

## ALZHEIMER'S POETRY PROJECT

A report on an innovative training program, based on a non-pharmacological arts intervention titled Alzheimer's Poetry Project (APP). With the goal to help improve the quality of life of residents of nursing homes with dementia and other psychosocial needs. This training program was delivered by a telepresence robot.

The mission of the APP is to improve the quality of life of people living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia by facilitating creative expression through poetry and other arts including music and movement.

### GRANT AGREEMENT

This agreement was entered into for the period of March 1, 2022 to April 30th, 2023, by the State of Wisconsin Department of Health Services on behalf of the Division of Quality Assurance and the Alzheimer's Poetry Project LLC.



Department of Health Services / Division of Quality Assurance  
Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee

This project report has been prepared by the author under a grant from the Department of Health Services (DHS) Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee. The views expressed in the report/training are personal to the author and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Department of Health Services or any of its staff and do not bind the Department in any manner.

This report was prepared by Gary Glazner, Grantee Grant Administrator and founder of the Alzheimer's Poetry Project LLC.

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## **Lake Michigan**

*(This poem was created by the poets of Sheboygan Senior Community and Melissa Theil, Director of Life Enrichment.)*

Lake Michigan is always cold

But when you are a kid you don't care

What would you find on the beach of lake michigan?

You would find seaweed!

Dead fish!

You would find flat stones for skipping – I skipped so many!

You could paint them if you are no good at skipping.

Lake Michigan is my most sacred spot

My mind went there

We had beach parties and parked

I was so happy in that moment

My home is on the beach

## **REPORT**

- 1) Overview of Project.
- 2) Dementia Arts Mapping: an in-depth analysis of the impact of staff training on nursing home resident response level to show we met our quantifiable target goals.
- 3) Staff Interviews on Resident Response and Creativity Training.
- 4) Sample Poems Created by Nursing Home Residents with Staff.
- 5) Sample Dementia Arts Mapping Templet and Training Handouts.

### **1) Overview of Project**

#### **Nursing Home Partners:**

- Edenbrook Appleton, Appleton;
- Hillview Health Care, La Crosse;
- Saint John's on the Lake, Milwaukee,
- Sheboygan Senior Community, Sheboygan;
- Villa Bradley Estates, Milwaukee
- Wisconsin Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls.

The residents at each nursing home choose the name for the robot. The names were Rosie, Edenbrook; Robbie, Hillview, Jo-Jo, Saint John's; Cisco, Sheboygan Senior; Incredible Robot, Villa Bradley and Square Head, WI VA.

### **Benchmarks**

- Conduct Dementia Arts Mapping at each of the six partner nursing homes.
- Conduct 8 hours of staff training at the six partner nursing homes on use of creativity and arts interventions = 48 hours.
- Prime Speakers Series 2 events per week x 36 weeks = 72 events.

One session of Dementia Arts Mapping took place before staff training with each of the 6 nursing home partners and one session Dementia Arts Mapping took place at the culminating event with each of the 6 nursing home partners.

We exceeded our goal and conducted 56 hours of staff training with the nursing home partners.

Prime Speakers Series featuring Jesse Neuman, trumpet and Anthony Hyatt, violin, conducted 58 hours.

Due to the challenge of fitting the Prime Speakers Series into the schedule of the partnering nursing homes, we did not meet our goal of 72 hours.

This allowed us to add more training and admin hours. Both were helpful in completing the project and providing the best experience for the nursing home residents.

### **Training Hours by Nursing Home:**

Edenbrook Appleton, 10 hours; Sheboygan Senior Community, 12 hours; Saint John's on the Lake, 9 hours; Villa Bradley Estates, 8 hours; WI VA, 6 hours and Hillview Health Care, 11 hours.

### **Prime Speakers events by Nursing Home:**

Edenbrook Appleton, 12 hours; Sheboygan Senior Community, 7 hours; Saint John's on the Lake, 14 hours; Villa Bradley Estates, 8 hours; WI VA, 6 hours and Hillview Health Care, 11 hours.

## **2) Dementia Arts Mapping and Quantifiable Target Goals**

Measure resident response before and after staff training using the Dementia Arts Mapping tool to compare their engagement level before and after the staff has received and implemented the methods learned in the training of creativity and arts interventions.

Our quantifiable target goal: (was to show after staff training,) a resident response level of 50%.

## **In-Depth Analysis of the Impact of Staff Training on Nursing Home Resident Response Level**

### **Description of Dementia Arts Mapping**

Dementia Arts Mapping was used to observe resident responses during diverse activity programs in each participating nursing home. The project director recorded the responses levels and took notes from a telepresence robot. A sample Dementia Arts Mapping Templet is included at the end of this report.

### **Pre-Training**

A wide range of activities that are typical in nursing homes were observed. The six sessions included: Bingo; Coffee Club; Dance/Movement; Dice Games; Drawing/Coloring and Exercise.

### **Culminating Events (Post-Training)**

Each of the six culminating events included the four main APP techniques:

- Performing poems using the “call and response,” technique where a staff member says a line of poetry and the group repeats the line in unison.
- Discussions about the poems.
- Props to hold, feel or smell to stimulate the senses.
- Creating a group poem by asking open-ended questions around a theme.

In addition, the sessions often included dance and singing.

### **In-Depth Analysis**

For the following charts from both pre and post observations, we averaged the participants’ response level by domain.

In the Chart A, we see that in the domain “Feeling Content,” the pre-training was at 88.5% showing the activities were effective and were slighter higher than the post-training at 85.5%.

We believe this shows that in general residents are comfortable and the activities are successful even before the staff engages in creativity training. This is the only domain were the pre observations were higher than the post observation.

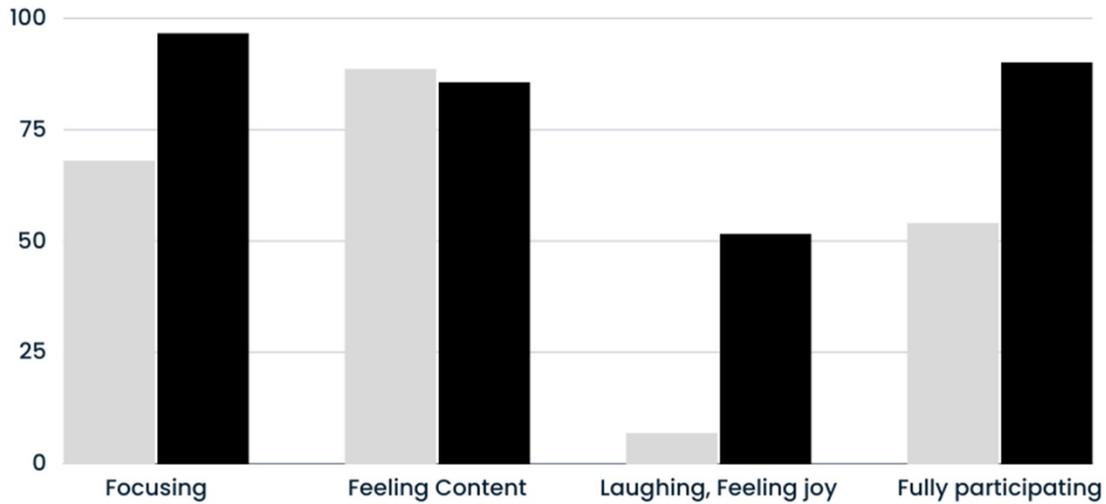
We see a striking increase in the domain of “Laughing/Feeling Joy” from pre at 7% to post at 51.%.

We also see an increase in the domain of “Fully Participating,” at 54% pre and 90% post.

Chart A

# DEMENTIA ARTS MAPPING

Percentages of People Participating by Domain. Grey shows Pre-Creativity Training and Black Shows Culminating Event.



In the Chart B, we see that in the pre there were no examples of the residents “constantly vocalizing,” while the post was at 77%. We also see a sharp increase in “revealing emotions,” of pre 3.5% to post 28%.

These are indications of the skill of the staff at learning and implementing the APP techniques. They also are indicative of the goals built into the techniques including performing poems and creating a safe space for and asking the residents about their feelings and emotions.

Chart B

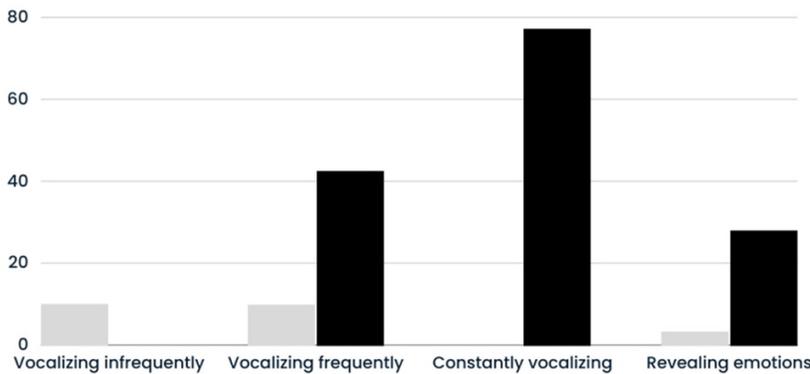


Chart C, again shows stark differences in resident engagement in the higher forms of creativity. We see “making spontaneous comments,” pre 15% and post 36%. This shows the staff encouraging the residents and them feeling empowered to verbally participate.

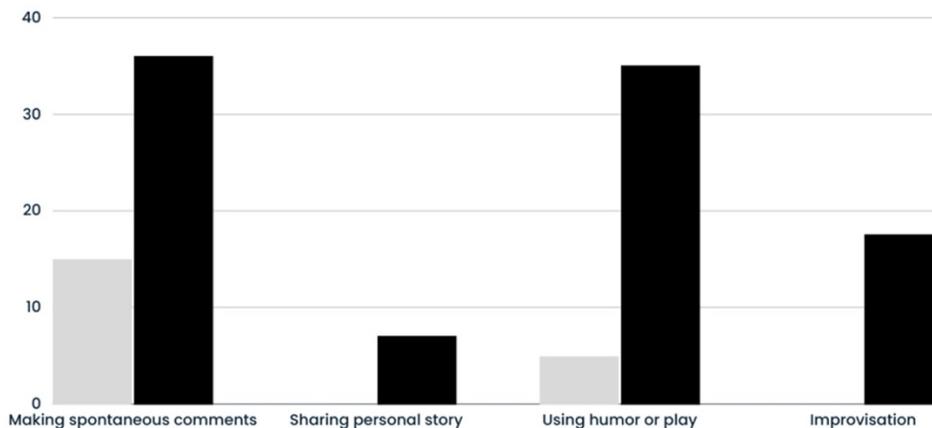
This is highlighted in “sharing personal story,” pre 0% post 7%.

Perhaps the two most significant shifts are in “using humor or play,” pre 5% and post 35% and improvisation pre 0% and post 17.5%.

Using “Humor or Play,” is distinct from the category we looked at earlier of “Laughing and Feeling Joy,” as it indicated residents telling jokes or specifically saying funny things as part of the performance of a poem, song or dance.

Examples of improvisation includes moments where residents on their own accord, interject a song, movement or vocalization to the performance. These most often occurred during the performance of the newly created group poem. We believe this shows both high resident engagement and staff skill in leading the sessions so people are free to add their creativity.

**Chart C**



As our quantifiable target goal: (was to show after staff training,) a resident response level of 50% we believe we have met and exceeded our goal with:

- “Fully Participating,” at 90%.
- “Focusing,” at 96.5%
- “Constantly Vocalizing,” 77%.

In addition to those results we are heartened to see the indications of higher levels of creativity:

- “Revealing Emotions,” 28%.
- “Making Spontaneous Comments,” 36%.
- “Using Humor or Play,” 35%.

A main goal of Dementia Arts Mapping outside of gaging resident response level, was to strengthen our creativity training for staff members.

Outside of the Dementia Arts Mapping but significant is how the staff were trained to include the APP techniques in a wide range of activities including:

- Arts and Crafts
- Bible Study
- Bingo
- Current Events
- Cycling Without Age (Rickshaws)
- Exercise sessions
- Memory in the Making
- Music and Memory
- Namaste Care
- TimeSlips
- Wii bowling (and other games)

### 3) **Staff Interviews on Resident Response and Creativity Training Process**

Residents and staff were interviewed about participating in the project. Here are highlights from the interviews.

“The members had quite the time. Lots of laughter. Lots of singing. Lots of dancing. I led the last session, which was great, coming up with our own poems.

I printed off, pictures of animals. That was the theme for our poetry session. That helped spark some imagination for our members to create our poem. That was very beneficial.

One of the images was of a polar bear and I mimicked the movement and what a polar bear would do in its everyday life. That was fun and I definitely did not expect to do that. They probably thought I was super crazy, but there was lots of laughter and great spirits.

Everyone was so happy and I heard nothing but great things from our members. We will keep these poetry sessions going and help the quality of life for our residents. I would highly recommend for other nursing homes to use program in the future.”

– Ben Clark, Administrative Intern, WI VA Chippewa Falls

“It seemed like everyone enjoyed it. I don’t even know which music I liked more. They can both come back anytime! The groups were always well attended.”

– Lois (resident) Sheboygan Senior Community

“I thought what I had overheard and seen was AWESOME!! At first it seemed like a funny idea and a bit far-fetched for this population but the interaction was fabulous! Residents were able to be involved with all sorts of activities that otherwise were not available as often.

It turned out to be more like watching a screen but the interactions were real-time and personable! Having it here and watching the activities, changed my perspective.”

– Bridget, Rehab Director, Sheboygan Senior Community

“Our residents enjoyed having interactions with the guest musicians and our time creating poetry via the Robot, whom the resident’s named JoJo. During sessions, so many residents, families and staff would stop in and just marvel at how residents were engaging with it.

There were so many smiles all around. JoJo became one of our team and people would talk to JoJo and use his name just as if it were a regular member of the staff.

We even created a name badge for JoJo so people could easily recognize and learn about why JoJo was at our facility.

One of the greatest things about having JoJo was that residents could participate with different facilitators on a regular basis. During the pandemic our facility was limited as to who could come and interact with residents so by using technology with the Robot it was like every few days someone new was here to be with our residents to visit, to create, and most of all to laugh together.

We loved our time with JoJo and know other facilities will as well.”

– Anne Luther, LifeStreams Manager, Saint John’s on The Lake

### **Prime Speakers Series**

This featured trumpet player Jesse Neuman and violinist Anthony Hyatt. They did both group programs and one-on-one sessions for residents in their rooms.

“One aspect I appreciated about the project was the access it gave to residents who generally stay in their room. The one-to-one music programs allowed people who don’t get a lot of engagement to have a phenomenal time, listening to the music and engaging with the musician in the robot. It was a very cool experience for them.”

– Emily, Life Enrichment Director, WI VA Chippewa Falls

The music was a fun addition to use with the robot. We used the music in a variety of ways; larger group, small groups, and one-to-one sessions. The small groups seemed to be our favorite way to interact with the robot and musicians. There was a small enough number of residents that Jesse was able to personally interact with them and call them by name, yet the group was able to share the experience together.

The one-to-ones were also great for some of the residents, and I did witness some very wonderful interactions with Anthony and a gentleman with dementia. Anthony was able to go with the flow and find some Italian tunes to play for this man who said he was Italian.

All of the residents enjoyed the personalized music and interaction and I saw them smiling, singing, and tapping their toes often. I think the shorter time frame was ideal because it was just enough time to keep their attention.

Both Jesse and Anthony were awesome to work with and the residents really enjoyed their visits!"

– Melissa, Director of Life Enrichment, Sheboygan Senior Community

"We went around with the robot and guest artists to play some music for individuals in their rooms and have some visits. I took the robot to the rooms where the people don't come out of their rooms. I am telling you there were a few people we haven't seen a smile on their face for a while. They were *thoroughly enthralled* and enjoyed the visit. It is a great program."

– Trista, Life Enrichment Staff, WI VA Chippewa Falls

#### **4) Sample Poems**

##### **Bird Poem**

*(Created by the poets of Eden of Appleton, with poet Gary Glazner, on April 26<sup>th</sup> 2022. We were inspired by: "Trees," by Joyce Kilmer; "The Eagle," by Alfred Lord Tennyson; "The Dog," by Odgen Nash; "There was an Old Man with a Beard," by Edward Lear; "The Raven," by Edgar Allan Poe and "I Feel Good," by James Brown. We asked a series of open-ended question around the theme of birds. The group's answers form the lines of our poem.)*

When I hear the word bird,  
I think chirping.  
Robins.  
April.  
Eagles.  
They fly up so high.  
See real good.  
Find a fish.  
The soar.  
The catch a big one.  
I silver fish, from the beautiful blue water.  
The love color of birds.  
Blue birds, black birds, red birds.  
Cardinals, green parrots, yellow canaries.  
Birds are nice.

One follows the other.  
Listen, you ain't no humming bird!  
I love Blue Jays.  
I'd love to see one.  
Birds and dogs love trees.  
I am allergic to trees.  
I love pear trees.  
You can make a pear pie!  
With cream sauce.  
If I were a bird I would soar.  
I would fly to Oklahoma  
And see the buffalo.  
I would fly down South- everything would be in bloom.  
I would fly to Tennessee, tie a gunny sack to a tree  
And swing into a swimming hole.  
I would fly to Florida and see gators, crocks and snakes!  
I would see pink flamingos and cranes.  
I would fly to the North Pole and see Santa!  
I would smile and say hello, Eskimo!  
I would fly right here to this nest made of friends.

### **Flowers**

*(The poem "Flowers" was created by the poets of Sheboygan Senior Community and Melissa Theil, Director of Life Enrichment.)*

Flowers are my favorite  
They come in so many different colors  
And they smell good too.

Everybody likes an orchid  
But they are very touchy to grow  
I like geraniums  
And they come in all different colors  
Gary thinks of all those hours he spent watering the geraniums!  
The red rose-  
Can't beat a red rose  
They smell so good!  
The rose stands for love –

I have a rose tattooed on my leg.  
Can we see it? Yes!  
When my husband died I got my rose tattoo – at 83 years old!

I like the daisy

Black-eyed Susan's are all over right now  
Hydrangeas are in bloom –but they don't smell that good  
Peonies!  
Lilly of the valley!  
Tulips!

We get flowers for Mother's Day.  
For birthdays.  
Anniversaries.  
On my wedding day.  
And for funerals-  
The good occasions and the sad...

Sometimes it's nice to get them just because...

My son gave me 2 dozen red roses  
when he was leaving for college.

I love getting chocolates with flowers!

Kids will pick dandelions  
to give to their moms –  
those are the sweetest.  
My girls did that!  
Sometimes they are from  
their yard or the church!  
With dandelions you can make a wish!

### **SSC Robot Poetry Project**

*(The poets of Sheboygan Senior Community and Melissa Theil, Director of Life Enrichment created a tribute and thank you poem for the project.)*

Cisco was our Robot's name,  
Bringing us music and poetry was its aim!

Gary introduced poetry for fun  
And it quickly became a hit – a home run!

We talked about flowers, birds, and farm animals like the llama  
And on a walk in the woods, Ed saw a Pistol Packin' Mama!

Then there was Anthony  
To which music came naturally

His movement and sound were very therapeutic  
And Art was sure to wear his shirt, "Got Music?"

Breathing in, Breathing out  
We were happy and relaxed throughout

Jesse, Jesse he's our man!  
Making us laugh and reminisce was his plan

He learned that Pat and Linda like to drink Wisconsin beer  
And that Claire turned 102 this year!

He played the best trumpet both near and far,  
Unless you ask Al, who in his day was the trumpet Superstar!

We learned, we laughed, we let our imaginations free  
Thank you Gary, Anthony, and Jesse for spending time with us at SSC!

# Wisconsin Project

## Ethnographic Observation Guide

To be used to collect qualitative data during activities programs in nursing homes and/or other care settings for older adults including those with dementia.

Observations should focus on the shift between residents' behaviors and interactions before, during, and after the activity.

Each activity will occur over 20-40 minutes as is typical of nursing home programming. The observer should be immersed in the activity space where he or she can see and hear nearly all aspects of the activity. Record data in written field notes during and immediately following each activity as described below.

**IMPORTANT:** Do NOT include any identifying information about nursing home residents. Data will be limited to descriptions of groups and individuals during the activities

Observations should be limited to those clients/residents who are present during activities.

### Activity Identification

Activity Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Activity Date and Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of participants: \_\_\_\_\_

Facilitator occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Activity Type (select the label which best defines the activity):

- Alzheimer's Poetry Project activity
- Arts-based activity without group socialization (e.g., individuals crafting collages)
- Group socialization activity without arts (e.g., facilitated group discussion of current events)
- Activity without group socialization or the use of arts (e.g., answering trivia questions)

Exercise DOMAINS	INDICATORS	# at T1	# at T2	# at T3	# at T4	# at T5	# at T6	# at T7	# at T8	# at T9	# at T10	# at T11	# at T12
Alertness	Sleeping												
	Not focusing												
	Focusing												
	Reacting												
(Notes)													
Emotional State	Feeling Distressed												
	Feeling Upset												
	Non-emotive												
	Feeling Contented												
	Laughing, Feeling joy												
(Notes)													
Activity Engagement	Observing only												
	Participating at times												
	Fully participating												
(Notes)													
Social Interaction	Physically interacting												
	Cross-talking												
	Addressing group												
(Notes)													
Vocalization	Vocalizing infrequently												
	Vocalizing frequently												
	Constantly vocalizing												
(Notes)													
Personhood	Revealing emotions												
	Making spontaneous comments												
	Sharing personal story												
(Notes)													
Creativity	Originality												
	Emotionality												
	Using humor or play												
	Improvisation												
(Notes)													

Observer Notes:

Immediately following the activity, record your own thoughts about the following techniques and record anything else which may be noteworthy:

INTRODUCTION

ENGAGEMENT METHOD

PRIMING EFFECT

CREATION METHOD

VALIDATION

ENDING

OTHER NOTES

*“To me and I think to many people, poetry brings out the best in us. For people like us with Alzheimer’s, we get nervous, and poetry helps calm us. You ask us to do things.”*

**-Martha, from 80th Street**

**Residence in New York**

### **Poetry Session Tips**

- Have everyone in a circle.
- Greet people, shake their hands tell them you will be performing and creating poems with them.
- While you may be seated during the session you may also move closer to people and kneel so you are not always standing over them when talking
- You may also choose to stand and recite a poem to give it emphasis.
- Ask permission before asking a question. “May I ask you a question please?”
- Thank people for their creativity and performance.

### **Overview:**

The APP engages the participants in the recitation of classic poems and creation of new poems.

The session leader uses a call and response technique; reciting a line from a well known poem and coaches the group to echo the line. Coupling this performance technique with an open ended question enables a group poem to be composed based on the participants’ responses. The hour long sessions divide into 30-minutes of performing poems and 30-minutes of creating a new poem. Each session ends with the performance of the new work.

### **Elements of performing poetry:**

projection, articulation, pacing of the recitation, dynamics, and bringing out the emotional content of the poem.

# **Alzheimer’s Poetry Project**

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## **Building a Poetry Program**

### **Call and Response:**

Recite a line of high energy poetry. Have the group echo you. This is an aerobic activity that helps to build and hold attention.

### **Discussion Starter:**

Use poems as a flash point for discussions. Build questions based on the subject matter of the poem. Reinforce the answers by reciting the poem using the call and response technique.

### **Props- Use items people can smell, feel, hold, taste:**

Build a program around the props

Tree poems: Bring in leaves and branches

Flowers poems: Bring in flowers

Sports poems: Nerf ball to play catch

### **Create a Group Poem:**

Use the simple prompt of asking an open ended question. Choose a classic poem as the model and then base the prompt on the subject matter of the poem. For example “Daffodils,” by Wordsworth. Ask what spring smells like, tastes like, sounds like, looks like and feels like. The groups’ answers become the lines of the poem.

## **Poetry Tips**

Do you have to use new poems for each workshop? There is great benefit gained from repeating poems from workshop to workshop. We see the participants build up performance skills and show evidence of life-long learning.

Alternate between different styles of performance and types of poems. Try a high energy, rhythmic poem, followed by a funny poem, and then a love poem.

*“I was truly amazed at how the APP was able to get our entire group of 20 residents active, giving ideas, engaging in conversation, and repeating back the poems for a full hour. That is one feat that can prove challenging, however, the enthusiasm, energy, and ease that is brought by the poet, and transferred to the group is phenomenal!”*

**-Angela Paoletti, MT, Attic Angel Place**

## ❖ Sample Poetry Menus ❖

### The Classic

- The Tyger- William Blake
- Purple Cow- Gellette Burgess
- Sonnet 18- William Shakespeare
- The Arrow and the Song- Longfellow
- She Walks in Beauty- Lord Byron

What is the most beautiful thing you have ever seen?

Prop: Silk Fabric

### Flowers

- A Red, Red Rose- Robert Burns
- Do You Carrot All for Me?- Anonymous
- Beautiful Soup- Lewis Carroll
- Daffodils- William Wordsworth

What does spring: smell like; taste like; sound like; feel like; look like?

Prop: Flowers

### Birds

- The Eagle- Alfred Lord Tennyson
- Bed in Summer- Robert Louis Stevenson
- Hope- Emily Dickinson
- Early Bird- Shel Silverstein
- The Raven- Edgar Allan Poe (first stanza)

If you were a bird where would you fly and what would you see?

Prop: Feathers

### Animals

- The Raven- Edgar Allan Poe (first stanza)
- The Crocodile- Lewis Carroll
- The Owl and the Pussy Cat- Edward Lear
- The Tyger- William Blake

What is your favorite animal?

Prop: Photograph of a tiger or other animal

### Trees

- Trees- Joyce Kilmer
- Song of the Open Road- Ogden Nash
- Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening- Robert Frost

Have you ever climbed a tree? What is your favorite tree? Favorite fruit? What animals do you see in trees?

Prop: Leaves, bark, branches

### On-line Resources for Finding Poems:

(Poetry Foundation: Poetry Tool) <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/>

(Academy of American Poets: Find a Poet, Find a Poem) <http://www.poets.org/>

(Google: Example search for tree poems) <http://www.google.com/>

