of feet across the sidewalk.  
There was one with a sign -  
'I hate to ask, you hate to give,'  
...*

**Background to the poem**

This poem was written in San Francisco after I had noticed how many homeless people there were gathered in Union Square, one of the main shopping areas of the city. Each person seemed to have something different about them and I began cataloguing these differences in a notebook. Once I had a list of their different activities. I was ready to write the poem.

**Introduce the poem**

- Read the poem to the children and if possible let them see a copy.
- The poem doesn't rhyme, but it has a rhythm through repetition of a particular phrase. Can children say what that phrase is? How effective do they think it is?
- Point out the structure of the poem and how the repeating phrase, 'There was one...' always begins a new line.

**Actions**

Talk to the children about different groups of people, people who gather together for the same reasons. Make a list on the board - football supporters, people in a bus queue, or queuing for a jumble sale, commuters on a train, doctor's waiting room, supermarket shoppers, extras for a horror film, festival goers etc

Take one of these groups and list some characteristics:

Commuters on a train:

one carefully holding his coffee,  
one with his mobile strapped to his ear and talking in an overloud voice,  
one arguing with his wife,  
one with a mobile telling her children what to cook for tea.  
one reading a book,  
one ripping something from the evening paper.  
a couple holding hands,  
one asleep on somebody's shoulder,  
one late, running for the train.

Show children how such ideas can be strung together to make a poem.  
Start with a repeating phrase - 'There was one,' or 'I saw one.'

## Lesson 2

### Questions About Slowworms

*Is a slowworm slow  
or can he be fast?  
On sports days would he  
always come last?*

.....

### Introduce the poem

- Read out the poem
- Point out that this is a poem where every line is a question.
- The questions also reveal something about the creature - that he's slow, that he's not a snake, that he likes a warm sunny place etc.
- Look at the structure of the poem. Each question takes up two lines and pairs of questions rhyme with each other. Children can attempt to write in this way but be sure to point out that a question poem can still be effective without rhyme.

### Actions

Ask children to think up suitable subjects to ask questions about - the Moon, Milky Way, a giraffe, hippo, dragonfly, marble.....

Once they have their subjects in mind, suggest that they write down any questions that come into their heads. It is best if they try to write quickly, without editing anything at this stage.

Once children have a variety of questions, then they can arrange them in the order that best satisfies them.

Giraffe, why is your neck  
so long?  
Does it help you  
to nibble on stars?  
Can you see over tops  
of mountains?  
Can you watch what happens  
on Mars?

Seek out other poems that make effective use of questioning e.g William Blake's 'The Tyger.'

### Lesson 3

#### ***Reasons Why I Don't Play Air Guitar Anymore***

- 1. My best friend borrowed it and never gave it back.*
- 2. I left it on a train and now British Rail claim they can't find it.*
- ...

#### **Background**

A fun idea that can hopefully result in a performance piece.

This often works well as a group activity where everyone can offer ideas and a long list can be whittled down to the 10 most witty suggestions.

#### **Introduce the poem**

- Read the poem
- Discuss the structure – it is a numbered list

#### **Actions**

- Get the children to suggest possible topics for writing - reasons why my train was late this morning, reasons why I keep being late for school (but don't allow the cliché - the dog ate my homework!) Reasons why each goal wasn't a goal in our school team's disastrous football match, reasons why elephants can't jump, reasons why Mum gets annoyed with me, reasons why I always manage to avoid washing the dishes, and so on.
- Get each child to suggest an idea
- Whittle down to the 10 wittiest - maybe by voting?
- Perform with different groups of children reading different lines

## Lesson 4

### **The Story of a Car**

*This car has been driven into walls and into sunsets.  
It has slipped down mountain tracks  
almost ending up on its back.  
This car has bumped and jolted over fields,  
...*

#### **Introduce the poem**

- Read the poem, or if possible, have copies to distribute.
- Ask about the structure.
- Comment on the fact that it is rhythmical but it doesn't rhyme.
- What gives it a rhythm?

Children will discover that it has two words repeated regularly - this car.  
This repetition helps to give the poem a rhythm without resorting to a regular rhyme.

#### **Actions**

- Suggest that children write a poem like this themselves. The poem should tell the story of an object or a creature. Subjects that might work well could be a bike, dog, cat, house, classroom, football, shoe, kite, tree, wall, picture, library book. Think of all the things that happened to whatever you are writing about.  
Some things might be true, others might be exaggerated, or fibs. It doesn't matter, just encourage children to say what sounds good, then think of a way to finish their poem.
- Suggest also that children try to bring some alliteration into the poem.
- Remind children that a poem needs to sound finished with lines that wouldn't fit elsewhere in the poem. Sometimes the last line or lines of a poem can make the reader smile or laugh, sad or shiver, think or wonder.

Here's another example:

This blackboard has been written all over.  
It has given us murderous maths..  
It has brain boggled us to see the dreaded work we have to do.  
This blackboard has been sssscratched all over by the nails of little fingers.  
It's the ruler of work, the ruler of the class.  
It has been rubbed down all over a thousand times.  
This blackboard has done a lot for the children,  
But now those children have to leave and the blackboard is deserted.

By Claire

(Written a few years back when blackboards were still in use and hadn't all been replaced by smart boards!)

## Lesson 5

### ***If I had Ears the Size of Satellite Dishes...***

*If I had ears the size of satellite dishes...*

*I could hear the buzz and whine of saws  
as they toppled rainforest trees*

*I could hear the soft beating  
of a butterfly's wings.*

...

### **Introduce the poem**

- Ask children about the BFG. Who has read the book or seen the film? BFG stands for Big Friendly Giant and Roald Dahl describes the giant as having, 'Extra usual ears.'
- Read the poem
- Check that children understand that the poem has a pattern that helps to give it its rhythm, in the repetition of 'I could hear...and 'and that these should always begin a line.

### **Actions**

- Ask children to imagine what it would be like if we had 'extra usual ears' like the BFG, or ears the size of satellite dishes. What would we hear that we can't hear with ordinary ears?
- Compose a class poem that begins -

If I had ears the size of satellite dishes,  
I could hear...

- Some children will suggest things that can be heard with ordinary ears and will need to be asked to think again. Think of impossible sounds to hear.
- Gradually build up the poem from the children's suggestions. Try to make them stretch the ideas so that, 'I can hear a ladybird on a leaf' becomes, 'I can hear a ladybird's footsteps on a leaf' or 'a ladybird tiptoeing along a leaf.'
- Each line should really highlight the sounds that are being heard. 'I can hear aliens in space' can be stretched to 'I can hear the hum of alien messages zinging through space.'
- Ask children how effective the ending is.
- Suggest that they write similar poems but about eyes (If I had eyes the size of dinner plates, I could see....) nose (If I had Pinocchio's nose, I could smell....), legs (If I had bionic legs, I could kick, jump, run etc), muscles (If I had Arnold Schwarzenegger's muscles, I could lift up, throw etc)