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**FEWER RECIPES AND MORE EATING:**

*what poems can say*

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Poetry! Riddles, sonnets, haikus, clerihews, narrative, fables, parables, concrete, syllables, meter, metaphor, simile...

Let's have a break for a bit from the recipes and tuck in to the feast!  
Writers write because they are driven to share something: they learn the craft in order to communicate that 'something' even more clearly.

But writers discuss the content of their poems as much as they discuss techniques and forms. Sometimes we are so busy with what poetry is we forget what it does.

The following poems celebrate the awesome power of poetry to share feelings, the senses and the big and small things of life. What better place to start than with a poem that makes your mouth water!

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**THE APPLE'S SONG**

Tap me with your finger,  
rub me with your sleeve,  
hold me, sniff me, peel me  
curling round and round  
till I burst out white and cold  
from my tight red coat  
and tingle in your palm  
as if I'd melt and breathe  
a living pomander  
waiting for the minute  
of joy when you lift me  
to your mouth and crush me  
and in taste and fragrance  
I race through your head  
in my dizzy dissolve.

I sit in the bowl in my cool corner and watch as you pass  
smoothing your apron.  
Are you thirsty yet?  
My eyes are shining.

Edwin Morgan  
*Sensational!* (Macmillan Children's Books 2004)



Poets try to make their poems come alive. We poke our poems with a pen and breathe into the words. If it works, the reader experiences it as something they actually remember and not simply something they've read.



### PARADISE

Climbing up into my father's  
barrow of cut grass  
and sinking gently, all that  
thick warm moisture  
moulded round me, then  
the mower's hum becoming louder, nearer, stuttering to a halt  
and Dad pretending not to know  
I'm in there, shaking out  
another load of luscious  
freshness onto me and muttering  
*I wonder where he is?*  
and me about to answer  
*Here I am* but then  
deciding not to.

John Mole

***Sensational!*** (Macmillan Children's Books 2004)



Poems have all that white space around them so the reader can bring their knowledge and feelings to the poem too. When the poet tells us every-single-thing it's like the person on the bus who plonks their bag on the seat next to them. No one else can sit down!



### **I TOLD A LIE TODAY**

I told a lie today  
and it curled up inside me  
like a steel hard spring.

It was quite a clever lie,  
no one guessed the truth,  
they believed me.

But I've carried the twist of it  
at the centre of my body all day,  
and I think it's expanding,  
filling me up,  
making my eyes feel red.

perhaps it's going to uncoil suddenly  
and burst me open,  
showing everyone what I'm really like.

I think I had better confess,  
before I'm completely unwound.

Robin Mellor

*Wicked Poems* (Bloomsbury Children's Books 2002)



What poems don't tell us is important. Because Robin Mellor doesn't tell us what the lie is, he leaves space for us to think: 'that could be about me.'

In this next poem, Laurence Binyon doesn't tell us what he thinks of hunger, he lets Hunger speak for itself.



### HUNGER

I come among the peoples like a shadow.  
I sit down by each man's side.

None sees me, but they look on one another,  
And know that I am there.

My silence is like the silence of the tide  
That buries the playground of children;

Like the deepening of frost in the slow night,  
When birds are dead in the morning.

Armies trample, invade, destroy,  
With guns roaring from earth and air.

I am more terrible than armies,  
I am more feared than the cannon.

Kings and chancellors give commands;  
I give no command to any;

But I am listened to more than Kings  
And more than orators.

I unswear words, and undo deeds.  
Naked things know me.

I am first and last to be felt of the living.  
I am hunger.

Laurence Binyon

*Wicked Poems* (Bloomsbury Children's Books 2002)



A poet has many styles, voices and forms to choose from. Sometimes the poet doesn't know what shape the poem is going to take. It sort of 'emerges' depending on the subject. First person is always good in a scary story. It lets us eavesdrop on the character's thoughts...



### **EMPTY HOUSE**

I hate our house when there's no one in  
I miss my family and I miss the din.  
The rooms and the hallway seem cold and bare  
And the silence hangs like dust in the air.  
What's that sound upstairs that makes me start  
Driving Fear like an icicle through my heart?  
I'm imagining things, there's nobody there -  
But I have to make sure so I creep up the stair.  
I stand holding my breath by the bedroom door  
And hear something rustling across the floor.  
Then a scratching sound, a tiny cry!  
I can't seem to breathe, my throat is dry.  
In the silence I hear my own heart beating  
And the rumble of water in the central heating.  
I should go in but I just don't dare  
So I call aloud, 'Is anyone there?'  
Nobody answers. I push open the door  
A fluttering shadow crosses the floor.  
And now I see him, now understand  
And I gather him gently in my hands.  
'I won't hurt you, my friend. Don't flutter, don't  
start.'  
But his body beats wild like a feathered heart.  
Out through the window, watch him wheel and fly  
Carrying my fear across the sky.

**Gareth Owen**

*Wicked Poems* (Bloomsbury Children's Books 2002)



Anyone scared? Maybe you need a hug-poem?



### **GIVE YOURSELF A HUG**

Give yourself a hug  
when you feel unloved

Give yourself a hug  
when people put on airs  
to make you feel a bug

Give yourself a hug  
when everyone seems to give you  
a cold-shoulder shrug

Give yourself a hug -  
a big big hug

And keep on singing  
'Only one in a million like me  
Only one in a million-billion-trillion-zillion  
like me.'

Grace Nichols

***Sensational!*** (Macmillan Children's Books 2004)



It's a sort of alchemy - making those little black marks on the page come to life: turning one thing into another. But the poet can't do it without the reader... Look - we've left a space for you!



**I WISH I COULD TURN INTO SOMETHING:**

Turn into a nightingale,  
And learn the nightingale's language;  
I'd come to dwell in the garden.  
I'd gather up golden bouquets,  
Dip them in liquid silver,  
I'd come to you in the evening,  
And lay them out on your roof.  
When you come out in the morning,  
May they be entwined in your curls!

Georgian

From *Mouth to Mouth: Oral Poems from Around the World* (Walker Books 2004)



"...talking together, with adults and peers, is the most important way in which children learn to think." **K. Norman**