

Daddy Fell into the Pond

Alfred Noyes

This is a popular poem in primary classrooms. It is a narrative poem that tells a funny story which many children may relate to and/or understand. It lends itself to work on pace and atmosphere as the tension builds throughout the verse to the climax of Daddy falling into the pond. It is a good opportunity to explore a poem from a different age.

Fun to have

Sound effects of splashing,
camera clicking and
laughter.

1 Warm up

Ask the children to:

- Roll their shoulders one at a time, first forward for three counts, then backwards and then both together.
- Breathe in and then sigh long and deeply as if really fed up.
- Make a glum face and push their bottom lip down and out – hold it for three counts. Then change it to a happy, smiling face and stretch their lips really wide to make the biggest smile.
- Say 'then' and hold the /n/ for as long as possible (within reason). Then take a big breath.

2 Tune in

tips

Alfred Noyes is most famous for a poem called *The Highwayman*. Born in 1880, the son of a teacher, he found studying at college hard but excelled at rowing. He married and had two children, and lived in both England and America.

Recording 1

An animated read with exaggerated pauses and sound effects.



- Tell the children that this poem is called *Daddy Fell into the Pond* and it is written by Alfred Noyes. Tell them a little bit about the poet (see the *tips* box).
- Ask the children to listen to the poem as you read it, or play recording 1.
- Ask them to listen out for clues that Alfred Noyes lived a long time ago. (Answers may include: 'We were nearing the end of a dismal day', 'merry and bright', 'sheer delight', 'old drake'.)
- **Challenge:** Ask more able readers to find definitions or synonyms for some of these words.
- **Support:** Try to find some support time or small-group time to ensure that less confident readers remember the more challenging words. Try to use them in the course of the work you do on this poem.

3 Model and explore

- Talk to the children about how writers and poets use words in poems to paint a picture for the listener.
- Tell them to listen again to the poem with this in mind: to listen and think about the picture that Alfred Noyes is painting for them.
- Listen again to recording 1 and ask the children to listen with their eyes closed to really see the picture in their minds.
- Take their ideas about the picture they see and record them on the board to share.
- Ask them if they noticed the pauses in the reading in recording 1. Listen again if necessary. Ask the children what effect the pauses have on the listener.

Recording 2

A reading lacking drama.

*tips*

Encourage the children to take amusing pictures using cameras in school or at home. Begin a shared board of their photographs and get them to add captions and/or add these to the school's learning platform.

- Repeat the exercise, listening to recording 2. Ask them if they get the same picture (because the words are the same), or is it different because the poem is read differently?
- Talk about:
 - The first four lines: ask the children to highlight the words that paint a picture of a dull day – 'grumbled', 'grey', 'nothing to do ... to say', 'the end', 'dismal day', 'nothing beyond'.
 - The alliteration of: 'dismal day' and 'grumbled ... grey'? What do they think this adds to the poem?
 - The words in upper case: 'THEN' and 'WHEN', and their effect.
 - Lines 7–11: ask the children to highlight the words that paint a picture of the day now being quite different – 'merry', 'bright', 'sheer delight'.
 - Line 12 to the end: the laughter responses to poor Daddy. Get the children to '[double] up, shaking silently' with laughter.
- Read the poem through, with the children joining in. Start low-key and then ensure that there is a notable shift of mood using their voices, speed and pauses. Can any children or pairs read the poem aloud for the class?

4 Rehearse

- Listen again to the two recordings of the poem. Which version do the children prefer? Help them to express their ideas and record them on the board as pros and cons to model this type of comparative thinking.
- Divide the children into small groups. Explain that each group will work together on a recital of the poem in the style of recording 1 to create the contrasting moods, but that they should think about adding their own ideas to the performance too. Some may like to embed pre-recorded sound effects using technology or props.
- Give each group as much time as possible to rehearse their ideas and co-ordinate.
- Move throughout the class to help children with their ideas and watch each group rehearse. If possible, have a helper or teaching assistant in the classroom at this point.
- If you choose to perform to an audience outside the classroom, the children will need to practise this poem over a few days to refine it.

5 Perform

- Have the children perform each version of the poem in their groups to the rest of the class, who will not have seen their peers' work so far.
- Consider video recording these short performances so that children may evaluate them afterwards.
- Choose the best of all the performances. As a class, perform the poem in this style to another class, parents or visitors.

evaluate

Ask for feedback so the children begin to appreciate others' ideas of (constructive) comment. Ask them to consider:

- Whether there was a good contrast in mood created.
- Whether pauses were used well to create suspense.
- The impact of the sound effects, if used.
- One thing that was exceptionally good and one thing that might have been improved.

Daddy Fell into the Pond

by Alfred Noyes

Everyone grumbled. The sky was grey.
We had nothing to do and nothing to say.
We were nearing the end of a dismal day.
And there seemed to be nothing beyond,

THEN

Daddy fell into the pond!

And everyone's face grew merry and bright,
And Timothy danced for sheer delight.
"Give me the camera, quick, oh quick!
He's crawling out of the duckweed!" *Click!*

Then the gardener suddenly slapped his knee,
And doubled up, shaking silently,
And the ducks all quacked as if they were daft,
And it sounded as if the old drake laughed.

Oh, there wasn't a thing that didn't respond

WHEN

Daddy fell into the pond!

