

Poem by Poem

A Time for Everything

PHOTOCOPY MASTER AVAILABLE

SECTION Prologue (page 1)

POET The unnamed author known as Ecclesiastes

These verses from the Old Testament of the Bible, Ecclesiastes 3: 2–8, form the Prologue to the whole anthology, each ‘season’ providing a peg upon which hang the chosen poems. A photocopy master of these words appears on page 132 so that every pupil can have a copy as an introduction to the anthology.

Preparing to read this poem aloud

- The repetitive nature of these verses requires a variety of volume, pitch and pace to retain interest.
- Use a calm and relaxed tone of voice throughout.

Past and future

- Read the verses aloud and invite pupils to comment on anything they notice about the times or actions described and the way they are arranged – in pairs of opposites. Discuss the balance that the text implies.
- Explain that this text is the Prologue to an anthology whose title is **A Time to Speak**, with the subtitle, **and a Time to Listen**.
- Explain that the book’s contents are arranged in sections, each one represented by one of the ‘time pegs’ listed in ‘A Time for Everything’. Demonstrate this by dipping in and reading two or three poems. Can the pupils guess the section in which they belong? Point out that, often, the poems could fit into more than one section.
- Hand out copies of the anthology, one between two, and allocate a section (for example, **A time to laugh**) to each pair.
- Ask them to read together all the poems appearing in that section. Encourage the pairs to discuss the poems, and decide which they like best – or which they like best on this particular day.
- Bring the class together and ask each pair to say which poem they chose and why. Ask for the title, the poet’s name and a little about the poem. Does it tell a story / describe a scene or event / have a moral? Is it sad / happy / humorous / quiet?
- Ask the rest of the class to make notes of titles of poems that they think they might enjoy reading, on the strength of other pupils’ comments and choices.
- Allow time for the pupils to read some of these poems for enjoyment.
- Bring the class together at the end of the session and briefly elicit the pupils’ reactions to the activity, and to the book. Discuss the concept of an anthology’s suitability for ‘dipping in’, making discoveries and returning to favourites.
- Collect the books and invite the pupils to sit back, relax and listen to one or two poems that you have chosen to read aloud to them.

EXTRA: Explain how the poems, although fitting into particular sections, might sometimes fit into more than one ‘season’, or even opposites. For example, Poem 66 ‘Easter Monday’ by Catherine Benson (**A time to keep**) might also fit into **A time to love**. Challenge the pupils to identify other such poems, and even poems that contain opposites, such as **A time to lose** and **A time to find**, within the same poem.