

# National Poetry Day Schools Guide



Stuck for ideas? Need a bit of guidance? Keen to see what types of poetry you can create with your students?

New Zealand's much-loved children's poet, Paula Green, who runs the popular Poetry Box blog, has put together this guide to provide inspiration.

*'Poetry is a fabulous playground. You can swing on words, slide on similes, climb on rhyme, leap along lines, dream on balancing beams...'* Paula Green.

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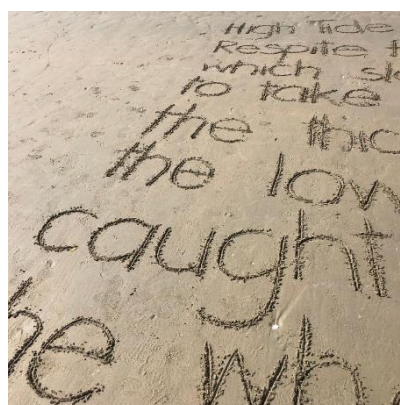
National Poetry Day is celebrated every year in August, an event that has something for everybody, from seasoned poets to total newbies! It is a celebration of the joy of the written and spoken word. The magic and excitement of poetry pervades the day, with the poetry community turning out in droves to discover New Zealand poets, share poetry and connect through this medium.

Schools have been a massive part of National Poetry Day from its inception! This guide covers some of the more popular events and types of poetry you can use with your classes, and gives a bibliography of New Zealand poetry books for children.

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## Activities

- **Go on a poetry trail.** Take a group on a walk with pad and pens. You could walk around the school, along the nearby streets, or beach, or park, or stream, or bush. Hunt for words and phrases. You could make a sheet before you go. Hunt for nouns, verbs, sounds, smells, movement, fascinating details, colours, similes. Either find a good place to stop or back at school, and use the words to make a poem.
- **Chalk poems.** Using poems they have written or found in books, get children to chalk these around the school. Each class could chalk their favourite poems outside their classrooms. You could make a poem trail in the playground. Groups could follow the trail, reading the poems, and pick a favourite. Choose a theme!



• **Ask libraries or bookshops** if they will display a few of your postcard poems in their shop windows or put them on display on National Poetry Day.

• **Take a group of children to read some poems in a retirement village** on Phantom Billstickers National Poetry Day. I have done this several times with children and it is one of the most heart-warming things I have done.

• **Get your local library to invite people in for morning tea** and listen to children from your school read some poems.

• **Go on a poetry picnic.** Pack a snack, invite grandparents, and find a perfect spot in your school grounds to have a picnic and listen to the children read some poems. If it is wet, you can always picnic in the hall or classrooms.

• **Try a poetry slam!** Perform your poems in front of the class or syndicate or school. Make a list of who is performing. The sound in slam poetry is important. Rhythm is important. You might play with rhyme. You might write poems that show how you feel or what you think about something. There might be a time limit. You might recite the poem off by heart. You don't usually use props but you can use gestures. Slam events can be competitive, but they don't have to be. They can just share the love of poetry. The audience can show appreciation with finger clips and claps and whoops.



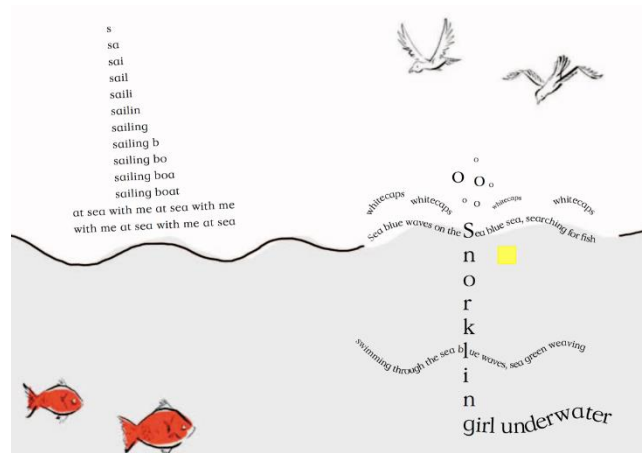
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## Types of Poems

*For examples, please see the appendix*

### List Poems

List poems make lists of things that fascinate you. They might play with sound, have twisty endings or twisty beginnings, show what's in your fridge, under your bed, in the sky, a colour, a season, what's soft or hard, quiet or noisy, near or far, tastes good, tastes yuk, makes you happy, sad, wild, reminds you of something or somewhere. You can use short lines or long ones. You can rhyme or not rhyme. List poems are such fun to write.



From Paula Green's *Letterbox Cat*

## Postcard Poems

Try writing a **postcard poem** from where you **LIVE or a favourite place in New Zealand**. Use your eyes to collect all the **LITTLE** things and the **BIG** things you can see where you live. **Put some** of them in a poem. **Real DETAIL** will make your poem SHINE. Your poem uses words like it is the **p i c t u r e** on the front of the postcard! Use your ears to see **how many words** to put on each line. What works best when you read it aloud?

## Picture Poems

Pick a topic (winter, the beach, kites, trees, cats, dogs, lunch, the street, boats, YOUR CHOICE!). Collect as many words as you can. Try making some poem lines of different sizes that you can put in your picture. Draw a faint outline of where you want the words to go. Fill the picture with your words (words don't need to be everywhere!). Do you need to draw any extra details (like eyes or teeth or shoes or whiskers)? Go over the words with coloured pens. Give the poem a title. Try reading it. Usually there are lots of ways to read a picture poem. You can call it a picture poem, a SHAPE poem or a CONCRETE poem. Over to you!

## Winter Poems

If you look out the window or walk down the street, how do you know it's winter? Brainstorm winter things: food, clothes, activities, weather, trees, sky, weather. Hunt for nouns and verbs. Show me winter in a poem with the details of what you see and hear and feel. You might like to add an eye-popping simile.

## Memory poems

**Sometimes I write poems that are based on a memory.** Sometimes I **use objects / things to JUMP START** a memory. **Write down as many objects and things as you can in 3 minutes.** They can be as **big** as the sky or as **small** as a pin. They can be **alive** (like a cat or a dog), **inside the house** (like a chair, a sock, a teddy, a book, food, person), or **outside the house** (like a tree, river, sand, a ball, a person). Look at all the words and see **which one JUMP STARTS a memory.** Turn that memory of when you were younger into a poem.

## Story poems

Poems can tell little stories. They can be real life, funny, imaginative, surprising, based on a myth or legend, based on a fascinating fact or event, full of action, use dialogue, have interesting characters. They can feature you! They can be long or short. Always listen to them. Check out three different ways to end the poem then pick your favourite.

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## Hot Tips

**Ears** Listen to your poems as you write them. Listen to your poem once you have finished. Any words or lines you want to change?

**Eyes** Go hunting for fascinating detail or words to make your poems come alive. Also, how does your poem look. Do the lines make a pattern or shape?

**Have fun!** At the end of the day poetry is play and enjoyment, and rules don't matter.

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## Poetry for Children - Aotearoa

Most New Zealand children's poetry books are out of print and very few get published each year. Here is a bibliography of some that you may find in your school or public library.

**Paula Green** ed, *A Treasury of NZ Poetry for Children*, Random House, 2014

**Paula Green**, *The Letterbox Cat*, Scholastic, 2014; *Groovy Fish and other poems*, The Cuba Press, 2019

**Paula Green** ed, *Roar, Squeak, Purr: A NZ Treasury of Animal Poems*, Penguin Random House, 2022

**Joy Cowley**, *The Goobledgook Book*, Gecko Press 2019

**Margaret Mahy**. *The Word Witch*, HarperCollins, 2009

**Peter Bland**, *The Night Kite: Poems for Children*, Mallinson Rendel, 2004

**Selina Tusitala Marsh**, *Mophead: How your difference makes a difference*, Auckland University Press, 2019, a poetic memoir by former Poet Laureate.

**Bill Nagelkerke**, *The Night the Moon Fell Down*, The Copy Press, 2019

**Fiona Waters** ed, *Tiger Tiger, Burning Bright! An animal poem for every day of the year*, Nosy Crow Ltd, 2020, UK but has NZ poets in it!

**Susan Paris and Kate de Goldi**, *Annual 1*, Gecko Press, 2016; and *Annual 2*, Massey University Press, 2017. You will find poems here for older children.

**Susan Paris and Kate de Goldi**, *Skinny Dip Poetry*, Massey University Press, 2021. Poems for older children.

## Poetry Box

Follow [NZ Poetry Box](#) and keep in touch with what is happening in NZ Poetry for children, along with reviews of NZ children's books. Paula Green posts challenges and encouragement for children in New Zealand to enjoy!

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## Appendix: Poem Examples

### List Poems

#### Lick Lick Riff

I'm a lick lick dog

I'm a quick quick dog

I'm a spinach ravioli dog

I'm a cream cannelloni dog

I'm a beach flying dog

I'm a hide and seek dog

I'm a chase the ball dog

I'm a hear the call dog

I'm a sweet sweet dog

I'm a meek meek dog

I'm a mushroom pizza dog

I'm a zooming cheetah dog

I'm a cheese spaghetti dog

I'm an extra raggy dog

I'm a tail flick dog

I'm a chew the stick dog

I'm a fetch the glove dog

I'm a loved loved dog

**Paula Green, from *Groovy Fish***

## **Shoes**

boat shoes

car shoes

bike shoes

goat shoes

giraffe shoes

kite shoes

soap shoes

fluffy shoes

light shoes'

rope shoes

tough shoes

MY SHOES!

**Paula Green, from *Letterbox Cat***

**Swip swap day**

a bird in her den

a fox in his burrow

a rabbit in her stables

a horse in his hive

a bee in her basket

a cat in his cave

a bat in her lair

a lion in his kennel

a dog in his web

a spider in her bed

a girl in her nest

fast asleep

**Paula Green, from *Groovy Fish***

## Postcard Poems

### **A Slow Sky Tonight**

The clouds are moving  
across the sky like tiny snails,  
the trees whisper tiny secrets  
that nobody can hear  
and a pink light lights up  
the faraway hills.  
Dinner is nearly ready.

### **Paula Green, from *The Letterbox Cat***

### **Te Henga, Bethells Beach**

A washed-up log with  
roots like a messy beard.  
Someone's riding a horse  
like a jockey  
that sends the dogs flying  
into the wild foamy waves.

### **Paula Green**

## Picture Poems

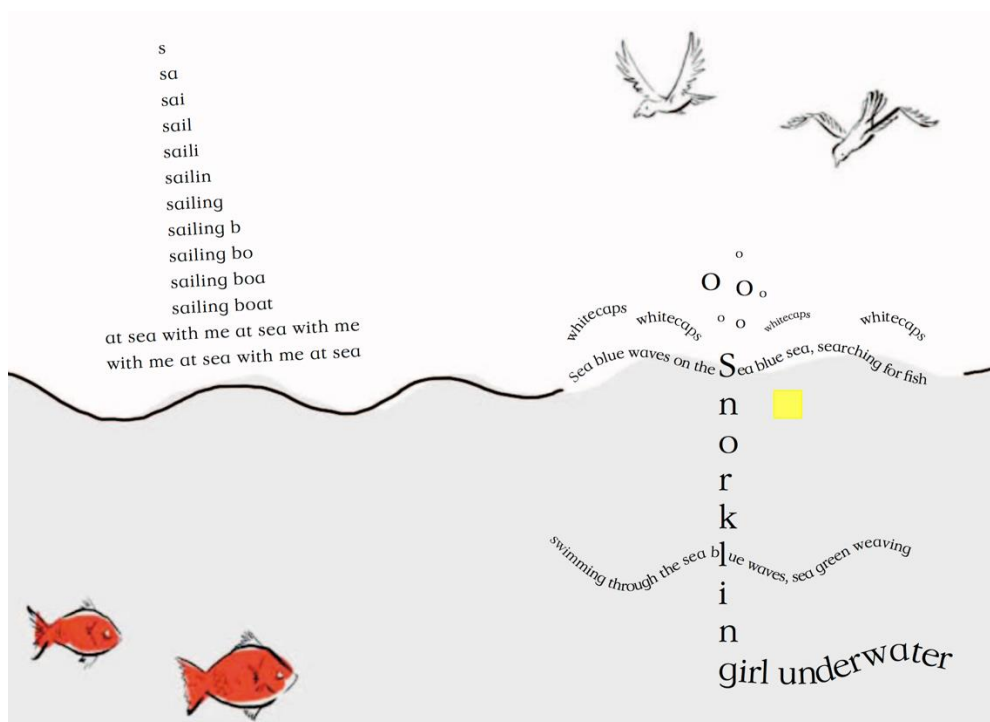
Check out some fabulous picture poems by children on NZ Poetry Box:

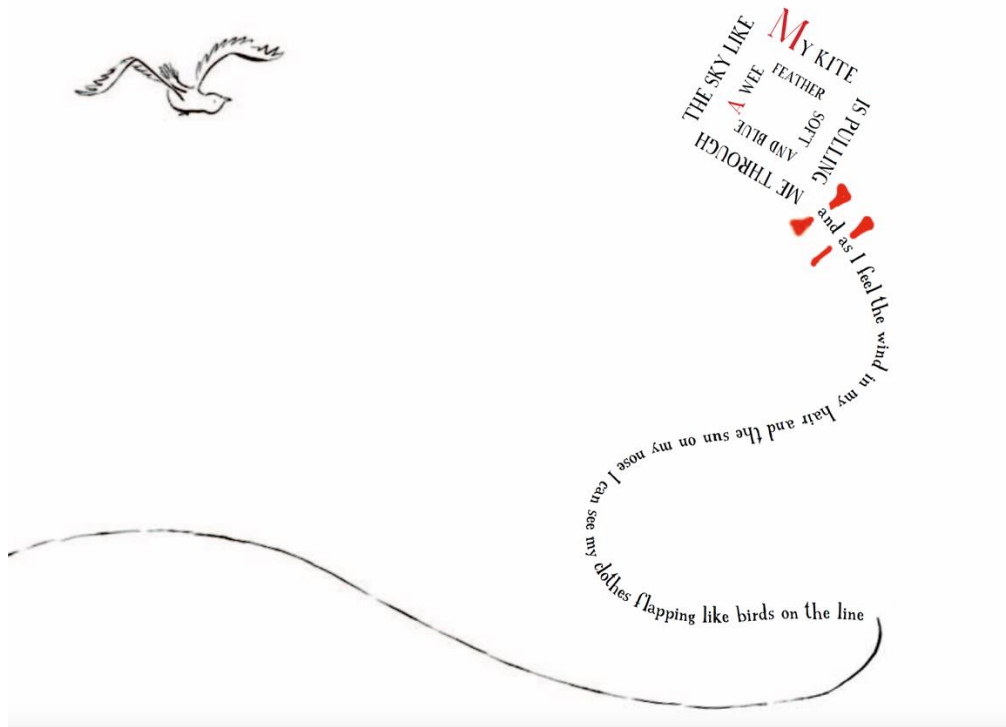
<https://nzpoetrybox.wordpress.com/2015/08/21/my-favourite-picture-poems/>

and here:

<https://nzpoetrybox.wordpress.com/2015/09/24/the-finished-picture-poems-have-just-arrived-from-y34-at-fairburn-school-wow-i-adore-them/>

from Paula Green's *The Letterbox Cat*:





## Winter poems

### Winter time

On the way to the beach today  
the icy ducks in the icy water  
the icy donkey on the icy paddock  
the icy sheep hiding in the icy fog  
the icy white bridge over the icy white stream  
the icy feet of the icy surfers on the icy sand,  
but there's shiny blue sky and hot soup steaming.

**Paula Green**

## **Winter**

Some trees lose their leaves in winter.  
They look like skinny bald men standing  
in the rain and sleet,  
  
but my cat gets so much extra fluff  
he waddles down the hallway like  
a puffed-up duck.

**Paula Green, from *The Letterbox Cat***

## **Memory Poem**

### **The Library**

When I was a girl  
the town library was my free ticket  
to Mt Everest and stone-age caves  
to medieval banquets and magical pools  
to Joan of Arc and royal waves  
to outer space and why the rain falls.  
  
Now I am older I write poems

to take me to faraway times and  
faraway places,  
but I still like visiting libraries  
for books are like suitcases  
waiting to unpack new surprises.

**Paula Green, from *The Letterbox Cat***

### **Story Poems**

#### **The Ball of Custard**

One day a big gloopy ball  
of yellow custard  
went rolling down the street  
as if it were looking  
  
for a big gloopy slice of apple pie or  
a big gloopy mound of Christmas pudding  
  
but as it glooped and rolled  
and slooped and bowled  
  
over and over  
and over and over

it picked up feathers and dust

dead leaves and fluff

so all the neighbours screamed

at the feathery custardy monster.

**Paula Green, from Groovy Fish**

### **Washing**

The very hungry wind

spies the washing on the line

whip slash gobble whoosh

blue socks zebra tops

whip slash gobble whoosh

scruffy jeans puffy togs

whip slash gobble whoosh

beach towels board shorts.

The very hungry wind scoops

up the clothes and spins

woohoowoohoowoohoowohoo

and spins like a wild clothes

dryer then tosses and flings

woohoowoohoowoohoowohoo

the washing right

through the deep blue sky

for the woman in the moon

when she wakes.

**Paula Green, from *Groovy Fish***