

World Poetry Day: 21st of March [B1]

La poesia rappresenta la massima espressione della creatività, capace di trascendere il tempo e le culture. Il 21 marzo si rende omaggio a questa straordinaria forma d'arte.

Poetry is everywhere and in every culture, from traditional ballads to political rap, from love poems to [prayers](#). We hear poetry, in the form of [nursery rhymes](#), when we're babies. And repeating simple poems can help us acquire language at any age. The oldest known poem, The Epic of Gilgamesh, was composed almost four thousand years ago in ancient Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq) but oral poetic traditions probably [go back](#) much further than that. To celebrate the universal nature of poetry and try to support the linguistic diversity that can be expressed through it, [UNESCO](#) observes World Poetry Day every year on 21 March. On World Poetry Day, people of all languages, all across the world, hold events [aimed at raising the profile](#) of poetry in education and the media and above all celebrating it.

WHAT MAKES ENGLISH POETRY THE WAY IT IS?

The first poetry in English that's more or less recognisable to the modern reader goes back to the time of Geoffrey Chaucer, who was writing in the late 1300s. Lots of Latin-based (Romance) words had entered the English language by this time. That's why we now find Chaucer's work much easier to understand than poems like Beowulf (700-750 [CE](#)), which were written in Old English. Also known as Anglo Saxon, Old English is a mainly Germanic language. English has maintained many Germanic elements and this has had an impact on its poetry. Words of Germanic origin tend to be shorter than Romance words and it's easier to make them rhyme. The strangeness of English [spelling](#) and pronunciation means that sometimes these rhymes are not obvious on the page. For example, 'eye' rhymes perfectly with 'lie', so the two words sound similar but look different. And there are lots of possibilities for half rhymes, too, for example 'ways' and 'grace'. In terms of rhythm,

English tends to fall naturally into iambs (an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable). Poets from Chaucer, to Shakespeare and beyond have exploited this natural rhythm.

Glossary

- **prayers** = preghiere
- **go back** = risalire
- **UNESCO** = United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- **aimed at** = avere come scopo
- **raising the profile** = elevare il prestigio
- **spelling** = ortografía
- **stressed** = accentate
- **nursery rhymes** = filastrocche
- **CE** = d. C (acronimo di Common Era)
- **unstressed** = non accentuate, atone