

## Poems, Performance and Passion: a celebration of poetry in Bilingual 9

*In February 2026, our Bilingual 9 students participated in a Poetry Performance Project. Read on to find out more.*

Poetry is an age-old tradition, and it is made to be performed. Think back to troubadours, medieval musicians who passed on their messages in the form of poetry and song. In fact, the rhymes in their messages meant their oral stories were easier to remember, and easier to recite. Poetry isn't usually meant to stay on the page.

Our Bilingual 9 students know this. Over January and February, they participated in our Poetry Performance Project. Each student learned a poem by heart, developed the skills to bring it to life, rehearsed, and eventually performed in front of their peers. This celebration of poetry performance culminated in a competition where students could hear their classmates perform their chosen pieces.

### Why did we run this project?

The Poetry Performance Project works for our students, and there is a plethora of reasons why.

#### **The project helps students develop a unique skillset for performing poetry.**

Learning to memorise poetry isn't easy – the Poetry by Heart website suggests various strategies to support poem memorisation [Poetry By Heart](#) . Learning to *perform* it by heart proves even more complex, as students add sound effects, character voices and gestures ( see Michael Rosen's tips here [Michael Rosen's top tips for performing poems and stories - YouTube](#) ). In this way, our students work towards the speaking objectives for the Bilingual Section while expanding their vocabulary.

**Furthermore, the Poetry Performance Project gives poetry a purpose.** We know that giving students a real reason to write is important to help them bear in mind the audience and purpose for writing (recommendation 4, [Improving Literacy in Key Stage 2 | EEF](#)). According to the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education 2023), this is also true for poetry <https://clpe.org.uk/research/poetry-primary-schools-what-we-know-works>: knowing that their peers will listen to the poem helps students refine their performance. How can they make their nine-year-old classmates laugh, if the poem is funny? How can they convey emotion and meaning? Performance brings a poem alive for the speaker and audience.

**Poetry performance promotes reading skills, too.** As students memorise and rehearse their poems, they pay attention to stress, intonation and expression: a trio known as prosody. In turn, they develop their reading fluency skills, since prosody is one of the three key elements of reading fluency (the other two being accuracy and automaticity)

[stage-2-ks2-reading-fluency-project/the-importance-of-teaching-fluency](https://www.stage-2-ks2-reading-fluency-project/the-importance-of-teaching-fluency). By rehearsing their poem, students therefore develop their reading fluency skills, freeing up mental load to focus instead on comprehending the poem.

**Finally, the Poetry Performance Project fosters a delightful sense of community among our Bilingual 9 pupils, teachers and parents.** Pupils are excited to learn their poems and refine their performance techniques, and they enjoy giving constructive feedback to their peers. Parents help their children rehearse at home, and give tips on their children can engage the listener. Our teachers embrace the opportunity to give personalised feedback in a performance setting. It's a win all round!

How did the project run?

There were three key stages in the project, which took place over a series of lessons.

### **1. Selecting the poem**

Firstly, students explored different poems and chose one to perform in front of their peers. The teachers gave tips – such as making sure the poem was short enough to learn by heart – but giving students the final say was invaluable. Each child needed to enjoy the poem they would learn.

### **2. Rehearsing the poem**

Once students had selected their poems, they could begin thinking about how to perform it. Our teachers continued to give advice, helping students practise techniques where necessary. Our students spent a chunk of time rehearsing their own poems and also listening to their peers rehearse, giving polite feedback where appropriate. Giving ample time to rehearse was a crucial step in helping our students develop the confidence to perform in front of their peers.

### **3. Performing the poem**

After a week or two, performance day arrived! Our teachers made sure students felt at ease and knew how to appreciate their classmates' performances. Pupils could then perform their poems, one by one, in front of their class. All students were strongly encouraged to perform, but if any child felt that this was too far out of their comfort zone, we understood.

After the first round of performances, a few students from each class were selected to proceed to the second round of performances. In each case, two Bilingual 9 classes came together in one room to hear the finalists perform. It took a lot of courage for these students to perform in front of 30-40 students and the judges, but they embraced the challenge! Students were highly motivated to perform to the best of their ability, with some students bringing in props (including a 'bed' and an elephant costume!).

After this final round, the winners received certificates and small prizes. All students received participation certificates as this is more than a competition; it is a festival to celebrate poetry performance.

A warm well done to each of our Bilingual Students, who worked hard to develop their poetry performance skills and encouraged their peers to embrace the project. Thanks also to our Bilingual 9 parents and teachers, who put a lot of energy into making this competition happen!