# Should POETRY BE TAUGHT IN SCHOOLS?

# http://w.idebate.org/debatabase/debates/education/poetry-should-not-be-taught-schools-junior

Poetry is an art form which uses the beauty and rhythm of language to produce emotions in a reader. It is a creative piece of writing that often has meanings and messages that appear hidden. Poetry is an ancient art form and dates back to the first human civilization in Sumer more than four thousand years ago. However, just because poetry is an ancient art form does that mean it should always be taught in schools?

Schools follow a curriculum, a set of courses that schools offer to their pupils; this is usually set by the state. This curriculum is made up of the courses that are judged to be essential to a child’s education. In England at the moment poetry is part of the national curriculum; but here as elsewhere there has been discussion about whether it should continue amid arguments about how well it is taught [1].

Directions: Read the following points (affirmative and negative). Annotate the following source. Once you are done, you need to write a well-developed body paragraph arguing the topic: Should poetry still be taught in school? In your response, you need to use at least three quotes. Please don’t forget to cite each of your quotes with a parenthetical reference (Source A, B, C, D, E or F). Also, remember to attach all quotes to your own words.

On \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_you will turn in: the graphic organizer stapled on top of the printed paragraph (MLA format).

SOURCE A: POINT

Poetry has benefits beyond the English curriculum by teaching about other subjects. In History for example war poetry offers the modern reader the chance to understand the horrors of war. Poet Wilfred Owen suffered from shellshock as a result of fighting in the First World War. In his poem ‘Mental Cases’ he describes his time and experiences at Craiglockhart psychiatric hospital in Scotland where he and Siegfried Sassoon (another World War 1 poet) were treated: “[W]ho are these? Why sit they here in twilight? Wherefore rock they, purgatorial shadows[9]” While we might never be able to properly understand the terrifying experiences that people go through during war we must read their poetry helps bring us closer to how they related to and coped with the experience in a way that simply learning the history does not.

 SOURCE B: COUNTERPOINT

History books can tell us more about the horrors of the First World War than any poetry can. War poetry is based on the opinions of one person’s experiences whereas a history book can give an account of all the events and horrors that occurred. Because history books have been written after the war they can gather accounts from many different people and can tell the full story of the war. Shellshock in the First World War helped make many mad; Sassoon himself was nicknamed “Mad Jack” for near suicidal exploits. [10] War poetry may thus be an unreliable source, and it is only one among many that should teach history.

Source C: POINT

There are people who dedicate their lives to studying poetry and still have trouble understanding its meaning. If these people constantly debate the nature of poetry how can school children be expected to properly understand it? It is difficult to teach because poetry can have multiple meanings; “[U]ntil education theory asks itself what poetry itself is, and therefore what the teacher is trying to get across, poems will continue largely to figure as teaching aids, exercises and – for teenagers – increasingly tedious, somewhat arbitrary puzzles" [2] and therefore poetry will remain of little worth in the classroom.

The greatest poets write about adult experiences, e.g, love, work, history, politics, solitude etc. As a result great poetry requires an adult mind to grasp its full meaning and teaching it in schools means that students develop a disliking for poetry before they are even fully capable of appreciating it.

Source D: COUNTERPOINT

While great poetry may deal with adult experiences there is poetry that targets a younger audience and methods available to teach this type of poetry. Children’s poetry, for instance, is not complex or dark in subject matter and uses very regular rhythm and rhyme schemes, which young students will enjoy. If age-appropriate poetry is taught in schools then it gives young people the chance to develop an appreciation for poetry and its various techniques. This means that in later years young people will have the skills necessary to properly understand great poetry.

### Source E: POINT

According to a report published in 2011 [3] a great number of pupils in England are struggling after starting secondary school and 3 out of 10 pupils are not making enough progress in English. If pupils are not making the required progress in basic English then it is difficult to understand the motivation behind teaching complex poetry. If a student is unable to do basic multiplication it makes no sense to ask them to do complicated mathematic equations. The same is true in English: pupils who struggle with things like grammar and vocabulary should not be expected to tackle complicated poetic structures.

### Source F: COUNTERPOINT

Poetry should not be seen as something that one studies after learning English but should, instead, be seen as a way to helpstudents grasp the English language. Many aspects of English are improved through the study of poetry.  Learning poetry involves repetitive reading and an exploration of vowels and syllables. Students also explore a variety of sentence structures and are given the opportunity to explore the creativity and flexibility available in language. Furthermore, by reading poetry students can improve their reading ability and public speaking skills.

**For your body paragraph, please format it as follows:**

Topic sentence: State your opinion.

First quote for support (Source)

Commentary – Why do you agree with the quote? What does it prove?

Second quote for support (Source)

Commentary – Why do you agree with the quote? What does it prove?

Third quote for support (Source)

Commentary – Why do you agree with the quote? What does it prove?

Conclude – Therefore…? Why does this matter?