

CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL

OF PERFORMING ARTS

2022

SET POEMS FOR VERSE SPEAKING CLASSES

Competitors in the following classes are requested to speak

EITHER the test piece (as published)

or

to choose a poem on the given theme,

offering a literary and performance challenge commensurate with the test piece

SD01

VERSE SPEAKING YEAR 2 AND UNDER

'MY GRANNIES' BY JUNE CREBBIN

OR ANY OTHER POEM ON THE THEME OF 'FAMILIES'

TIME LIMIT: ONE MINUTE

MY GRANNIES

I hate it, in the holiday,
When Grandma brings her pets to stay
Her goat, her pig, her seven rats
Scare our dog and chase our cats.
Her budgies bite, her parrots shout
And guess who has to clean them out?

My other Gran, the one I like,
Always brings her motor-bike,
And when she takes me for a ride
To picnic in the countryside,
We zoom up hills and whizz round bends
I hate it when her visit ends.

by June Crebbin

SD02

VERSE SPEAKING YEAR 3

'CHICKEN POXED' BY VALERIE BLOOM

OR ANY OTHER POEM ON THE THEME OF 'BEING NAUGHTY'

TIME LIMIT: ONE MINUTE

CHICKEN POXED

My sister was spotty,
Real spotty all over,
She was plastered with spots
From her head to her toes.

She had spots on the parts
That her bathing suits cover,
Spots on her eyelids,
Spots on her nose.

I didn't know chickenpox
Could be so interesting,
It seemed such a shame
To waste all those spots.

So when Jody was sleeping
And no one was looking,
I got a blue pen
And connected her dots.

by Valerie Bloom

SD03

VERSE SPEAKING YEAR 4

'THE PAINTING LESSON' BY TREVOR HARVEY

OR ANY OTHER POEM ON THE THEME OF 'COLOURS'

TIME LIMIT: TWO MINUTES

THE PAINTING LESSON

What's THAT, dear?" asked the new teacher.

"It's Mummy," I replied.

"But mums aren't green and orange!

You really haven't TRIED.

You don't just paint in SPLODGES

You're old enough to know

You need to THINK before you work...

Now – have another go."

She helped me draw two arms and legs,

A face with sickly smile,

A rounded body, dark brown hair,

A hat-and in a while,

She stood back

(with her face bright pink):

"That's SO much better –

Don't you think?"

But she turned white

At ten to three

When an orange-green blob

Collected me.

"Hi, Mum!"

by Trevor Harvey

SD04

VERSE SPEAKING YEAR 5

'SUMMER STORM' BY JOHN FOSTER

OR ANY OTHER POEM ON THE THEME OF 'THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT'

TIME LIMIT: TWO MINUTES

SUMMER STORM

Light travels, said Miss,
Faster than sound.
Next time there's a storm.
When you see the lightning,
Start counting slowly in seconds.
If you divide
The number of seconds by three,
It will tell you
How many kilometres you are
From the centre of the storm.

Two nights later
I was woken
By the lashing rain,
The lightning
And the thunder's crash.

I lay,
Huddled beneath the sheet,
As the rain poured down,
And lightning lit up the bedroom,
Slowly counting the seconds,
Listening for the thunder
And calculating the distance
As the storm closed in –

Until,
With a blinding flash
And a simultaneous ear-splitting crash,
The storm passed
Directly overhead.

And I shook with fright
As the storm passed on,
Leaving the branches shuddering
And the leaves weeping.

by John Foster

SD05

VERSE SPEAKING YEAR 6

'DAFFODILS' BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

OR ANY OTHER POEM ON THE THEME OF 'NATURE'

TIME LIMIT: TWO MINUTES

DAFFODILS

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

by William Wordsworth

SD06

VERSE SPEAKING YEAR 7

'INVICTUS' BY WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

OR ANY OTHER POEM ON THE THEME OF 'MYSELF'

TIME LIMIT: THREE MINUTES

INVICTUS

Out of the night that covers me,

Black as the pit from pole to pole,

I thank whatever gods may be

For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance

I have not winced nor cried aloud.

Under the bludgeonings of chance

My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears

Looms but the Horror of the shade,

And yet the menace of the years

Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,

How charged with punishments the scroll,

I am the master of my fate,

I am the captain of my soul.

by William Ernest Henley

SD07

VERSE SPEAKING YEAR 8

'THE WAY THROUGH THE WOODS' RUDYARD KIPLING

OR ANY OTHER POEM ON THE THEME OF 'TIME'

TIME LIMIT: THREE MINUTES

THE WAY THROUGH THE WOODS

They shut the road through the woods

Seventy years ago.

Weather and rain have undone it again,

And now you would never know

There was once a road through the woods

Before they planted the trees.

It is underneath the coppice and heath,

And the thin anemones.

Only the keeper sees

That, where the ring-dove broods,

And the badgers roll at ease,

There was once a road through the woods.

Yet, if you enter the woods

Of a summer evening late,

When the night-air cools on the trout-ringed pools

Where the otter whistles his mate,

(They fear not men in the woods,

Because they see so few.)

You will hear the beat of a horse's feet,

And the swish of a skirt in the dew,

Steadily cantering through

The misty solitudes,

As though they perfectly knew

The old lost road through the woods.

But there is no road through the woods.

by Rudyard Kipling

SD08

VERSE SPEAKING YEARS 9 & 10

'POEM' BY SIMON ARMITAGE

OR ANY OTHER POEM ON THE THEME OF 'LOOKING BACK'

TIME LIMIT: THREE MINUTES

POEM

And if it snowed and snow covered the drive
he took a spade and tossed it to one side.
And always tucked his daughter up at night
And slipped her the one time that she lied.
And every week he tipped up half his wage.
And what he didn't spend each week he saved.
And praised his wife for every meal she made.
And once, for laughing, punched her in the face.

And for his mum he hired a private nurse.
And every Sunday taxied her to church.
And he blubbed when she went from bad to worse.
And twice he lifted ten quid from her purse.

Here's how they rated him when they looked back:
sometimes he did this, sometimes he did that.

by **Simon Armitage**

SD09

VERSE SPEAKING YEARS 11 – 13

'ASHES OF LIFE' BY EDNA ST VINCENT MILLAY

OR ANY OTHER POEM ON THE THEME OF 'WHEN LOVE HAS GONE'

TIME LIMIT: THREE MINUTES

ASHES OF LIFE

Love has gone and left me and the days are all alike;

 Eat I must, and sleep I will,—and would that night were here!

But ah!—to lie awake and hear the slow hours strike!

 Would that it were day again!—with twilight near!

Love has gone and left me and I don't know what to do;

 This or that or what you will is all the same to me;

But all the things that I begin I leave before I'm through,—

 There's little use in anything as far as I can see.

Love has gone and left me,—and the neighbors knock and borrow,

 And life goes on forever like the gnawing of a mouse,—

And to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow

 There's this little street and this little house.

by Edna St Vincent Millay

SD10

VERSE SPEAKING OPEN

'THE THOUGHT FOX' BY TED HUGHES

OR ANY OTHER POEM ON THE THEME OF 'INSPIRATION'

TIME LIMIT: THREE MINUTES

THE THOUGHT FOX

I imagine this midnight moment's forest:
Something else is alive
Beside the clock's loneliness
And this blank page where my fingers move.

Through the window I see no star:
Something more near
Though deeper within darkness
Is entering the loneliness:

Cold, delicately as the dark snow
A fox's nose touches twig, leaf;
Two eyes serve a movement, that now
And again now, and now, and now

Sets neat prints into the snow
Between trees, and warily a lame
Shadow lags by stump and in hollow
Of a body that is bold to come

Across clearings, an eye,
A widening deepening greenness,
Brilliantly, concentratedly,
Coming about its own business

Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox
It enters the dark hole of the head.
The window is starless still; the clock ticks,
The page is printed.

Ted Hughes