

# Poetry Events: How To Do It

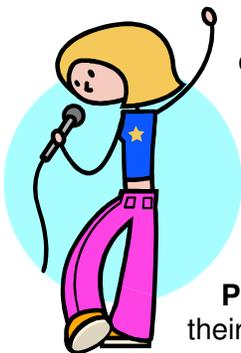
## Open Mic Poetry Night



For our all-ages **Open Mic Poetry Night**, we invited a **guest MC** from the community, which in our case was a retired educator who had grown up reading poetry throughout her childhood. In fact, she recited a fairly substantial poem from memory before inviting members of the audience to step up to the mic. The first 20 minutes were reserved for younger children with earlier bedtimes. Sure enough, we had 5-year-olds reciting their favorite Mother Goose rhymes! But later there were adults who spontaneously decided to share favorite poetry from college days.

For this event, **publicity is key**. Snacks were **not** essential, nor missed, it being right after supper. But a **book display** was, especially for those who were suddenly inspired to step up to the mic. Choose a broader range of books for this all-ages event. **Decorate** the library with **colorful poetry posters!** [Good sources = ALA Graphics, Children's Book Council, standard library catalogs such as Highsmith, Demco, etc.] Try setting out **poetry worksheets & coloring sheets** in the weeks prior to your event, and display these throughout the library. They are the best kind of signage money can't buy! Good luck, and have FUN.

## Teen or Tween Poetry Jam



How does a Poetry **Jam** differ from a Poetry **Slam**? A slam event is a competition, meaning someone - either the audience or judges - determines winners and runners-up. From what I've seen and read, it can also be quite rowdy! But if you'd like to be a little more inclusive, encouraging **everyone** to give poetry reading or writing a try, hold a **Poetry Jam**.

During the school year, success is almost guaranteed if one or more middle school language arts teachers gets involved (ideally during **April, National Poetry Month**). If they're interested enough to include poetry reading & writing in their classrooms, your Poetry Jam can be an afterschool event, giving students the opportunity to read their own poetry in front of their peers. Be sure to have a **display of poetry books** for browsing, for those who'd rather read the works of favorite or newly discovered poets. Brief booktalking is okay, but remember, this event is all about the budding poets and poetry fans in attendance. After seeing & hearing a few of their peers at the mic, it's surprising how many others get inspired to go up.

Other helpful elements include **large magnetic poetry** [good sources = Magnetic Poetry Really Big Words Edition (cheapest I've found is on Amazon), OR <http://infix.se/2006/10/22/how-to-make-your-own-magnetic-poetry> (could be a great project for your youth volunteers!)] as a fun warm-up activity at each table. Offering **light snacks** such as chips and pop is always well-received. A **good sound system** is helpful; a **microphone on a stand** allows readers to have both hands free to hold books, paper, or use gestures for emphasis. One middle school librarian introduced the idea of **snapping fingers** instead of clapping, as open mic etiquette. Cool, man... She also brought in mellow music CDs (Nora Jones) to help set the stage with a "coffee house" atmosphere.

-- Geri Ceci Cupery

## Poetry Break



Caroline Feller Bauer's book, *Poetry Break*, is full of ideas for how to do Poetry Break at schools, at the library, at community events, and more. Adapt the ideas for summer reading program events for all ages. Caroline has made it so easy by including suggested, tried-and-true poems for the various activities she suggests.

When I did 'Poetry Break' in the schools, I had a sign and a simple hand puppet who announced loudly, *Poetry Break* as we walked into the classroom. About a week before the Poetry Break day, I created a simple sign up sheet with the date and a column of time slots. I had permission to visit teachers to get them to sign up, sometimes I left the clipboard in the office for the week. Ask the principal or secretary at your school what the best way would be to circulate the form and get it back. Now-a-days there is email. I was volunteering, so I just touched base with teachers when I was at the school.

### Sign up for a 5 minute Poetry Break.

(Shhh, don't tell the kids when Poetry Break will be! It is more fun and meaningful when it is an 'interruption' of their regularly scheduled classes)

Tuesday, May 5.

9:00 \_\_\_ Room # \_\_\_                      9:30 \_\_\_ Room # \_\_\_

9:10 \_\_\_ Room # \_\_\_                      9:40 \_\_\_ Room # \_\_\_

9:20 \_\_\_ Room # \_\_\_                      9:50 \_\_\_ Room # \_\_\_

Please return this form to.... By Friday, May 1.

After a few months of doing Poetry Break in the classrooms (grades 3 to 5), I started getting poems from the children. They wrote their own poems or found favorites that they copied down and they wanted me to read them at Poetry Break. Sometimes they were willing to read their own poem out loud to their class.

## Circulating Poetry



Here is an idea I want to do this summer – Have teens make colorful, creative bags or boxes and fill them with poems to keep at the circ desk. Depending on how many bags and boxes you get, you could change it each week or once a month. Put your library name, website, hours, etc on the back of all poems for marketing. Have a display of poetry books and provide colorful, small pieces of paper and pencils with a poster for patrons to pick a poem or add a poem.

-- Karen M. Wendt

Much Ado About... Summer Reading Program 2009

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