



Selecting Poetry for the School Library or Classroom Collection

Poetry is not for everyone. In selecting poetry consider the wide range of the audience appeal of students and teachers: from those who don't like poetry (even teachers) to those who are passionate about it, perhaps poets themselves.

Consider the following in selecting both individual books as well as consideration for the whole poetry collection.

1. Audience

- *To whom will this book appeal?*
- *What is the audience age and interest range of this book?*
- *Have you considered this fact: the highest student response rate when asked the type of book they want to read is “funny”? Does this add to the humorous poetry books in your collection?*

2. Literary Merit

- *What is the tone or mood of this book?*
- *Has this book (or poet) won literary awards?*
- *What have reviewers written on this book? Do these reviews offer deeper literary perspectives?*
- *What literary contributions will these poems contribute to your school or classroom?*
- *For a book by a single poet, does the authorial voice ring true through the poems in this book?*
- *For books on a single theme or topic, does this book offer original and unique ways to look at the subject?*

3. Content: Theme and Topic

- *What topics and themes would you like to add to your collection, overall?*
- *Have you considered variety in historical perspectives for your poetry collection?*
- *If this is a new version of a classic, what contribution to classic poetry does your collection own?*



4. Student Interest

- *What is the student appeal of this book? Will students want to engage in this content?*
- *Will this book be read for personal interest or something else?*
- *Are there popular poets your students enjoy from whom there may be additional titles?*
- *Are there poetry books or topics your students have requested?*
- *Might this poetry book support English learners, new to learning English?*

5. Diverse Perspectives

- *Does the subject matter in this book contribute new ideas and perspectives to your library or classroom collection? Does it offer fresh perspectives?*
- *Does this book appeal to a unique demographic of students that may have otherwise been overlooked?*
- *Does this book reflect your school's population as well as the broader society?*
- *Does this title broaden the range of ideas and information for your students?*
- *Is this book being considered for your collection simply to “fill a void” or does it truly contribute to diverse perspectives?*
- *Have you considered the diverse interest and popularity of various formats of poetry?*

6. Authorship

- *What do you know about the poet author (or authors, in collected works) of this book?*
- *Is this poet someone of interest to the students in your school?*
- *Is this poet someone that is studied as part of the school’s curriculum (e.g., Shakespeare, Emily Dickinson, or Amanda Gorman)?*
- *What awards or contributions to the field has this author made beyond their poetry? Is this poet a spokesperson for their passion or interest? Is this poet a potential role model?*

7. Curriculum Connections

- *What poetry is studied in the school’s ELA curriculum that this book can contribute to?*
- *Are there curriculum connections beyond ELA that perhaps teachers have not considered connecting poetry with, such as math and science?*

Poetry



- *Are there particular poetry forms that are studied for which this book can supplement or enhance the curriculum?*

8. Schoolwide Interest

- *Will this book contribute to the school's overall educational goals?*
- *Are there groups/clubs to which this book might appeal or be used?*
- *Are there holidays or cultural celebrations the school engages in which this book can play a part?*
- *What poetic forms are part of the school's curriculum? Does this book contribute to those forms?*

9. Form and Format

- *In what format is this book published: an anthology, a collection on one theme, by one or multiple authors?*
- *What poetry form(s) are included in this book? Is it one poetry form (e.g., haiku poems)?*
- *How is the book arranged: by format, poetry type, author, or theme?*
- *What purpose does the publisher or author state for creating this collection of poems?*
- *Is the book illustrated? If so, how do the illustrations contribute to the book?*
- *Does this book add new formats such as song lyrics, especially rap, and other musical formats that are particularly popular with young readers?*

10. Practical Perspectives and Personal Bias

- *Is this a book that will be checked out and read by anyone other than you?*
- *Are your personal poetry biases being addressed in your selection of poetry?*
- *What do you want your students to learn or take away from reading poetry?*
- *What trusted professional review sites have you searched for seeking quality poetry?*
- *Where did you hear about this book and how have reviewers received the book?*
- *Does the cost of the book warrant purchase, and does this book contribute to more than one of the previous selection considerations?*