

## POETRY FOR PARENTS AND KIDS: A CABIN FEVER SURVIVAL HANDBOOK

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### Activities for Kindergarteners

#### How to Make a Dragon

*This is a poem where you and your child will create their favorite mythical animal.*

#### Directions

1. Find a great picture of a dragon.
2. Get a paper and pencil to write out lines as a child dictates them.

Ask your child about dragons. How do they move? Ask them to show you. What do they like? Sound like? Feel like? What do they love? Focus on the senses: the feel of the dragon's skin, its color, what sound it makes, what it loves to eat, and smell. Make your child want to BE the dragon--they could even dress up like one!

3. Start the poem (taking dictation) asking your child: My dragon has wings that look like...(see sample).

*Poems do not need to be long and you and the child can take turns with the different lines. If dragons don't ignite the imagination, try a different animal: unicorns, fairies, even bunnies.*

#### Dragon Poem

A dragon has wings green as moss  
and scales that feel like  
leather that *whoosh* when it flies  
Fire comes out of its mouth when it is mad  
but it dreams of being a goldfish swimming  
in a shiny bowl



ACTIVITIES FOR FIRST GRADE

**Recipe for a Puppy**

*This is a poem where you and your child will use the language and precision of recipes for crazy things like puppies, summer, world peace--their imagination is the limit.*

**Directions**

1. First talk with your child about the language of recipes: ingredients, actions, tools, containers, temperature, how long to cook, how many to serve and what accompaniments. Write out as many of these cooking words as you can.
2. Ask them what they would like to write a recipe for. In this case, it would be a puppy, but it could be a recipe for a friend, a kitten, world peace...there are so many possibilities!
3. Ask questions: What would a puppy tail be made of (how many cups of what?) What about puppy feet? Or puppy teeth? What about that puppy breath? As they begin to answer, encourage them to use precise measurement: 1 cup, 2 tablespoons, rolling, slicing, dicing, the number of people it will serve, as well as meal accompaniments. Throw in some wild ingredients!

**Recipe for a Puppy**

- 1 cup of silky fur
- ½ cup of wiggles
- 12 tablespoons of icicle teeth
- 1 ounce of sour breath
- 4 lumpy feet
- 1 oz. of utter joy
- 2 teaspoons of play
- ½ utter dejection



Mix together in a large bowl. Shape and stir and shape into a ball. Set on the floor. Watch it wiggle and twirl and run and play until exhausted. Serve with kibble.

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ACTIVITIES FOR SECOND GRADE

**Secret Squirrel**

Directions

1. Help your child to write about their favorite hiding place in their house--but adults have to promise not to reveal it!
2. What does it look/smell/taste/feel/sound like? If it is a closet--what is in it? Is it under the bed?
3. Ask the child to describe specific details in this hiding place: old red high heels, golf shoes, dust balls the size of tumbleweeds? Specific details are what bring the poem alive. Do they like to pretend they are anywhere else when they are there? What sounds do they hear when they are there? Are there imaginary creatures there?

Under the Couch

I go under the couch. It's silent so peaceful, then suddenly I see my dog. She is under there too. Her tail is thumping, then my brother sits down on top and starts watching TV. I have to go somewhere else. Finally, finally, it's silent again Under my bed. Uh-oh. There's The cat!



ACTIVITIES FOR THIRD GRADE

**Loony Lunes**

*Lunes, like their ancestor the haiku (5/7/5 syllable count) are a great way to make concise, sharp observations of the world. Adults have students think of activities they love to do or have them go outside to observe things to write about: birds, dogs, bicycles.*

**Directions**

1. A lune has 11 words total on 3 lines. Keep your lune active--use those verbs running, twisting, jumping, racing, for example. Then, that third line needs to surprise the reader. The key is to create one line about something that ignites this child: football, spring, ballet, running, friends.

2. Here is an example of the first line: *think of me*

3. The second line: *as a beautiful ballerina twirling*

4. Now for the *snap* of surprise: *around the block.*

5. Kids can write a series of linked lunes, but each one must follow the 3/5/3 and total of 11 words format. Have fun!

I know my  
times tables. That why I  
feel like X.

*Michah, 3rd Grade*

I am a  
Nice person and so is  
My shadow, hee.

*Zane, 3rd grade*



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ACTIVITIES FOR FOURTH GRADE

**Terrific Tetractys**

*This is a form poem where, like a haiku, the number of syllables is counted. If a child is not yet familiar with syllables, have them say their name and other fun words as you clap together one time for each syllable.*

Sam = 1 clap

Victoria = 4 claps

Zip-a-dee-doo-dah = 5 claps

Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious = 14 claps

**Directions**

1. Have the child number their paper from 1-10.

2. Each line will follow this format:

1st line - one syllable

2nd line - two syllables

3rd line - three syllables

4th line - four syllables

5th line - 10 syllables

6th line - 10 syllables

7th line - 4 syllables

8th line - 3 syllables

9th line - 2 syllables

10th line - 1 syllable

3. Have fun with this! It can be very descriptive or conversational...but stay with the syllable count!

**Doctor's Office**

well

I did

a little

jig at the new

doctor's office and they got mad at me

for dancing on the counter with my shoes

on and told me

to take them

off and

sit

*Paisley, 4th Grade*



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### Scavenger Challenge Poems

#### Directions

1. Find 5 items in your house: 1 item of food, 1 item from the past, 1 living item, 1 utensil (such as a fork, a spoon or a spatula) and 1 photograph.
2. Assemble them in front of you and make a list.
3. Your challenge: Write a poem using all five items in the poem. Take your time to come up with a poem! You can repeat the items in the poem.

Here is an example.

Items: Egg, Old button tin,  
my cat, spatula, photo of my  
great-grandmother.

#### Found Poem

My great-grandmother Sarah Caroline, stares out from the  
sepia-toned photograph where she appears not to have a neck,  
her face so lined, so kindly, overseeing the dining room where  
my cat lies, warming himself on the old register, beneath  
the table where a wicker basket  
with just one easter egg, blue  
is lying. Above, on a shelf, is a button  
tin, featuring Queen Victoria as an old woman  
on one side; the bride Queen Victoria and her groom, Prince Albert  
on the other; filled with four generations of lost buttons,  
in this dining room where so  
Many meals have been taken, so many book read,  
so many homework assignments completed,  
so many spatulas serving up so many eggs,  
sandwiches, steaks, slices of MacIntosh apple pie.  
outside the window



ACTIVITIES FOR FIFTH GRADE

**Gifts**



**Directions**

1. Read this poem out loud. Notice what you see, taste, touch, hear, smell in the poem. Notice how the gifts change. What does that say about the speaker? How does this writer describe each gift?
2. Make a list of 4 gifts that have been given to you that were not purchased. These may be gifts of a touch, a special story, something homemade.
3. For each gift, describe the gift. Try to use 3 words to describe it. What does it look like, sound like, feel like, taste like or smell like?

**Special Gifts**

He gave me a snowglobe,  
nothing special  
not an expensive cloth  
or a plastic toy,  
but only a glittery snow globe  
from Nashville.

She gave me a box  
of thin sand dollars,  
texture of sandpaper  
and colors like  
white and beige.

He gave me a lesson  
on how to play  
baseball,  
on how to bat  
and how to pitch,  
the reminder of the ball  
on my loose tooth.

He gave me the reminder of imagination  
when we made a snowman battle ground  
and a dragon egg out of much snow.

She gave me a worn doll  
to remember her by,  
Her well-loved princess doll  
we would play with at  
Primrose Preschool  
just before she moved  
away,  
and still years  
after  
the doll lays in my closet.

He gave me the courage  
to do what I want to,  
to be who I want to  
letting me know there's  
always someone who cares  
for me  
and always someone  
who will sit and listen.

*by Kat, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade*

**Outside the Window**

## POETRY FOR PARENTS AND KIDS: A CABIN FEVER SURVIVAL HANDBOOK

The first stanza of Billy Collins' poem, "Monday", begins:

The birds are in their trees,  
the toast is in the toaster,  
and the poets are at their windows.

Poets are observers and often that involves a window. This poem of Mark Gibbons, inspired by Billy Collins' poem, "Monday," talks about what things in the poems are literally seen out the windows, what things are remembered or imagined.

### Directions

1. When Mark teaches this to his classes, he talks about possible windows to choose and how the window is a way to begin writing. What happens after the poem begins might have everything and nothing to do with that window. That's the magic of the window and the magic of writing a poem. Here are some student titles: window in time, through the window, one crazy window, upstairs window, winter window, tear dropped window, mirror mirror, night window, up up & away, sky light, the ultimate rock paper scissors game!

2. Then the child needs to observe in detail what is going on outside the window: is there a chickadee hopping on the bird feeder? A postwoman wearily trooping from house to house? Pine cones scattered across the neighbor's yard, the heavy branches of blue spruce like heavy skirts? Remember: details drive the poem so don't if a child writes tree, flower, bird: help them specify what kind of tree, flower or bird.

### Here is Mark's poem:

#### Outside my Window

the grosbeak clings to the top  
of the wire fence, hops to the ground,  
pecks around the dried leaves  
and puff balls, flutters back to the fence,  
cocks her head and looks at me

looking at her, then turns her back,  
drops down again and springs  
onto a lilac shoot where she bobs,  
tilts bill and beady eye, fixes sky, before  
she flies to the galvanized gatepost.

she's not as colorful as the male  
strewn between the house and hedge  
yesterday, nothing left but feathers and feet,  
which made me think of the headless cat  
we found last year in the backyard

### Student example:

C ars  
A re fun  
R unning machines and



W indows.  
I like windows. Windows make my  
cousin  
N auseous, but I think they're fun.  
D on't ever fall  
O ut of a car  
W indow.

by Cassidy, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

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right where those puff balls are at,  
and the mountain lion that thundered  
across our porch, almost catching  
our smelly cat, who keeps littering the lawn  
with squirrel tails and hollow bones.

my own weak and carnivorous  
constitution has given me the opportunity  
to sit down today, stop, look around  
and listen -- witness the world  
outside my window -- victim of a bad egg,

no doubt a good egg, a lucky egg,  
a rotten lottery ticket claimed  
to put me here, right now, in this sweet  
flitting moment -- a breathtaking  
plunge that opens my eyes.

*Mark Gibbons, MWC teacher and poet*