

The Alice Sound



NONSENSE POETRY

CREATIVE MUSIC PROJECT



CREATIVE MUSIC PROJECT – NONSENSE POETRY

*“I can explain all the poems that were ever invented –
and a good many that haven’t been invented just yet.”*

Humpty Dumpty in *Through the Looking-Glass*

Poetry is everywhere in *Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. Victorian children must have been delighted to discover familiar verse in a zany, Carrollian form. While only some of these poems will be recognised by young readers today, that certainly shouldn’t stop us having fun with them!

What follows are some fun ideas to inspire you to create and perform your own nonsense poetry.

1. START BY RECITING A VERY FAMOUS RHYME.

This one:

*Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are,
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.
Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are.*

Then try the Hatter’s version:

*Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!
How I wonder what you’re at!
Up above the world you fly,
Like a tea-tray in the sky.
Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!
How I wonder what you’re at!*

2. DISCOVER EVERYTHING THERE IS ABOUT THE TEXT.

Challenge the students to explore the original poem – or the Hatter’s crazy remix.

How many lines are there?

There are 6.

What do they notice about its structure?

Lines 5 & 6 are the same as 1 & 2.

What is interesting about the rhythm of each line?

Every line contains 7 syllables.

Tell me about the rhyming structure?

It’s built from rhyming couplets.

3. NOW, MAKE YOUR OWN NONSENSE POETRY.

In groups, invite the children to make their own quirky rhymes. Use the same rhythmic and rhyming structure as *Twinkle, Twinkle* – but feel free to explore any topic. Actively encourage the children to create something that sounds ridiculous. Aim for nothing less than pure Carrollian nonsense!

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LSO London Symphony Orchestra

Queen Mary University of London

TOP TIP

It may be useful to use the words 'Twinkle, twinkle.....' as the start of this new poem. What could come next?

NB: It is very important that the new poem has rhyming couplets.

4. PERFORM YOUR NEW NONSENSE POEMS.

Challenge each group to make a fun presentation of their poem. Use the nonsense in the text to inspire their work: encourage the children to produce something dramatic, vocally interesting, and fun.

Do all members of the group speak in unison?

Are there any special words that can be highlighted?

Encourage each group to think carefully about the volume and speed of their performance. Most importantly, they no longer have to stick with the original meter of Twinkle, Twinkle – in fact, challenge the children to produce something that is as rhythmically interesting as they can.

5. ADD SOME UNPITCHED PERCUSSION.

Once the class are happy with their poems, add some musical instruments to their performance. Unpitched percussion instruments will work best for this.

Invite each group to choose the most appropriate sounds to reinforce and/or accompany their text.

For instance, the first line of their poem could be accompanied like this:

Twin-	- kle,	twin-	- kle,	dis-	-co	cat!	
<i>triangles and a rainstick – playing very softly and free</i>							LOUD BANG!
				Drum hit X	Drum hit X	Scraper	

NB: not every word needs to be accompanied by an instrument. Select the best, most important ones to highlight. The unpitched sounds could simply follow the rhythm of the words – or be entirely free and textural.

Is it possible to add a dramatic pause or some silence into the performance?

Continued on next page →

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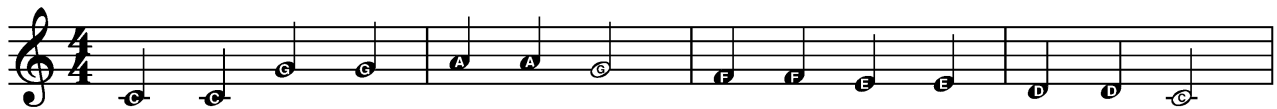


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6. NOW, ADD A MELODY.

It really could be as simple as this:



Twin - kle Twin - kle li - ttle star, how I won - der what you are!



Up a - bove the world so high, like a dia - mond in the sky.



Twin - kle Twin - kle li - ttle star, how I won - der what you are!

7. FINALLY, ADD A SURPRISE.

Nothing is ever as it seems in Alice's adventures. Why not add a surprise somewhere into your performance. It could be anything at all. Anything!

HAVE FUN.

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