

POETRY APPRECIATION 2025

January 2025: CHEERFUL POEMS FOR JANUARY

The jolly theme of jolly poems was felt by some to be jolly difficult! But all managed to find two poems to share and it turned out to be a varied and delightful mix. Included was the old favourite of *The Lion and Albert* by Marriott Edgar which was a treat to hear again.

Then there was a more recent poem by Judith Nichols called *Brian's Picnic* where all the boy wanted was a doughnut despite a huge choice of delicious food on offer. The poem *A Statue* by Wendy Cope proved how popular Eric Morecombe was as 'in turn the men adopt a dancing pose' and the women 'hug the statues arm and nestle close'.

The poem by Siegfried Sassoon was as celebratory yet poignant as you would expect in *Everyone Sang*. Ogden Nash's poem *Children's Party* was both flippant and cute which started with the lines 'May I join you in the doghouse, Rover? I wish to retire til the party's over'.

March 2025: SCHOOL AND SCHOOLDAYS

Our March meeting had the subject of School and Schooldays but we started with a sonnet titled *The Lure of the Black Hole*. This harked back to last month's subject of Space and the Heavens but also related to our English and Science lessons at school. However, after hearing it, it was revealed to have been written not by a human being but by a computer programme. It was judged to be good enough to have been written by real poet and it was rather chilling to realise just how easily we had been conned into thinking it had come from a human brain.

Things cheered up after that with several more light-hearted items about naughty children and unpopular teachers but one long offering found us disputing whether it was actually poetry at all or just jumped up prose.

Phillip Larkin's *The School in August* was a little sad but that's Phillip Larkin for you.

Between poems we discussed school uniform (especially navy blue knickers!), school dinners (our memories were mostly negative), what made a good or a bad teacher and why so many of us said that they had HATED Maths.

In April our subject will be the poetry of John Keats. New members are welcome and any old members who have been unable to come for a while can be assured that we'd be pleased to see them again.

April 2025: JOHN KEATS

Our April meeting was a study of some of the poetry of John Keats. Keats was one of the Romantic poets. They focused their works on human relationships and feelings and the beauties of nature.

He was born into a working class family in 1795 and died at the age of 26 in 1821 of the tuberculosis that had already caused the deaths of his mother and brother. He probably knew that he too would die from it and this must have influenced his poetry.

We found that his poetry was particularly effective in giving us the feeling of being suspended in a particular moment in time. In *To Autumn* we observe the season as it passes as slowly as we would watch a fruit ripen and time is totally suspended in his *Ode on a Grecian Urn*.

David found us some humour in some verses from a letter in which Keats pokes fun at Oxford citizens and clergy and Ayas did his best to explain the meaning of *La Belle Dame sans Merci* which one of us admitted had puzzled her at school.

Keats is not a superficially easy poet. His poems need more than a quick read through to appreciate but they are well worth a bit of serious concentration.

May 2025: RELATIONS

Our June meeting had as its subject "Relations". The ten members present managed to find a variety of poems including one about a working class father who made up a fire in a cold house every day of the week, a son, grown so tall his mother can't believe it, a loveless marriage, back-berrying with family as a child, an annoyingly critical uncle and even a poem of praise for a mother-in law so saccharine that it was probably a reject from a greetings card company!

There was incidental discussion about the early death of Rupert Brooke and if experience of the realities of war would have influenced his poetry and our own experiences of family life were shared.

We don't just read a poem, say "that was very nice" and move on to the next one. Our discussion of the poetry presented is a valued part of the meeting. If we want to say "I thought that was dreadful" we do, however eminent the poet.

Our subject for July will be Music and anything connected with it and in August we will concentrate on the poetry of Carol Ann Duffy.

Thanks to everyone present for giving us such a good selection of poems and to Lynn for her hospitality.

October 2025: ANIMALS

Our October meeting had a seemingly easy subject with poems about animals. However, our very first poem by T.S. Elliot somehow seemed to relate a hippopotamus to the Church (Don't think we quite got our heads round that one!). However, we do try to get to the deeper meaning of difficult poems so we did have a go.

"*The Language of Cat*" perfectly contrasted the hauteur of a cat with the ready friendliness and eagerness to please of a dog.

"*Elegy for Giant Tortoises*" lamented the loss of yet another species at the hands of Man and John Clare's "*Badger*" again exposed mankind's cruelty.

Two more catty poems, "*Conversation on a Garden Wall*" and "*Mafia Cats*" cheered us up.

Cats did seem to get the lion's share of the meeting although the poor lion didn't even get a mention although a gorilla and a rabbit did.

These are only a few of the poems brought and enjoyed at a very enjoyable meeting. Thanks to everyone found them for us.