

# Primary Speech Arts Readings

## Poetry for Children

### Merry Sunshine

*Anonymous*

“Good morning, Merry Sunshine,  
How did you wake so soon,  
You’ve scared the little stars away  
And shined away the moon.  
I saw you go to sleep last night  
Before I ceased my playing;  
How did you get ’way over there?  
And where have you been staying?”

“I never go to sleep, dear child,  
I just go round to see  
My little children of the East,  
Who rise and watch for me.  
I waken all the birds and bees  
And flowers on my way,  
And now come back to see the child  
Who stayed out late at play.”

### Bird Talk

*Aileen Fisher*

“Think...” said the robin,  
“Think...” said the jay,  
sitting in the garden,  
talking one day.

“Think about people-  
The way they grow;  
They don’t have feathers  
at all, you know.”

“They don’t eat beetles,  
they don’t grow wings,  
they don’t like sitting  
on wires and things.”

“Think...” said the robin.  
“Think!” said the jay.  
“Aren’t people funny  
to be that way?”

## **All Things Bright and Beautiful**

*Cecil Frances Alexander*

All things bright and beautiful,  
All creatures great and small,  
All things wise and wonderful,  
The Lord God made them all.

Each little flower that opens,  
Each little bird that sings,  
He made their glowing colours,  
He made their tiny wings.

The purple-headed mountain,  
The river running by,  
The sunset, and the morning,  
That brightens up the sky.

The cold wind in the winter,  
The pleasant summer sun,  
The ripe fruits in the garden,  
He made them every one.

He gave us eyes to see them,  
And lips that we might tell  
How great is God Almighty,  
Who has made all things well.

## **Good Night Prayer**

*Henry Johnstone*

Father, unto Thee I pray  
Thou hast guarded me all day;  
Safe I am while in Thy sight,  
Safely let me sleep tonight.

Bless my friends, the whole world bless;  
Help me to learn helpfulness;  
Keep me ever in Thy sight;  
So to all I say goodnight.

## **Home! You're Where It's Warm Inside**

*Jack Prelutsky*

Home! You are a special place;  
you're where I wake and wash my face,  
brush my teeth and comb my hair,  
change my socks and underwear,  
clean my ears and blows my nose,  
try on all my parents' clothes.

Home! You're where it's warm inside,  
where my tears are gently dried,  
where I'm comforted and fed,  
where I'm forced to go to bed,  
where there's always love to spare;  
Home! I'm glad that you are there.

## **Bed In Summer**

*Robert Louis Stevenson*

In winter I get up at night  
And dress by yellow candle-light.  
In summer, quite the other way,  
I have to go to bed by day.

I have to go to bed and see  
The birds still hopping on the tree,  
Or hear the grown-up people's feet  
Still going past me in the street.

And does it not seem hard to you,  
When all the sky is clear and blue,  
And I should like so much to play,  
To have to go to bed by day?

## **The Secret Song**

Margaret Wise Brown

Who saw the petals  
drop from the rose?  
I, said the spider,  
But nobody knows.

Who saw the sunset  
flash on a bird?  
I, said the fish,  
But nobody heard.

Who saw the fog  
come over the sea?  
I, said the pigeon,  
Only me.

Who saw the first  
green light of the sun?  
I, said the night owl,  
The only one.

Who saw the moss  
creep over the stone?  
I, said the gray fox,  
All alone.

## **Who Has Seen the Wind?**

*Christina Rossetti*

Who has seen the wind?  
Neither I nor you:  
But when the leaves hang trembling,  
The wind is passing through.

Who has seen the wind?  
Neither you nor I:  
But when the leaves bow down their heads,  
The wind is passing by.

## **The Little Turtle**

*Vachel Lindsay*

There was a little turtle.  
He lived in a box.  
He swam in a puddle.  
He climbed on the rocks.

He snapped at a mosquito.  
He snapped at a flea.  
He snapped at a minnow.  
And he snapped at me.

He caught the mosquito.  
He caught the flea.  
He caught the minnow.  
But he didn't catch me.

## **Mice**

*Rose Fyleman*

I think mice  
Are rather nice.  
Their tails are long,  
Their faces small,  
They haven't any  
Chins at all.  
Their ears are pink,  
Their teeth are white,  
They run about  
The house at night.  
They nibble things  
They shouldn't touch  
And no one seems  
To like them much.  
But I think mice  
Are nice.

## The Bug

*Marjorie Barrows*

And when the rain had gone away  
And it was shining everywhere,  
I ran out on the walk to play  
And found a little bug was there.

And he was running just as fast  
As any little bug could run,  
Until he stopped for breath at last,  
All black and shiny in the sun.

And then he chirped a song to me  
And gave his wings a little tug,  
And that's the way he showed that he  
Was very glad to be a bug!

## Where Go the Boats?

*by Robert Louis Stevenson*

Dark brown is the river,  
Golden is the sand.  
It flows along forever,  
With trees on either hand.

Green leaves a-floating,  
Castles of the foam,  
Boats of mine a-boating—  
Where will all come home?

On goes the river  
And out past the mill,  
Away down the valley,  
Away down the hill.

Away down the river,  
A hundred miles or more,  
Other little children  
Shall bring my boats ashore.

## The Wind

*by Robert Louis Stevenson*

I saw you toss the kites on high  
And blow the birds about the sky;  
And all around I heard you pass,  
Like ladies' skirts across the grass—  
O wind, a-blowing all day long,  
O wind, that sings so loud a song!

I saw the different things you did,  
But always you yourself you hid.  
I felt you push, I heard you call,  
I could not see yourself at all—  
O wind, a-blowing all day long,  
O wind, that sings so loud a song!

O you that are so strong and cold,  
O blower, are you young or old?  
Are you a beast of field and tree,  
Or just a stronger child than me?  
O wind, a-blowing all day long,  
O wind, that sings so loud a song!

## The Land of Counterpane

*by Robert Louis Stevenson*

When I was sick and lay abed,  
I had two pillows at my head,  
And all my toys beside me lay  
To keep me happy all the day.

And sometimes for an hour or so,  
I watched my leaden soldiers go,  
With different uniforms and drills,  
Among the bedclothes, through the hills;

And sometimes sent my ships in fleets  
All up and down among the sheets;  
Or brought my trees and houses out,  
And planted cities all about.

I was the giant great and still  
That sits upon the pillow-hill,  
And sees before him, dale and plain,  
The pleasant Land of Counterpane.

## Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

by Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village, though;  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.

## The Moon

by Robert Louis Stevenson

The moon has a face like the clock in the hall;  
She shines on thieves on the garden wall,  
On streets and field and harbor quays,  
And birdies asleep in forks of the trees.

The squalling cat and the squeaking mouse,  
The howling dog by the door of the house,  
The bat that lies in bed at noon,  
All love to be out by the light of the moon.

But all of the things that belong to the day  
Cuddle to sleep to be out of her way;  
And flowers and children close their eyes  
Till up in the morning the sun shall arise.

## At the Zoo

by A. A. Milne

There are lions and roaring tigers, and enormous  
camels and things,  
There are biffalo-buffalo-bisons, and a great big bear  
with wings,  
There's a sort of tiny potamus, and a tiny nosserus  
too—  
But *I* gave buns to the elephant when *I* went down to  
the Zoo!

There are badgers and bidgers and bodgers, and a  
Superintendent's House,  
There are masses of goats, and a Polar, and different  
kinds of mouse,  
And I think there's a sort of something which is  
called a wallaboo—  
But *I* gave buns to the elephant when *I* went down to  
the Zoo!

If you try to talk to the bison, he never quite  
understands;  
You can't shake hands with a mingo—he doesn't like  
shaking hands.  
And lions and roaring tigers *hate* saying, "How do  
you do?"—  
But *I* give buns to the elephant when *I* go down to  
the Zoo!

## Windy Nights

by Robert Louis Stevenson

Whenever the moon and stars are set,  
Whenever the wind is high,  
All night long in the dark and wet,  
A man goes riding by.  
Late in the night when the fires are out,  
Why does he gallop and gallop about?

Whenever the trees are crying aloud,  
And ships are tossed at sea,  
By, on the highway, low and loud,  
By at the gallop goes he:  
By at the gallop he goes, and then

## My Shadow

*by Robert Louis Stevenson*

I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,  
And what can be the use of him is more than I can  
see.

He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head;  
And I see him jump before me, when I jump into my  
bed.

The funniest thing about him is the way he likes to  
grow—  
Not at all like proper children, which is always very  
slow;  
For he sometimes shoots up taller like an India-  
rubber ball,  
And he sometimes gets so little that there's none of  
him at all.

He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to play,  
And can only make a fool of me in every sort of way.  
He stays so close beside me, he's a coward you can see;  
I'd think shame to stick to nursie as that shadow sticks  
to me!

One morning, very early, before the sun was up,  
I rose and found the shining dew on every buttercup;  
But my lazy little shadow, like an arrant sleepyhead,  
Had stayed at home behind me and was fast asleep in  
bed.

## Foreign Lands

*by Robert Louis Stevenson*

Up into the cherry tree  
Who should climb but little me?  
I held the trunk with both my hands  
And looked abroad on foreign lands.

I saw the next door garden lie  
Adorned with flowers, before my eye,  
And many pleasant places more  
That I had never seen before.

I saw the dimpling river pass  
And be the sky's blue looking glass;  
The dusty roads go up and down  
With people tramping into town.

If I could find a higher tree  
Farther and farther I should see,  
To where the grown-up river slips  
Into the sea among the ships,

To where the roads on either hand  
Lead onward into fairyland,  
Where all the children dine at five,  
And all the playthings come alive.