



National Memory Day

Exploring Poetry and Memory

A resource for sharing and enjoying poems
with people who are living with memory loss



National Memory Day is a Literature Works project delivering creative poetry and reminiscence sessions at Memory Cafés and other community settings for people living with memory loss throughout South West England.

www.nationalmemoryday.org.uk

About Poetry and Memory

The mind is complex and memories are rarely isolated. They intertwine and attach themselves to feelings: the song playing on the radio the day you fell in love, the poem at your best friend's wedding. Since it began in 2017, the National Memory Day project has delivered workshops for hundreds of people living with memory loss throughout South West England. We have found that the recall of familiar poems brings shared enjoyment, sparking memories and sometimes even a degree of language recovery.

We set up National Memory Day to explore and celebrate these links between poetry and memory. We do this by training local poets and placing them in Memory Cafés and other community settings to run sessions – reading aloud, sharing, revisiting and sometimes creating new poems together as a group.

Poetry is for everyone. You do not have to be an academic or a poet to enjoy it in your everyday life. You just need to read or hear a poem. This resource is designed for any of us who know someone living with memory loss and would like to recall the rhyme and rhythms of poems with them. Here we have put together some tips and reproduced some of the most cherished poems from the National Memory Day project, which we hope you will enjoy together. These can be found at the end of the resource. Further information and poems can be found at:

www.nationalmemoryday.org.uk

The Literature Works Team

November 2019

Communication and Living with Memory Loss

Some useful tips from our partners at the Alzheimer's Society about communication and living with memory loss.

People living with memory loss can struggle with communication. They may have trouble finding the right words, repeat themselves, or find following a conversation challenging. When working with people with memory loss it is important to remember that other factors may also be making communication difficult, such as hearing loss or perception difficulties. Effective communication is important for helping each individual to feel involved in the activity; helping to build confidence and encouraging participation. When working with people who experience memory loss, try to think about the way you are communicating and consider these tips below:

- Speak clearly about one topic at a time
- Be aware of your body language. Try to be at the same level as the person you are talking to
- Include the person in decisions and never talk over them
- Listen to the person and give them time to respond – we all need a few moments to gather our thoughts
- Think about not only what you say, but how you say it. Your tone of voice is very important
- Be aware of changes in behaviour. If someone is not enjoying themselves or becoming confused, change the activity
- Reassure the person throughout and always be positive about their contribution

Samuel Griffiths

Alzheimer's Society, Plymouth

Reading Aloud to People Living with Memory Loss

Some guidance from our lead National Memory Day poet trainer.

Reading poetry aloud is a gateway to reminiscence, to communication and to greater wellbeing, both for the reader and the listener. It is a shared experience. Intimacy, communication, humour and empathy are key to its success. Whether you are reading to one person or to a group, these recommendations will support you:

- You are sharing, rather than delivering and eye contact is important
- Share poems that you like, this will have an impact
- Choose a variety of styles and types, some funny and some serious
- Include popular, widely known poems
- Choose poems that are not too long
- Don't be afraid to include poems that deal with ageing or difficult subject matter
- Poems do not have to rhyme but a good rhythm helps
- Use a good anthology and mark it up in advance
- If you're reading to a group, plan, practise and time your reading beforehand
- Hum to warm up your voice
- beforehand and have plenty of water to drink
- Build in pauses and discussion between poems
- Don't be afraid to deviate or go along with suggestions and requests
- Be guided by your audience and how they respond
- Encourage people to read aloud or recite if they would like to
- Sometimes people like to have copies of the poems to follow or to keep afterwards
- Make a note of what works or doesn't work to keep developing your repertoire

Karen Hayes

Poet and National Memory Day trainer

Creating a Group Poem

Tips from one of our experienced Memory Café session facilitators.

Creating a poem as a group is a way of ensuring that everyone – participants, carers and volunteers – feels involved and shares a sense of achievement in the session. It energises participants and builds confidence. They too can be poets. They too can create something beautiful from recalling moments in their lives. The most important thing is to make everyone feel involved.

To create a group poem

- Decide a theme – holidays, jobs, favourite pets, food, seasons, anything can be a theme
- Follow the group's suggestions. Listen to everyone. Invite quiet people to contribute by asking them something easy to answer
- Flip chart paper, fat pens and big writing are useful so everyone can see the work in progress
- Write everything down. Don't worry about neatness! Keep reading back what you have so far and then ask for the next suggestion. Reading back helps with further ideas
- If possible, everyone should contribute at least one line, phrase, remark or even just a word
- If you have been sharing favourite poems, is there a line that someone particularly liked? Did a poem bring out a memory?
- Around now the group can think of a title and also how they would like it to end
- Now you have captured the words, some tweaking may help with the sense and the flow, for example you could change the line order
- Once you have this, write the poem out clearly
- Reciting the poem with the group, either at this session or the next one, celebrates that sense of shared achievement

Claire Coleman

Poet and Memory Café
session facilitator

National Memory Day

*Exploring Poetry
and Memory*

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Literature Works supports creative writing and the development of writers and readers of all ages in the South West of England.

www.literatureworks.org.uk

The Poetry Archive produces, acquires and preserves recordings of poets from around the English-speaking world.

www.poetryarchive.org

Alzheimer's Society is the only UK charity that campaigns for change, funds research to find a cure and supports people living with dementia today. www.alzheimers.org.uk

www.literatureworks.org.uk



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The Tyger **by William Blake**

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?





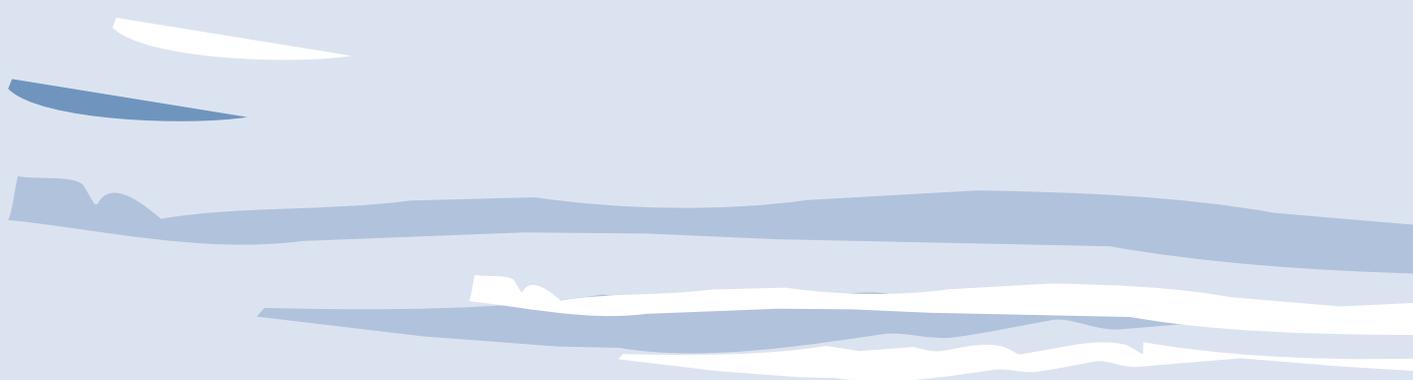
The Lake Isle of Innisfree

by W. B. Yeats

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.



Daffodils

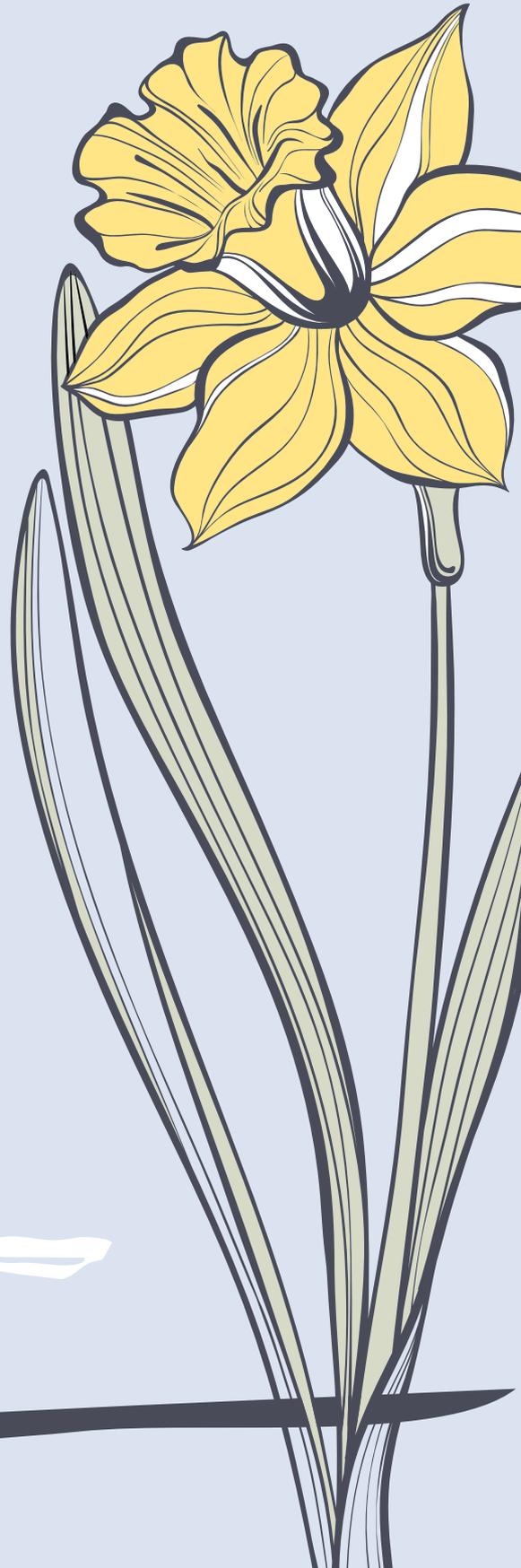
by William Wordsworth

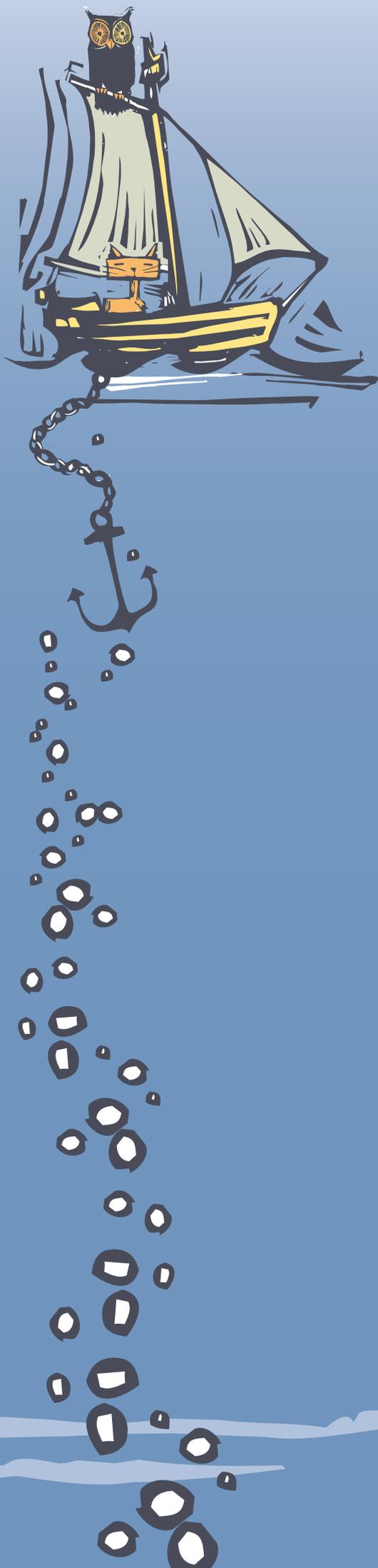
I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

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.





The Owl and the Pussy-cat by Edward Lear

The Owl and the Pussy-cat went to sea
In a beautiful pea-green boat,
They took some honey, and plenty of money,
Wrapped up in a five-pound note.
The Owl looked up to the stars above,
And sang to a small guitar,
“O lovely Pussy! O Pussy, my love,
What a beautiful Pussy you are,
You are,
You are!
What a beautiful Pussy you are!”

Pussy said to the Owl, “You elegant fowl!
How charmingly sweet you sing!
O let us be married! too long we have tarried:
But what shall we do for a ring?”
They sailed away, for a year and a day,
To the land where the bong-tree grows
And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood
With a ring at the end of his nose,
His nose,
His nose,
With a ring at the end of his nose.

“Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling
Your ring?” Said the Piggy, “I will.”
So they took it away, and were married next day
By the Turkey who lives on the hill.
They dined on mince, and slices of quince,
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,
They danced by the light of the moon,
The moon,
The moon,
They danced by the light of the moon.

Suggested Poems to Read Together

Oh, I Wish I'd Looked After

Me Teeth by Pam Ayres

If by Rudyard Kipling

Elegy in a Country Churchyard

by Thomas Gray

Buckingham Palace

by A. A. Milne

Sea Fever by John Masefield

Cargoes by John Masefield

The Listeners

by Walter de la Mare

Ozymandias

by Percy Bysshe Shelley

Leisure by W.H. Davies

Ode to a Nightingale

by John Keats

Christmas by John Betjeman

**Stopping by Woods on a
Snowy Evening**

by Robert Frost

Jabberwocky

by Lewis Carroll

Sonnet 18

by William Shakespeare

From a Railway Carriage

by Robert Louis Stevenson

The Charge of the Light Brigade

by Alfred Lord Tennyson

Macavity the Mystery Cat

by T.S. Eliot

I Saw a Jolly Hunter

by Charles Causley

Suggested Anthologies to Explore

Dancing by the Light of the Moon

by Gyles Brandreth (Michael Joseph; 2019)

The Nation's Favourite Poems

by Griff Rhys Jones (BBC Books; 1996)

Poetry Please: The Nation's Best-Loved Poems

by Roger McGough (Faber & Faber; 2014)