

# Using Poetry Books to Teach Reading Skills

This is a whole class, year-long activity that can be easily adapted for your at-risk students.

At the beginning of the year, ask your children to bring in a 1” 3-ring binder, with their name on the outside spine. If you ask for the kind that has a plastic covering with a slip pocket on the front, the children can make a decorative picture on a pre-made paper that says: My Poetry Book and it can be slipped into the pocket of the binder.

Begin collecting poems that match your themes or seasons, as well as poems that will match the needs of your at-risk children. When you are collecting, make sure that the poems fit the skills/concepts that you want to teach.

Begin your poetry folder by explaining to the class that they will be getting poems each week that will be kept in their poetry folder. Tell the class that on the first day that they receive poems they will be reading them together as a class, visualizing them, drawing appropriate pictures and then searching for specific skills on day 2.

## DAY 1

1. Tell the class the title of the poem and discuss what it might be about.
2. Read it to the class and have kids close their eyes and visualize the poems as you read. Have kids share their visualizations
3. Pass out poems. Read together, chorally. We usually do this 2 or 3 times until kids are familiar with the poem, its rhythm and its meaning.
4. Ask students to illustrate their “visual pictures.”

## DAY 2

Go back to poems from day 1. Tell the students the skill that you will be searching for. This should be a previously introduced skill that the class has been learning. The children will be using highlighters to circle/underline skills, i.e. pick up your highlighter. When I say “go,” find all of the words that have a short a sound and circle the short a in each word. When the class is done, have volunteers share their words. To extend the lesson, give the class a word with a short a sound from the poem and have them make as many short a words as they can.

## INDIVIDUALIZING

Meet with your small, guided reading groups and use the poetry books to meet the needs of your at-risk students. You will find that one poem may be used for many skills and adapted to meet the needs of many small groups and individual students. Skills can include initial/final consonants, vowels, blends, diagraphs, contractions, hearing and clapping syllables, punctuation, endings, syllabication, vowel patterns-just to name a few. I often use a small, composition notebook for the children to write down their skills.