



# Poetry Recitation & Copywork

## Poetry Selections

Our featured poet for this session is Ben Jonson, a famous Renaissance writer. We've included six poetry selections for your kids and teens to read, listen to, memorize, and recite. They are:

- X: Song: To Celia
- Of Life and Death
- On a Robbery
- A Fit of Rhyme Against Rhyme
- Hymn to the Belly
- A Hymn to God the Father

For copywork, we have included Zaner-Bloser style handwriting sheets for primary, elementary, and cursive, as well as college-ruled for older students. We have chosen three poems, as well as a historical speech to copy, listed below:

- Of Life and Death
- On a Robbery
- A Hymn to God the Father
- (History copywork) Queen Elizabeth's Tilbury Speech

*"Language most shows a man: Speak, that I may see thee."*

~ Ben Jonson



## Benjamin Jonson

circa June 11, 1572 - August 18, 1637

Benjamin Jonson, or Ben Jonson as he became known (1572-1637), was one of the most important poets and playwrights of the English Renaissance, a time when art, theater, and literature were flourishing in England. He lived during the same period as William Shakespeare and even knew him personally. While Shakespeare is the most famous writer of the time, Jonson's work also left a lasting mark on English literature.

Jonson was born in London in 1572. His father died before he was born, so he grew up in a family that struggled financially. As a boy, Jonson attended school, where he showed a

talent for reading, writing, and especially for classical Greek and Roman authors who deeply influenced his later writing. For a short time, he worked as a bricklayer, helping build houses, before joining the army. As a soldier, Jonson traveled to the Netherlands, where he gained experience and courage that shaped his bold personality.

When Jonson returned to London, he began acting in plays, but he soon discovered his true gift was in writing them. His plays often mixed comedy with sharp observations about people and society. One of his most famous plays, *Volpone* (1605-1606), satirized greed and selfishness, showing how easily people could be tricked by their own desires. Another play, *The Alchemist* (1610), poked fun at those who were gullible enough to believe in get-rich-quick schemes. Jonson's clever humor and skillful use of language made his plays popular with audiences.

In addition to plays, Jonson wrote poetry. His poems were admired for their careful structure and thoughtful ideas. One of his most famous poems is *To Celia*, which includes the well-known line "Drink to me only with thine eyes." He also wrote touching elegies, or poems of mourning, such as the one he wrote after the death of his young son. These works reveal a softer, more personal side of Jonson.

Jonson's personality was strong and sometimes fiery. He got into quarrels and even spent time in prison more than once for offending authorities with his sharp words. Yet, he was also admired and respected by many, including King James I, who gave him a yearly salary, earning him the title of the first "Poet Laureate" of England. This meant Jonson was paid to compose poetry and plays for important events, and he became officially recognized as one of the nation's leading poets.

Ben Jonson's influence lasted long after he died in 1637. His plays and poems were widely read, and future writers looked up to him as a master of language and wit. While Shakespeare may be better remembered today, Jonson's work offers an important window into the life, humor, and concerns of the Renaissance. He influenced a generation of writers, and his plays are still remembered (and even performed) to this day, ensuring that his memory lives on.

# Poetry Selections

## IX: Song: To Celia

Drink to me, only, with thine eyes,  
And I will pledge with mine;  
Or leave a kisse but in the cup,  
And Ile not look for wine.  
The thirst, that from the soule doth rise,  
Doth aske a drink divine:  
But might I of Jove's Nectar sup,  
I would not change for thine.  
I sent thee, late, a rosie wreath,  
Not so much honoring thee,  
As giving it a hope, that there  
It could not withered be.  
But thou thereon did'st onely breathe,  
And sent'st it back to mee:  
Since when it growes, and smells, I sweare,  
Not of it selfe, but thee.

## On Life and Death

The ports of death are sins; of life, good deeds:  
Through which our merit leads us to our meeds.  
How wilful blind is he, then, that would stray,  
And hath it in his powers to make his way!  
This world death's region is, the other life's:  
And here it should be one of our first strifes,  
So to front death, as men might judge us past it:  
For good men but see death, the wicked taste it.

## On a Robbery

RIDWAY robb'd DUNCOTE of three hundred pound,  
Ridway was ta'en, arraign'd, condemn'd to die;  
But, for this money, was a courtier found,  
Begg'd Ridway's pardon: Duncote now doth cry,  
Robb'd both of money, and the law's relief,  
'The courtier is become the greater thief.'

# Poetry Selections

## A Fit of Rhyme Against Rhyme

Rhyme, the rack of finest wits,  
That expresseth but by fits  
True conceit,  
Spoiling senses of their treasure,  
Cozening judgment with a measure,  
But false weight;  
Wresting words from their true calling,  
Propping verse for fear of falling  
To the ground;  
Jointing syllables, drowning letters,  
Fast'ning vowels as with fetters  
They were bound!  
Soon as lazy thou wert known,  
All good poetry hence was flown,  
And art banish'd.  
For a thousand years together  
All Parnassus' green did wither,  
And wit vanish'd.  
Pegasus did fly away,  
At the wells no Muse did stay,  
But bewail'd  
So to see the fountain dry,  
And Apollo's music die,  
All light failed!  
Starveling rhymes did fill the stage;  
Not a poet in an age  
Worth crowning;  
Not a work deserving bays,  
Not a line deserving praise,  
Pallas frowning;

Greek was free from rhyme's infection,  
Happy Greek by this protection  
Was not spoiled.  
Whilst the Latin, queen of tongues,  
Is not yet free from rhyme's wrongs,  
But rests foiled.  
Scarce the hill again doth flourish,  
Scarce the world a wit doth nourish  
To restore  
Phœbus to his crown again,  
And the Muses to their brain,  
As before.  
Vulgar languages that want  
Words and sweetness, and be scant  
Of true measure,  
Tyrant rhyme hath so abused,  
That they long since have refused  
Other cæsure.  
He that first invented thee,  
May his joints tormented be,  
Cramp'd forever.  
Still may syllables jar with time,  
Still may reason war with rhyme,  
Resting never.  
May his sense when it would meet  
The cold tumor in his feet,  
Grow unsunder;  
And his title be long fool,  
That in rearing such a school  
Was the founder.

# Poetry Selections

## Hymn to the Belly

ROOM! room! make room for the bouncing Belly,  
First father of sauce and deviser of jelly;  
Prime master of arts and the giver of wit,  
That found out the excellent engine, the spit,  
The plough and the flail, the mill and the hopper,  
The hutch and the boulder, the furnace and copper,  
The oven, the bavin, the mawkin, the peel,  
The hearth and the range, the dog and the wheel.  
He, he first invented the hogshead and tun,  
The gimlet and vice too, and taught 'em to run;  
And since, with the funnel and hippocras bag,  
He's made of himself that now he cries swag;  
Which shows, though the pleasure be but of four inches,  
Yet he is a weasel, the gullet that pinches  
Of any delight, and not spares from his back  
Whatever to make of the belly a sack.  
Hail, hail, plump paunch! O the founder of taste,  
For fresh meats or powdered, or pickle or paste!  
Devourer of broiled, baked, roasted or sod!  
And emptier of cups, be they even or odd!  
All which have now made thee so wide i' the waist,  
As scarce with no pudding thou art to be laced;  
But eating and drinking until thou dost nod,  
Thou break'st all thy girdles and break'st forth a god.

# Poetry Selections

## A Hymn to God the Father

Hear me, O God!  
A broken heart  
Is my best part.  
Use still thy rod,  
That I may prove  
Therein thy Love.

If thou hadst not  
Been stern to me,  
But left me free,  
I had forgot  
Myself and thee.

For sin's so sweet,  
As minds ill-bent  
Rarely repent,  
Until they meet  
Their punishment.

Who more can crave  
Than thou hast done?  
That gav'st a Son,  
To free a slave,  
First made of nought;  
With all since bought.

Sin, Death, and Hell  
His glorious name  
Quite overcame,  
Yet I rebel  
And slight the same.

But I'll come in  
Before my loss  
Me farther toss,  
As sure to win  
Under His cross.

# Poetry Study

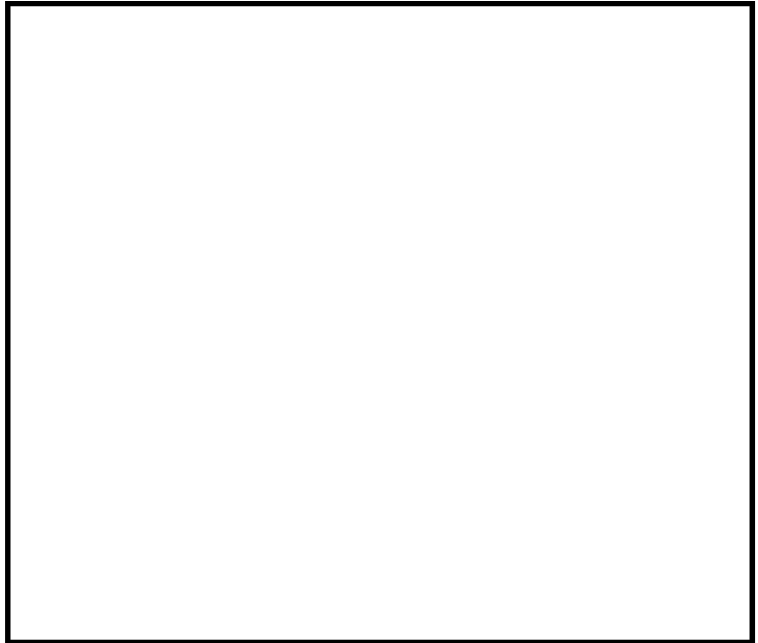
**Title:**

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**Type of Poem:**

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**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:**

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**Write three adjectives about the poem.**

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

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