

# Teaching rimes with shared reading

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Star light, star bright  
 First star I see tonight  
 I wish I may  
 I wish I might  
 Have the wish I wish tonight.

“Do you ever wish upon a star? I used to make a wish on the first star I saw in the evening, and I’d say this rhyme. Can you read it with me? Let’s have the boys read the first line and the girls read the second, and so on.... Who wants to read it all by yourself? What do you notice about the poem?”

**M**y second-grade students and I read and reread poems like this one every morning. Daily shared reading of poems, songs, and chants provides students with enjoyable, successful reading experiences, and it can be the basis of skills lessons in the context of real reading.

## What is shared reading?

Shared reading, also called shared book experience, was invented by Holdaway (1979) as a way to re-create in the classroom the one-on-one reading experiences children have when they are read to by a parent. Children being read to at home can see the text; they interact with it as they point out what they notice and ask questions. These children learn to associate books with pleasure. In shared reading, large texts allow an entire class to see the text as they read along with the teacher. Shared reading provides repeated readings of predictable texts and poems, building students’ sight-word vocabularies, fluency, and phonics knowledge during enjoyable and successful reading experiences. Parkes (2000) provided a complete description of

shared reading, its benefits to children’s literacy development, and ways to explicitly teach reading and writing behaviors, skills, and strategies.

While shared reading has been described as one of the basic components of a comprehensive literacy program (Routman, 1999), its usefulness in teaching word-recognition strategies (such as phonics) has not always been recognized. Since the National Reading Panel’s (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) report concluded that systematic phonics instruction produces significant benefits for students in kindergarten through sixth grade and for students having difficulty learning to read, phonics has received renewed attention. The panel also found that no one method of teaching phonics was proven superior to any other. They suggested that teachers make sure that students understand the purpose of learning letter sounds and that students are able to apply what they have learned. Teaching phonics in the context of shared reading has the benefit of showing students how phonics knowledge is used in the context of real reading. Shared reading has been recommended for English as a second language learners (Drucker, 2003) and for struggling readers (Allington, 2001).

## Why teach rimes?

Rimes are spelling patterns or “chunks” such as *-ate*, *-ile*, and *-ake*. One-syllable words can be divided into onsets and rimes; the onset is the letter or letters before a vowel, while the rime is the vowel(s) and letters following it. For example, in the word *plate*, *pl* is the onset, and *-ate* is the rime. Teaching onsets and rimes is a better approach to phonics than teaching individual letter sounds because onsets and rimes are much more consistent than single

letters. The letter *o*, for example, can make a variety of sounds, as in *hot*, *come*, and *cone*. Clymer (1963) found that many of the phonics rules traditionally taught are not reliable; only half of the vowel generalizations he tested worked at least 60% of the time. Rimes, like *-all*, however, almost always make the same sound. Furthermore, Moustafa's (1997) research showed that children tend to figure out new words by analogy—that is, by thinking of other similar words they know. Students who learn a rime can apply this knowledge to help them figure out new words. Research has shown that beginning and dyslexic readers benefit from being taught to decode by rime analogy (Goswami, 2000). Wylie and Durrell (1970) identified 37 rimes (they called them phonograms) that can be found in 500 primary words. These 37 rimes can be used as a basis for shared reading lessons (see Table 1). I have also designed lessons on vowel digraphs such as *ou* and *oi* for shared reading.

## Five steps for shared reading

### Step 1: Reading the poem

In shared reading, the teacher begins with an introduction that might include reading the title and author's name, asking students questions to build interest or activate their background knowledge, and having students make predictions. The teacher reads the text first, pointing to each word. The students join in on subsequent readings. Reading continues as long as the enjoyment is maintained. I might divide my second graders into two groups to take turns reading every other line, or I might have half the class read a poem while the other half add motions. When the poem is very familiar to all the students, I

might ask for volunteers to read it alone. Usually my struggling readers will volunteer, because by this time they can read the poem perfectly.

### Step 2: Introducing a skill

After repeated readings of the poem, skills lessons can be taught. Poems that rhyme lend themselves particularly to the study of rimes. After a shared reading of "Star Light, Star Bright," I ask students what words in the poem sound the same, or rhyme. As they identify the rhyming words, I write them down on a piece of poster board, one directly underneath the other. I might write the letters of the rime *-ight* in a different color, or I might have students place highlighter tape over the rime in each word. My purpose is to help students notice the spelling pattern and learn the sound made by the *-ight* chunk. I ask students for other words that also rhyme, and we add them to our list. Of course, not all words that rhyme with *light* and *bright* have the same spelling pattern. If a student says "White," I say, "That's great! I'm going to put it in another row because *white* sounds the same but it is spelled a different way." And I begin a row with *-ite* words. Students quickly learn that there can be more than one way to spell a particular sound because English is an odd language. Finally, I place the *-ight* poster on our wall for further reference.

### Step 3: Working with words

Next, I provide students with a hands-on activity that provides more opportunities to work with *-ight* words. For example, I might give each student a copy of the poem with the lines out of sequence. The students cut the lines apart and put them back in the correct order. (We might also do this activity as a group using a pocket chart and sentence strips.) Or students might use letter cards to build *-ight* words as I call them out. (We might also do this activity as a group using transparent or magnetic letter tiles.) In a similar manner, students could write *-ight* words on small dry-erase boards or chalkboards.

### Step 4: Writing

Many poems make good models for students' writing. Often, we write class and individual poems based on the structure of our shared reading poem. Poems may also suggest writing topics. For exam-

**TABLE 1**  
**37 rimes**

*-ack, -ail, -ain, -ake, -ale, -ame, -an, -ank, -ap, -ash, -at, -ate, -aw, -ay*  
*-eat, -ell, -est*  
*-ice, -ick, -ide, -ight, -ill, -in, -ine, -ing, -ink, -ip, -it*  
*-ock, -oke, -op, -ore, -ot*  
*-uck, -ug, -ump, -unk*

ple, after reading “Star Light, Star Bright,” students may want to write about what they would wish for.

### Step 5: Rereading

Once we have read a poem, the poster goes into a box, to be taken out and read again by request during shared reading time. Students also choose poems from the box to read during Sustained Silent Reading. I also create a poem notebook for each student, into which each new poem is added. On occasion, we take time to read or illustrate some of the poems in our collections. These rereadings build fluency and provide repeated opportunities to read texts containing the rime.

Once students have learned a rime, I remind them to use this knowledge. When a student is reading to me and hesitates at a word with a rime we have studied, I remind that student, “That word looks like another word we know.” If needed, they can consult our rime posters. Shared reading has been a powerful teaching tool in my classroom for helping children enjoy reading and for building fluency and skills.

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