



Poetry Recitation & Copywork

Poetry Selections

This session's featured poet is Osip Mandelstam. We've included four poetry selections for your kids and teens to read, listen to, memorize, and recite. They are:

- Alone I stare into the frost's white face
- Stone: 103 The Twilight of Freedom
- From Stone
- I don't remember the word I wished to say

For copywork, we have included Zaner-Bloser style handwriting sheets for primary, elementary, and cursive, as well as college ruled for older students. The poems we have chosen are:

- Alone I stare into the frost's white face
- Stone: 103 The Twilight of Freedom

"Poetry is the plough that turns up time in such a way that the abyssal strata of time, its black earth, appear on the surface."

~ Osip Mandelstam



Osip Mandelstam

January 14, 1891 – December 27, 1938

Osip Mandelstam was a Soviet Russian poet who was known for his writings against the government and his persistence in fighting against political persecution. He was born in 1891 in Warsaw, Congress Poland, a part of the Russian Empire. Soon after, his family moved to Saint Petersburg. In 1900, Mandelstam entered a prestigious school where he began to write poetry. In 1907, his first poems were published through his school's almanac.

In 1908, Mandelstam moved to Paris to study literature and philosophy. The next year, he left Sorbonne to attend the University of Heidelberg in Germany.

In 1911, he continued his education at the University of Saint Petersburg, where he converted to Methodism due to Jews being excluded. The same year, he and several other young Russian poets formed the Poets Guild, creating something similar to a political movement during a tense time in history. In 1913, Mandelstam published his collection of poems known as *The Stone*. The collection was republished in 1916 with additional poetry.

In 1922, Mandelstam married Nadezhda Khazina, and the couple settled in Moscow. Before Nadezhda, Mandelstam had an affair with a fellow poet, Anna Akhmatova, and throughout the 1910s, he was involved with Salomea Andronikova, a St. Petersburg socialite. His involvement with other women did not stop despite being married to Nadezhda, and their marriage was often threatened, most notably by Olga Vaksel in 1924. In 1922, Mandelstam also published his second book of poems, *Tristia*, and almost completely abandoned poetry for a time. He worked to translate literature into Russian instead and later worked as a newspaper correspondent.

In 1933, Mandelstam composed and shared the poem "*Stalin Epigram*" with a few of his colleagues, bringing immediate attention to his works and values. He was arrested the following year and sentenced to exile in Cherdyn. Despite Mandelstam's betrayal, Nadezhda accompanied him into exile when he was arrested in the 1930s. She helped him hide his works and memorized pieces of them to keep his legacy and message living, risking her own arrest in many moments. These final works of Mandelstam were saved thanks to Nadezhda and were later published as the *Voronezh Notebooks*. She was one of the main reasons his poetry was able to be republished in the 1970s.

After attempting suicide in exile, Mandelstam's sentence was decreased, only banishing him from large cities.

Unfortunately, this relative stability would not remain permanent. In 1938, Mandelstam was given a government voucher for a trip to a home outside of Moscow. Upon his arrival, he was arrested and charged with counter-revolutionary activities. He was sentenced to five years in correction camps. He attempted to reach his wife while in imprisonment, asking for warmer clothes and supplies to live on, but he died before he could ever receive them.

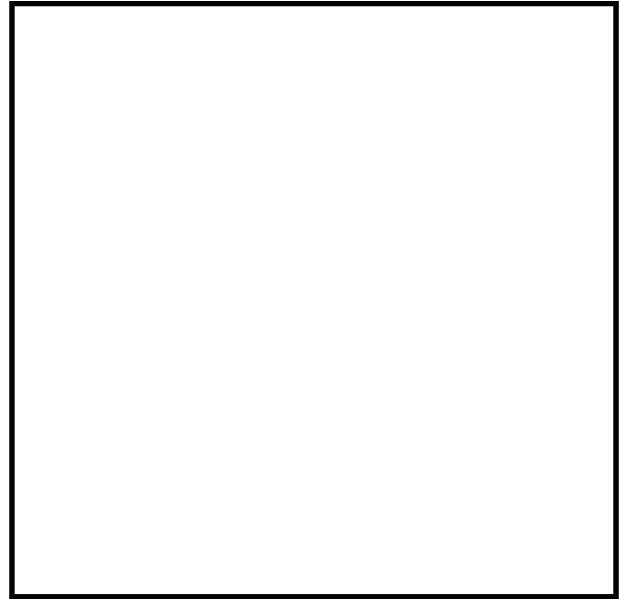
Nadezhda worked to keep Mandelstam's memory alive, writing memoirs about her life alongside the famous poet. She also published many of his manuscripts and unpublished works. His legacy is now remembered today through his works and his admirable actions against corruption within the political sphere of that time in history.

Poet Study

Poet: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Place of Birth: _____



3 Facts About the Poet:

Best Known Poems by the Poet:

Poetry Selections

Alone I stare into the frost's white face

Alone I stare into the frost's white face.
It's going nowhere, and I—from nowhere.
Everything ironed flat, pleated without a wrinkle:
Miraculous, the breathing plain.
Meanwhile the sun squints at this starched poverty—
The squint itself consoled, at ease . . .
The ten-fold forest almost the same . . .
And snow crunches in the eyes, innocent, like clean
bread.

Stone: 103 The Twilight of Freedom

Let us praise the twilight of freedom, brothers,
the great year of twilight!
A thick forest of nets has been let down
into the seething waters of night.
O sun, judge, people, desolate
are the years into which you are rising!

Let us praise the momentous burden
that the people's leader assumes, in tears.
Let us praise the twilight burden of power,
its weight too great to be borne.
Time, whoever has a heart
will hear your ship going down.

We have roped swallows together
into legions.
Now we can't see the sun.
Everywhere nature twitters as it moves.
In the deepening twilight the earth swims into the nets
and the sun can't be seen.

But what can we lose if we try one
groaning, wide, ungainly sweep of the rudder?
The earth swims. Courage,
brothers, as the cleft sea falls back from our plow.
Even as we freeze in Lethe we'll remember
the ten heavens the earth cost us.

Poetry Selections

From Stone

Against pale blue enamel, the shade
That makes every April the same,
The birch tree's branches swayed
And evening shyly came

The pattern, precise and complete,
Made a network of thinly etched lines
Like the ones on a porcelain plate
With its carefully drawn design,

When the dear artist draws until
The firm glaze holds what he wrought
For that moment aware of his skill
And sad death forgot.

I don't remember the word I wished to say

I don't remember the word I wished to say.
The blind swallow returns to the hall of shadow,
on shorn wings, with the translucent ones to play.
The song of night is sung without memory, though.

No birds. No blossoms on the dried flowers.
The manes of night's horses are translucent.
An empty boat drifts on the naked river.
Lost among grasshoppers the word's quiescent.

It swells slowly like a shrine, or a canvas sheet,
hurling itself down, mad, like Antigone,
or falls, now, a dead swallow at our feet.
with a twig of greenness, and a Stygian sympathy.

O, to bring back the diffidence of the intuitive caress,
and the full delight of recognition.
I am so fearful of the sobs of The Muses,
the mist, the bell-sounds, perdition.

Mortal creatures can love and recognise: sound may
pour out, for them, through their fingers, and overflow:
I don't remember the word I wished to say,
and a fleshless thought returns to the house of shadow.

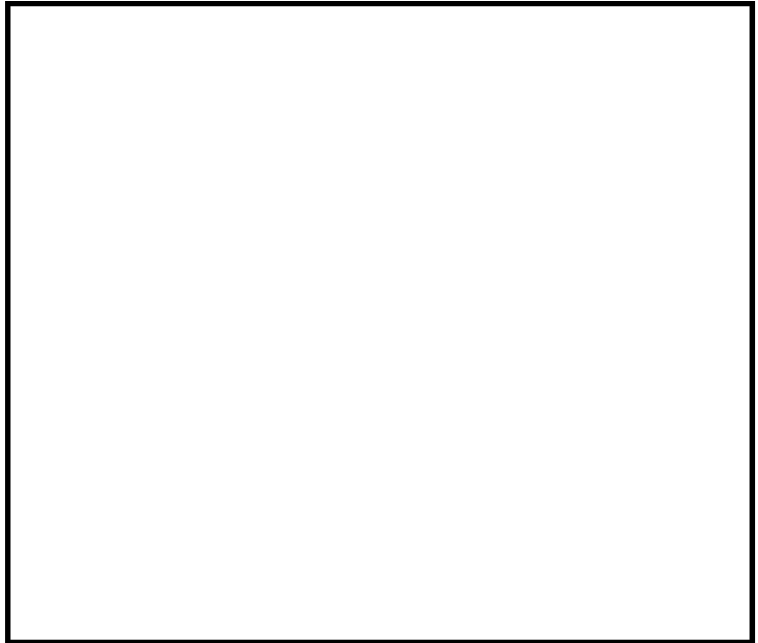
The translucent one speaks in another guise,
always the swallow, dear one, Antigone....
on the lips the burning of black ice,
and Stygian sounds in the memory.

Poetry Study

Title:

Type of Poem:

Use the box to at right to draw a picture of what the poem brings to mind.



Write one thing you liked and did not like about the poem:

Write three adjectives about the poem.

Compose a few lines of your own poem inspired by this work
