

**SOUTHRANK
CENTRE**

A POET

IN

EVERY

PORT

NORTH EAST

Welcome to the A Poet in Every Port teachers' pack: the companion resource

To mark our 75th anniversary, the Southbank Centre and the National Poetry Library are taking the celebration beyond our base on London's South Bank and out across the UK.

Leading these celebrations is A Poet in Every Port, a national project celebrating the poetry, language and local identity. Inspired by the spirit of the 1951 Festival of Britain – the nationwide celebration of arts and culture that led to the creation of the Southbank Centre – this project will take to the road during the summer of 2026. We are visiting 11 coastal towns and cities in a specially designed Mobile Poetry Library.

Through free public events, workshops and poetry readings, we'll be working hand in hand with regional partners and poets across the four nations to help nurture local voices and celebrate the incredible poetry projects already thriving in each of the communities we visit.

But the journey doesn't stop at the seaside! Through this teachers' pack, we are inviting schools across the UK to join the tour, whether you are located on the coast or hundreds of miles inland. You don't need to visit the mobile library to take part – we have bottled the spirit of the project into these lesson plans so your pupils can participate from their classrooms.



The Word Exchange

At the heart of the project is the **Word Exchange**, which encourages people to capture the unique sound of where they live in the form of poetry.

This pack of resources will challenge students to become 'word detectives', exploring how language evolves within their own community. The 'exchange' happens on the page, where students are encouraged to mix the old with the new, comparing the dialect words passed down by grandparents with the slang used in the playground today.

Find out how to share your class' poems with us at the end of this pack, for your students' work to be retained in the National Poetry Library's collection.



A Poet in Every Port's ambassador is the much-loved poet **Roger McGough**. Hailing from Liverpool, he knows the power of local dialect better than anyone. Here is his Word Exchange poem in Scouse dialect, to inspire you and your students to write your own.

Poetry, the big fish in the Pool of Life by Roger McGough

And we should know, we invented the word
As well as kecks, cob ons and the Liver Bird

Antwacky, clobber, bevvv and sliced bread
Footy of course, both Blue and Red

Scallywags, woolybacks, scran and whoppers
Jiggers, blerts, and bizzies for coppers

I'm nesh and it's baltic, chucking it down
So ta-ra for now, I'll see yiz round town.

*(Enjoyed writing that, the words seemed to flow
Dialects can be fun, why not give it a go?)*

To help your students connect deeply with the heritage of their nearest shore, we have developed this companion resource covering every part of the UK coastline. Whether your school is located in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, or in north-east, north-west, south-east, south-west, or east England, we have a guide for you.

Read on for:

- **Tailored lesson plans:** Specific sessions designed for both primary and secondary schools.
- **Local inspiration:** Activities featuring poems and poets from your specific region to spark local pride.
- **Inclusive activities:** Creative exercises with clear adaptations for SEND pupils, ensuring every student can participate in the Word Exchange.

These lesson plans are a guide, and we invite teachers to pick and choose activities as well as adapt the suggested timings to suit their class.



North east: primary school

- Read Rowan McCabe's 'An Ode to a Seaside Town' and write an ode to your town using local dialect words. [Link to poem here.](#)
- Read Rowan McCabe's 'Dream Job' and write a poem about a job or activity that reminds you of your town using local dialect words. [Link to poem here.](#)

Odes to our town

 50 minutes

Learning objectives:

By the end of the lesson, pupils will:

1. Recognise how poetry can celebrate a place and its people.
2. Identify and use local dialects and familiar phrases in their writing.

Definitions:

Ode – a lyric poem, typically one in the form of an address to a particular subject, written in varied or irregular metre.

Lesson structure

1. Create a Word Exchange 🕒 10 minutes

Pupils brainstorm words and phrases they or their families use that are unique to South Shields or Tyneside (e.g. canny, bairn). Encourage intergenerational comparison: words they know their grandparents or parents use versus modern slang. Write them on the board as a dialect bank for later use.

SEND support: Provide pre-prepared examples of dialect words if needed. Use pictures or emojis to illustrate meanings.

2. Read and discuss the central poem 🕒 10 minutes

Introduce Rowan McCabe and read 'An Ode to a Seaside Town'. Ask pupils:

1. What images or feelings does the poem give you about South Shields?
2. Can you spot any words or phrases that feel like they belong to this area?

3. Pupils write their own short ode (eight to 12 lines) about South Shields 🕒 15 minutes

Students could include:

1. Local dialect words from the word bank.
2. Descriptions of people, places or activities in their town.
3. Sensory language.

SEND support: Offer sentence frames: 1) 'I love [place/person/activity in South Shields] because ...' 2) 'On the [beach/street], I see ...'

Optional extension task:

Read Rowan McCabe's 'Dream Job' and write about a job or activity that reminds you of your town using local dialect words.

4. Sharing 🕒 10 minutes

Volunteers read their poems aloud to the class or in small groups.

5. Plenary 🕒 5 minutes

Ask pupils to reflect:

1. How did using local words make your poem feel specific to South Shields?
2. Did you learn a new word from a classmate?



North east: secondary school

- Read Jake Morris-Campbell's 'Akenside Syndrome' and write a poem about a moment when your dialect or accent felt misunderstood or celebrated. [Link to poem here.](#)
- Read Jo Clement's 'Playing Cards' and write a poem about an object or heirloom associated with your family or identity. [Link to poem here.](#)

Finding our voice: dialect and identity in poetry 🕒 50 minutes

Learning objectives:

By the end of the lesson, pupils will:

1. Analyse how dialect and accent contribute to voice and identity in poetry.
2. Identify and use local dialects and familiar phrases in their writing.

Lesson structure

1. Create a Word Exchange 🕒 10 minutes

Pupils brainstorm words and phrases they or their families use that are unique to South Shields or Tyneside (e.g. canny, bairn). Encourage intergenerational comparison: words they know their grandparents or parents use versus modern slang. Write them on the board as a dialect bank for later use.

SEND support: Provide pre-prepared examples of dialect words if needed. Use pictures or emojis to illustrate meanings.

2. Read and discuss the central poem 🕒 10 minutes

Introduce Jake Morris-Campbell and read 'Akenside Syndrome'. Ask pupils:

1. Which words or phrases are specific to Tyneside/Geordie dialect?
2. What does the poem suggest about voice, place and identity?
3. Identify the phrase 'Geordie syllables caught in my throat' and discuss its effect.

3. Pupils write their own short poem (eight to 12 lines) about their dialect/accent 🕒 15 minutes

Poems could include:

1. A local place, memory or community experience.
2. Tension or pride in how their dialect is perceived.
3. Contrasts between local speech and standard English.

Prompts:

1. A walk through your town.
2. A conversation with someone from a different part of the country.
3. A moment where your dialect made you feel proud or misunderstood.

SEND support: Offer sentence frames:

- 1) 'I love my accent because ...'
- 2) 'The words that I use are ...'

Optional extension task:

Read Jo Clement's 'Playing Cards' and write a poem about an object or heirloom associated with your family or identity.

4. Sharing 🕒 10 minutes

Volunteers read their poems aloud to the class or in small groups.

5. Plenary 🕒 10 minutes

Ask pupils to reflect: How did using local words make your poem feel specific to South Shields?

Follow the tour and find out more

Want to see where the mobile National Poetry Library is parking up? **Visit our website** to view the tour map, check our arrival dates for the 11 coastal locations and find out about the free events happening near you.

Show us your class poems!

Your students are the future of poetry, and we want their voices to become a permanent part of history within the National Poetry Library's collection. Please send your class' work to info@poetrylibrary.org.uk

Not only will their poems be archived, but by submitting, your school gets the chance to win a truly inspiring learning experience: an exclusive, in-person workshop delivered by a poet-educator for your students. We can't wait to read what they've written.

Credits

A Poet in Every Port is produced by the National Poetry Library and the Southbank Centre, working hand in hand with regional partners and poets across the four nations to nurture local voices.

Special thanks to our teachers' pack writer and poet, **Tommy Sissons**, for developing these resources.

Win a live performance

Do you know any budding poets aged 16+ who are ready to take their writing to the next level?

We are looking for the best Word Exchange poems from across the UK, and offering writers the chance to win a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to perform their work live on stage at the **Southbank Centre's London Literature Festival in 2027**.

Encourage your older students to visit our website to enter the national competition. It could be their first big gig!



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