

Learn some lines

Objectives

- To have a go as a group at learning some lines of a poem
- To help students believe it is possible!

Introduction

Many students will think they could never learn a poem. Here we offer a shared learn-it-together activity to help establish the idea that learning a poem starts with learning a single line – and it can be fun!

Learn a poem together

Find 'Tichborne's Elegy' on the Poetry By Heart Anthology timeline. Listen to the recording of the poem then share some initial details of the poet's biography and context from the poem and poet notes on the web page.

Listen again then look at a copy of the poem. What do you find surprising, interesting or challenging about this poem?

Next allocate one line of the poem to each person or pair. Each person or pair then learns their line by heart, then thinks about how best to say it aloud. Then, have a group recitation of the poem with each person or pair saying their line in the right sequence. You're on your way!

Then, from the top of the poem, double up with the next person or pair and teach each other your lines – everyone will now know two lines.

Join 3 of these doubles together, teach each other again, and now everyone will know a whole stanza - already!

Try the poem again as a whole group. Then think about these questions: what features of the poem helped in learning it by heart (eg length, rhyme, rhythm, repetition of phrases)? Where were the challenges? What memory techniques did you use to meet the challenge?

Then see who, with a bit more time, can tackle the whole poem!