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## I Must Go Down to the Beach Again

### Discussion and Activity Guide

Produced by Karen Jo Shapiro and Charlesbridge  
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With apologies and a wink, Karen Jo Shapiro delightfully parodies some of the English language's most classic works. Mr. Browning, Ms. Dickinson, Lord Byron and others can consider themselves sincerely flattered because these imitations will have young readers laughing out loud and loving poetry.

After reading the book, ask students these questions:

- Did you enjoy the book?
- Did you think poetry could be fun?
- Are you interested in reading more poetry?

### About Parodies

Using parodies of poems is an excellent way for educators to introduce students to the varied rhythms and rhyme patterns of poetry. Students can gain the confidence to create their own original works by “transforming” famous poems.

Classical poetry tends to have “heavy” themes such as death or adult love, in language too dense and uninteresting for most elementary and middle-school students. On the other hand, children do benefit from (and often enjoy) being exposed to a variety of rhyme and rhythm patterns. Parodies provide the perfect bridge so that students can appreciate different poetic forms while reading and writing about topics that are fun and meaningful to them. Students can develop a personal connection to a famous poet they admire, experimenting with writing in a similar style or using specific poems as direct inspiration. These exercises, in turn, might provide motivation for students to learn more about the poet or the poet's time period.

Of course, students can use all sorts of written works for inspiration, including nursery rhymes and songs. Let the creative games begin!

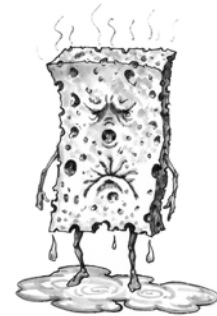
– Karen Jo Shapiro

## What About Poetry

### **Repetition:**

Many poems in *I Must Go Down to the Beach Again* repeat a sentence or phrase. Sometimes repetition is used to make a poem funny, and sometimes to make a dramatic point. Repetition also can make a poem sound more “musical.” Read these poems with your students. Ask them to find the repetition and guess what its purpose might be.

*I Must Go Down to the Beach Again*  
*The Smells*  
*This Rotten, Lousy Flu*  
*Don't Let the Toast Burn*  
*The Train Comes, the Train Goes*  
*July Joy*



### **Rhyme:**

There are all kinds of rhyming patterns in poetry, and one of the things that makes writing parodies fun is experimenting with different forms.

All of the poems in *I Must Go Down to the Beach Again* rhyme, yet they have different rhyme and rhythm patterns. (For a good discussion of beat, meter, and other parts of poetry see *Immersed in Verse* by Allan Wolf, Lark Books, 2006, pages 33 - 42).

◆ A poem in which every two lines rhyme with each other has an AABB form. Read and discuss these poems in *I Must Go Down to the Beach Again* that have this pattern:

*My Last Marker*  
*The Train Comes, The Train Goes*  
*Glad Rest*  
*David's Flute*

◆ An ABAB poem is one in which every other line rhymes. Ask students to find some in the book?

*Up-Hill*  
*This Rotten, Lousy Flu*  
*If*  
*One Day I Took a Chance and Wrote a Poem*

◆ Some poems have three rhyming lines in a row. Ask students to find an example in *I Must Go Down to the Beach Again*.

*Norman's Fancy*

◆ Internal rhyme happens when words within a line rhyme with each other.  
Have students list the internal rhymes in *July Joy*.

*shout/out*  
*treat/eat*  
*boom/zoom*

### **Personification:**

In *My Letter from the World*, the world is given the human-like characteristic of being able to write a letter. Have students write a poem about what they think the world would write, say, or do if it could.

### **Themes:**

Poetry is written about all kind of themes, or subjects. Have students list all the poems in *I Must Go Down to the Beach Again* written specifically about food.

*Pass the Pancakes*  
*The Sick Tummy*  
*Don't Let the Toast Burn*  
*Norman's Fancy*

Ask students to list the poems about family. (Discuss that a poem may have two themes!)

*Pass the Pancakes*  
*About My Baby Sister*  
*To My Brother*  
*Norman's Fancy*

Some poems are pure silliness.

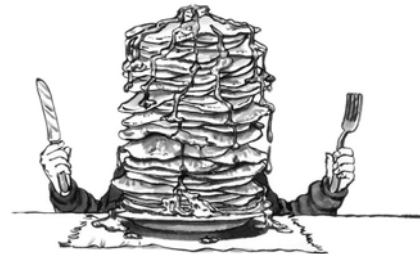
*Never Try to Smell a Bee*

Some describe an object. (This is called imagery.)

*Bubbles*

Others talk about ordinary parts of the day.

*If*  
*There Is No Cleanup Like a Bath*  
*Glad Rest*



## **I Must Read**

The poems in *I Must Go Down to the Beach Again* are parodies of poems written by famous poets of long ago. The original poems that inspired Karen Jo Shapiro are online at [www.charlesbridge.com](http://www.charlesbridge.com). Ask students to compare the original poems to Karen Jo's parodies.

- What is similar?
- What is different?

Read *My Mouth Closed Twice*.

- Ask students what they think is happening in the poem.
- Ask them if this, or something similar, has ever happened to them. Have the class share their stories, discussing emotions and actions. List descriptive words on the chalkboard.
- Give students time to write about something they really want to say. Ask them to think about subject and theme; to use words that describe their thoughts, emotions, and actions; and to think about rhyme and rhythm.

Read *Soccer Land*.

- Ask students what feeling they get from the language. What is the tone of the poem?
- What words convey this?
- As a class, pick a subject and write ten action words associated with it.

Read *If*.

- Discuss with students what they think Karen Jo Shapiro's thoughts are about reading.
- Ask students about their own thoughts on reading. Do they like to read? What sorts of things do they enjoy reading?
- Read the original poem by Rudyard Kipling. Discuss with students whether it has the same sense of excitement as the parody.
- What do students think is the author's message?

Read *Don't Let the Toast Burn*.

- Have students figure out the rhyming pattern of the first stanza.
- The second verse is called the chorus and is repeated throughout the poem. Ask students what is unusual about the chorus. (The only line that remains the same is "Don't let the toast burn.")
- Judy Love's hilarious illustrations accompany each poem in this book. Discuss the illustration for *Don't Let the Toast Burn*. Ask students if it matches the feeling and message of the poem.





## Poem Detective

(You may want to write these questions on the chalkboard and make this a detective race. The first student to discover all the poems can be the classroom poet laureate).

- ◆ Find the one poem in which every line rhymes with the word “free.”

*Never Try to Smell a Bee*

- ◆ Which poem is all about the feeling of frustration when you are not allowed to speak?

*My Mouth Closed Twice*

- ◆ Find four poems in *I Must Go Down to the Beach Again* that describe activities.

*Soccer Land.*

*To My Brother*

*David's Flute*

*The Train Comes, The Train Goes*

- ◆ Karen Jo Shapiro parodied this writer three times in *I Must Go Down to the Beach Again*. While the language is poetic, the pieces parodied here are actually dialog in plays. Find the poems and name the original author.

*David's Flute*

*Soccer Land*

*Bubbles*

(The original versions were all written by William Shakespeare.)

- ◆ There is a poem in the book that is a conversation between two people. What is the poem? What are the two people talking about?

*Up-Hill*

(About a toad)

- ◆ There are three poems about siblings. What are they?

*About My Baby Sister*

*To My Brother*

*Norman's Fancy*





## **I Must Write**

### **Write, Write, Write:**

Here are a few poetry-inspired writing assignments for your students:

- Write a poem about how you play a sport, as in *Soccer Land*.
- Write about the joys of your favorite holiday, as in *July Joy*.
- Try writing a poem that gives silly advice, as in *Never Try to Smell a Bee?*
- Write a poem with an AABB rhyme scheme.

Inspiration for poems can be found anywhere and in anything (burnt toast, for instance). Set up a “poetry inspiration station” in your classroom. Include photographs, objects, books, or whatever you like. Ask students to choose one thing and write about it in any style they like. Then have them revise their writing into a poem with structure (form, rhyme, and meter). “Publish” the students’ poems in a classroom anthology.

### **Parody the Parody:**

- Using a format like that in *If*, ask students to write a short poem that starts “If you can...” and ends “Then you’re a ....”
- Emily Dickinson wrote: “There is no frigate like a book/to take us far away.” Karen Jo Shapiro wrote: “There is no cleanup like a bath/to take my dirt away.” Ask students to write their own short poem using this pattern (“There is no... like a ....”).
- John Masefield wrote: “I Must go down to the seas again....” Karen Jo Shapiro wrote: “I must go down to the beach again....” Ask students to use this idea of passion for a place and to write a poem about a place where they must go .

## **I Must Act It Out**

- Pick two students to act out and say alternate complaint lines in *This Rotten Lousy Flu*, joining together to exclaim “This rotten, lousy flu!”
- Split the class up into pairs. Have one student read aloud *To My Brother, My Mouth Closed Twice*, or *David’s Flute* and have the other act out the poems.
- Break up the class into pairs or groups. Assign each group a poem from *I Must Go Down to the Beach Again*. Allow them to work out a presentation, choosing their own narrator, assigning their own characters, and setting their own scenes. Have each group perform their poem for the class.
- During National Poetry Month in April, pick a day to celebrate poetry. Assign each student a role as one of the famous poets parodied in *I Must Go Down to the Beach Again*. Each student should prepare for that day by researching their assigned poet. On your day of celebration, students can dress up like their poets, present reports on their lives, and read some of their poems.