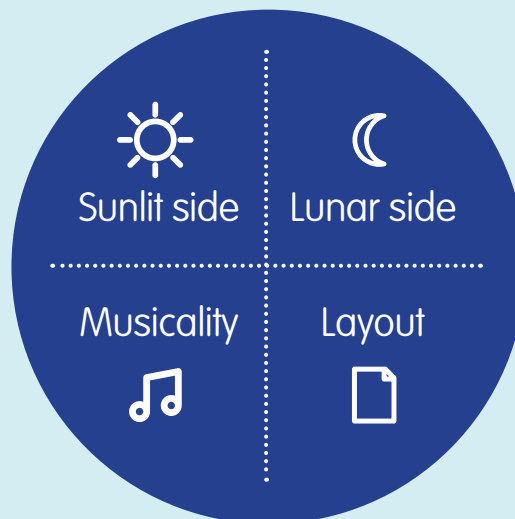


WHAT A GOOD RECITATION SOUNDS LIKE

In his book *On Poetry*, our poet-judge Glyn Maxwell describes four important dimensions of poems: the sunlit side of its immediate meanings; the moonlit side of the meanings it gives up more deeply; its musicality; and its visual dimension. The very best Poetry By Heart performances are able, in different ways, to realise those dimensions, not necessarily equally, but in some measure.



In less successful performances the sunlit side tends to dominate. These performances often treat poems as dramatic monologues to be enacted, with the emphasis on personalising the voice and drawing attention to the speaker. How much of a place there is for that depends on the poem, but we're also listening for some attention to the cooler, shadier side of the meanings.

The best performers have a good 'ear' for the musicality of the poem, an eye for its shape and a recognition that these dimensions are important to its meaning and how that is communicated and enjoyed. In performance, it means paying attention to sound patterns and rhythm, and to the shapes the lines and stanzas make. Performances in which the poem becomes prose don't tend to fare well in the higher rounds of the competition.

As our poet judges have pointed out poems differ in their demands. Some poems are more dramatic than others.