Young People's Writing Competition 2019

Closing August 23th, 2019

The theme for this year's competition is **Bees**.

https://www.poetry4kids.com/classics/

The ballad is a vehicle for story-telling, and has been a vital part of English language poetry since medieval times.

Ballads were traditionally composed as songs, and they followed a simple rhyming pattern and a set meter (or rhythm). These days their rhythm is employed and often modified by modern songwriters and poets to create powerful performances. Ballads are designed to be either sung or read out loud.

Structure

Each verse has four lines (but some more recent ballads can have six or more lines), and the poem can have as many verses as necessary to tell the story.

The rhyme is usually only on the second and fourth line, (abcb) but sometimes the first and third line can rhyme as well.

The rhythm is traditionally as follows:

How <u>doth</u>* the <u>lit</u>tle <u>bu</u>sy <u>bee</u>
Im<u>prove</u> each <u>shin</u>ing <u>hour</u>,
And <u>ga</u>ther <u>hon</u>ey <u>all</u> the <u>day</u>
From <u>every</u> <u>shi</u>ning <u>flow</u>er!

Da-DAH-da-DAH-da-DAH-da-DAH
Da-DAH-da-DAH-da-DAH….

*doth = old English, means 'does'

But the first line can be shortened, as in:

I <u>eat</u> my <u>peas</u> with <u>hon</u>ey
I've <u>done</u> it <u>all</u> my <u>life</u>

(Da-DAH-Da-DAH-da-DAH-da
Da-DAH-da-DAH-da-DAH)

For younger poets, both lines can have the same rhythm and length, and rhymes can be aabb, if they find it easier:

Isn't it funny
How a bear likes honey?
Buzz! Buzz! Buzz!
I wonder why he does?

The best way to introduce children to ballads is to ask them to read some of the examples aloud, until they have the rhythm dancing in their heads. One way to practise as a group might be to ask each child to come up with a separate verse to tell a story.

As can be seen in some of the examples, a repeated chorus is often added.

Requirements for the competition:

- Years 2 and 3: one or two verses of four lines each.

- Years 4 and 5: up to four verses of four lines each.

- Years 6 and 7: up to six verses of four lines each.

- Years 8 through 10: up to six verses, a maximum of eight lines in each verse.

Choruses can be added to the poems in any of the age categories, if desired. Entries will be judged on originality, appeal to an audience, attention to rhythm and rhyme, use of poetic devices such as alliteration, simile and metaphor, accurate spelling and grammar.

Entries must be typed on Times New Roman, 12 point, double spaced and on one side of the paper only. The appropriate entry form must accompany each entry. Teachers need to sign each piece of work to verify that it is that of the student and has not been written or edited by an adult.

Please do not include your name on your entry, apart from the separate entry form provided on the front.

Winners in each category will receive an individual cash prize.

Ideas to get kids started:

- Write a list of words associated with bees. See how many of them rhyme.
- Write a song together about the 'waggle dance', using a ballad rhythm. Start by thinking of descriptive words like 'wiggle', 'squirm', 'spin', 'dance', 'pirhouette', 'leap', 'dart', 'charge'.
- A challenge, but you could try an acrostic poem using a word like HIVE.

Sources for inspiration:

- Buzz about Bees https://www.buzzaboutbees.net/bees-poem.html
- A story about beekeeping https://www.bbka.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=ef215651-cf8d-4144-963b-c661ee976af6
- A downloadable pdf all about bees which includes simple poems and activities: https://www.countrysideclassroom.org.uk/storage/resource/downloads/85d62cb2-ad17-4251-a634-f6d8b53d2be2/original/low-res-understanding-bees-education-pack-england-1.pdf

Examples:

1. Short poems, suitable for younger poets:

Isn't it funny
How a bear likes honey?
Buzz! Buzz! Buzz!
I wonder why he does?

From *Winnie the Pooh*, by A.A. Milne

Snowball

I made myself a snowball
As perfect as could be.
I thought I'd keep it as a pet
And let it sleep with me.
I made it some pajamas
And a pillow for its head.
Then last night it ran away,
But first it wet the bed.

Shel Silverstein

Listen To The MUSTN'TS

Listen to the MUSTN'TS, child,
Listen to the DON'TS
Listen to the SHOULDN'TS
The IMPOSSIBLES, the WONT'S
Listen to the NEVER HAVES
Then listen close to me-
Anything can happen, child,
ANYTHING can be

Shel Silverstein

I eat my peas with honey
I've done it all my life
It makes the peas taste funny
But it keeps them on the knife!

Anonymous

The Busy Bee

How doth the little busy bee
Improve each shining hour,
And gather honey all the day
From every shining flower!

How skilfully she builds her cell!
How neat she spreads the wax!
And labours hard to store it well
With the sweet food she makes.

Isaac Watts, 1674–1748

The Crocodile (a parody of 'the Busy Bee')

How doth the little crocodile
    Improve his shining tail,
And pour the waters of the Nile
    On every golden scale!

How cheerfully he seems to grin,
    How neatly spreads his claws,
And welcomes little fishes in,
    With gently smiling jaws!

Lewis Carroll, 1832 – 1898 – from *Alice in Wonderland*

The Fisherman

The fisherman goes out at dawn
When every one's abed,
And from the bottom of the sea
Draws up his daily bread.

His life is strange ; half on the shore
And half upon the sea --
Not quite a fish, and yet not quite
The same as you and me.

The fisherman has curious eyes ;
They make you feel so queer,
As if they had seen many things
Of wonder and of fear.

They're like the sea on foggy days, --
Not gray, nor yet quite blue ;
They 're like the wondrous tales he tells
Not quite -- yet maybe -- true.

He knows so much of boats and tides,
Of winds and clouds and sky !
But when I tell of city things,
He sniffs and shuts one eye !

By Abbie Farwell Brown, 1871 - 1927

The traditional Ballad form is also kept alive in popular songs, like this one:

I'd like to teach the world to sing   Sung by the Seekers

I'd like to build the world a home
And furnish it with love
Grow apple trees and honey bees
And snow-white turtle doves

I'd like to teach the world to sing
In perfect harmony
I'd like to hold it in my arms
And keep it company

I'd like to see the world for once
All standing hand in hand
And hear them echo through the hills
For peace throughout the land
(That's the song I hear)

I'd like to teach the world to sing
In perfect harmony

2. Poems from the 19th century which use the ballad form:

   The Pedigree of Honey

   Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

   The pedigree of honey
   Does not concern the bee;
   A clover, any time, to him
   Is aristocracy.

The Mad Gardener's Song by Lewis Carroll uses six lines per verse.

He thought he saw an Elephant
That practised on a fife:
He looked again, and found it was
A letter from his wife.
'At length I realize,' he said,
'The bitterness of Life!'

He thought he saw a Buffalo
Upon the chimney-piece:
He looked again, and found it was
His Sister's Husband's Niece.
'Unless you leave this house,' he said,
'I'll send for the Police!'

He thought he saw a Rattlesnake
That questioned him in Greek:
He looked again, and found it was
The Middle of Next Week.
'The one thing I regret,' he said,
'Is that it cannot speak!'

He thought he saw a Banker's Clerk
Descending from the 'bus:
He looked again, and found it was
A Hippopotamus.
'If this should stay to dine,' he said,
'There won't be much for us!'

He thought he saw a Kangaroo
That worked a coffee-mill:
He looked again, and found it was
A Vegetable-Pill.
'Were I to swallow this,' he said,
'I should be very ill!'

He thought he saw a Coach-and-Four
That stood beside his bed:
He looked again, and found it was
A Bear without a Head.
'Poor thing,' he said, 'poor silly thing!
It's waiting to be fed!'

He thought he saw an Albatross
That fluttered round the lamp:
He looked again, and found it was
A Penny-Postage-Stamp.
'You'd best be getting home,' he said,
'The nights are very damp!'

He thought he saw a Garden-Door
That opened with a key:
He looked again, and found it was
A Double Rule of Three:
'And all its mystery,' he said,
'Is clear as day to me!'

He thought he saw an Argument
That proved he was the Pope:
He looked again, and found it was
A Bar of Mottled Soap.
'A fact so dread,' he faintly said,
'Extinguishes all hope!'

The Owl and the Pussy Cat by Edward Lear has eight-line verses, and repeats the last line to create a chorus at the end of each verse.

The Owl and the Pussy-cat went to sea
    In a beautiful pea-green boat,
They took some honey, and plenty of money,
    Wrapped up in a five-pound note.
The Owl looked up to the stars above,
    And sang to a small guitar,
"O lovely Pussy! O Pussy, my love,
    What a beautiful Pussy you are,
        You are,
        You are!
What a beautiful Pussy you are!"

Pussy said to the Owl, "You elegant fowl!
    How charmingly sweet you sing!
O let us be married! too long we have tarried:
    But what shall we do for a ring?"
They sailed away, for a year and a day,
    To the land where the Bong-Tree grows

And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood
   With a ring at the end of his nose,
         His nose,
         His nose,
   With a ring at the end of his nose.

"Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling
   Your ring?" Said the Piggy, "I will."
So they took it away, and were married next day
   By the Turkey who lives on the hill.
They dined on mince, and slices of quince,
   Which they ate with a runcible spoon;
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,
   They danced by the light of the moon,
         The moon,
         The moon,
They danced by the light of the moon.

From 'A Disastrous Honeymoon' by Julia Wakefield (a proposed sequel to Edward Lear's poem)

The Owl and the Pussycat sailed away
As soon as their nuptials were done.
Having stopped for provisions at botany Bay
They embarked with the rising sun.

They sailed all day and half the night
In the wake of a wandering star;
Till the Owl looked up at the moon so bright
And drew out his small guitar….

A famous Australian example is Dorothea McKellar's poem:

I love a sunburnt country

The love of field and coppice
Of green and shaded lanes,
Of ordered woods and gardens
Is running in your veins.
Strong love of grey-blue distance,
Brown streams and soft, dim skies
I know, but cannot share it,
My love is otherwise.

I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of ragged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains.
I love her far horizons,
I love her jewel-sea,
Her beauty and her terror
The wide brown land for me!

Finally, here are some poems more or less in ballad form that celebrate bees.

My Friends The Bees

by Murray Christensen (Invercargill, New Zealand)

I love to eat some honey
I've loved it all my life.
I lick it off my fingers
And yes, even off the knife.
Bees have just always been there
Doing what they do so well.
But now thanks to human kind
We are damning them all to hell.
So if we care to keep them around
I know it's not too late.
Just change the way we farm our land
and leave the chemicals outside the gate.

(This poem was written recently by a contributor to the website. The last line doesn't scan very well: could it be improved?)

Bees Song – not really a traditional ballad but a great song!

by Oliver Swingler (Cullercoats, UK) (To the tune of All Through The Night)

Bees are buzzing, pollinating
All through the day
Feeding larvae, honey making
All through the day
But we make their lives confusing
Neonicotinoids using
They get ill, our crops we're losing
All through the day

Wild insects pollen blending
All through the day
So that plants can be unending
All through the day
But monoculture ploughs are slashing
It's their habitats we're trashing
And their numbers they are crashing
All through the day

Promote wildlife gardens growing
All through the day
Stop the GM farmers sowing
All through the day
Help the bees to keep maturing
Harmful chemicals outlawing
Farms organic need restoring
All through the day