



# English: Poetry and Delight

## What if poetry were delighting in sounds?

Maria wanted her class to not only understand the rhythm in words, but delight in them and just enjoy rolling them around their mouths. For her, this was part of delighting in God's world, which includes the world of sound.

"Although understanding and analyzing the rhythms in words was useful for understanding the meaning of poetry, I wanted my class to experience the delight of words first. I remembered Robert Frost's words about poetry beginning in delight and ending in wisdom. Maybe in the past I had jumped to 'wisdom' (understanding what it meant) too soon.

"I began by playing a clip of 'Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious' (from the film *Mary Poppins*), and we just had fun trying to sing it. Then I shared some of my favorite words, just words I liked the sound of. Some of them were old words, some were place names, and others were words like ruffle. After this, the class made lists of their favorite words in terms of sound. We wrote a favorite word or two on colored cardboard and quickly added decorations. We then held a word-swap, where children enjoyed each other's words by reading them aloud together.

"Each child chose one of their words, worked out a rhythm, and picked an instrument to use for that rhythm. We came together and took turns clapping or playing our words. From this we went on to explore nonsense poems and their use of sound and rhythm. Since we are a faith-based school, I included a prayer of thanks for the delightful possibilities that God placed in language and sounds."

## What's going on here?

Maria **saw** poetry as part of delight in God's world, and encouraged attentiveness to the riches of language and an experience of joy in learning.

She **engaged** students in various ways of playfully delighting in the sound of words, trying out different ways of relating to them, and sharing the experience with others (DVD clip,

word-swap, musical instruments).

She **reshaped her practice** by changing the atmosphere to one of fun through playful activities and resources (DVD), by changing the context for teaching a skill (identifying and reproducing word rhythms) to one of sharing delight, and by guiding student interaction (sharing).

## What does this have to do with faith, hope, and love?

It is easy to drift into seeing knowledge only in terms of usefulness and to neglect delighting in it. Christians see this world as the gift of a loving God; it is his box of goodies to be opened. Delight comes from **faith** in a good God that expects to find a reflection of that goodness in the things he has put into the world for us to delight in. Delight and joy emphasize a relationship with God that goes beyond duty. Joy is jubilant **love**, rejoicing love.

## What difference does it make?

Taking the time to enjoy words creates a different feel about learning and about God's world. For a Christian, it's sharing fun with God.

## Where could we go from here?

All the senses have the potential for delight. The delight of the eyes, taste, touch, smell, and sound can be explored in many subjects.

## Digging deeper

The term *Eden* means delight. Eden was a garden of delight, and this is a way of looking at our world. People can delight in the world, the Bible, in each other, and in God. Delight is a form of joy; it is consciously taking pleasure in someone or something. It involves a

raised awareness, taking notice, reveling in something—whether that be the wonder of sounds, the beauty of math, or the complexity in science. Delight does not mean ignoring the darker side of life; it involves acknowledging that life can be difficult, and being determined to celebrate what we can.

Seeing the world and life itself as a gracious gift from God leaves us more open to delight and joy. This kind of attitude replaces a mind-set that focuses *only* on rights and entitlement, which can leave us looking for what we are missing rather than what we have.

Throughout the Old Testament there is an emphasis on feasting before God, an expression of celebration and delight. This celebratory attitude to life understands life as a gift. For Christians, this physical expression of delight—a feast—is a response to grace, God’s undeserved love. The New Testament follows this theme with its emphasis on joy.



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