

## Poetry Recitation – Developing a Strategy

How do you learn a poem by heart? As with many things in life, there is no definitive way to learn a poem. The way you remember things will be different to the way other people remember things. Your memories might be full of colour, while someone else will vividly recall sounds. You might like lists while someone else prefers pictures. One thing the best memorizers agree on though is that the more pathways you make for your memory, the better your recall will be.

Learning a poem by heart should definitely not be a tedious thing. The livelier and more enjoyable you make your memorization experience, the more likely you are to remember your poem by heart.

## Make a Memory Temple

Think of a building you know well. Maybe it's your home now, or a house you used to live in. Perhaps it's your school, or a museum you're very familiar with. Imagine walking around the building. Visualise the main door and imagine yourself opening that door and taking a stroll through the building. Notice the rooms and whether anyone is in them in your imagined version of the place.

With the memory temple technique, you use the building as a scaffold on which to hang your lines of poetry. Tichborne's elegy is three stanzas long, so use one room of your memory temple for each stanza. Read over the poem before you begin and decide whether there are any lines or images that suit particular rooms in your memory temple.

For example, if I use my childhood home as my memory temple, I will use the dining room for the first stanza because of the reference to a feast. I'll set the second stanza in the lounge because it refers to a tale that 'was not told' and we had a full bookshelf in there. The third stanza can go in the kitchen because of the 'full glass' line. Then I use the imagining process described in the previous section and attach it to the rooms of my memory temple like this:

*The version of my younger self, wearing the number 1 t-shirt will now be in the corner of the dining room, and the whole of that part of the room will become frosty. 'My prime of youth is but a frost of cares'.*

*I imagine moving to the dining table for the feast with its dish of glass and splinters 'My feast of joy is but a dish of pain'.*

# POETRY BY HEART

Recitation Competition

*I then imagine that my mouth magically heals as I push away from the table and move to the window. Through it I see a vibrant crop of corn. I notice how it moves in the sunlight. I see a giant hand reach in and tear it all up (this is of course, not the literal meaning of tares, but homophones can be helpful when memorising!) I see the golden crop replaced with grass. This is the third line 'My crop of corn is but a field of tares.'*

*For the next line 'And all my good is but vain hope of gain' I move to the left hand corner of the room and imagine a huge stack of certificates and trophies on a cabinet. This is 'And all my good'. In this part of my dining room there is a mirror, so I imagine looking into it and seeing myself acting vain, maybe doing my hair, admiring my reflection saying 'is but vain hope of gain.'*

*I imagine the room becoming suddenly very dark, and the moon shining in through the window. A clock strikes midnight. 'The day is past, and yet I saw no sun.' Finally I imagine skipping towards the doorway and singing 'And now I live' and then I imagine collapsing in a melodramatic death in the doorway with 'and now my life is done.'*

Walk through your memory temple over and over, making it bigger, brighter, tastier, louder until it feels real. Then imagine walking to the next room ready for the next verse.