Sample text and teaching session from *The School Magazine*

Poem: The Pelican Chorus by Edward Lear

The Pelican Chorus

by EDWARD LEAR

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King and Queen of the Pelicans we;
No other birds so grand we see!
None but we have feet like fins!
With lovely, leathery throats and chins!
Ploffskin, Pluffskin, Pelican jee!
We think no birds as happy as we!
Plumskin, Plashkin, Pelican jill!
We think so then, and we thought so still!

Sample teaching session

Teaching Session: The Pelican Chorus by Edward Lear
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Session Focus

RS2.8 Discusses the text structure of a range of text types and the grammatical features that are characteristic of those text types.

- *Can talk about rhyme, syllables, rhythm when discussing a poem.*

What you will need

- Copies of the poem for each member of the group (the poem is out of copyright, so you can print and copy the poem as needed)

- http://www.poetry4kids.com/poems.html

Setting the Scene

- Explain to students that this poem was written by Edward Lear, a man who is well-known for his funny poems and drawings.

- Brainstorm the term 'nonsense' and make the point that poems like this are just silly and funny—there's no deep message. That doesn't mean they're not cleverly constructed though!

Modelled Reading

- Ask students to read the poem to the person sitting next to them.

- Now read the poem through to students, ensuring that the poem's rhythmic qualities are evident.

- Ask students to identify any words they don't know the meaning of, and write them on the board.

- Explain that these are *nonsense* words—words that Lear has made up to amuse and entertain his audience.

- Ask students to make up their own nonsense word for a fluffy dog, a snake or a cockroach eg fluffduffler; slinkleslider; spatchemdatch. Ask students to share their words with a partner.

- Point out that the best ones relate in some way to the thing they're describing, just as Lear's choices reflect some aspects of the pelicans' bodies and environment.

Guided Reading

- Clap as you recite the first line of the poem. Ask students to join in as you recite the rest.

- Explain that clapping helps identify the *rhythm* of the poem. Each clap falls on a *stressed* syllable. In a poem with a regular rhythm, your claps will occur at approximately equal intervals.

- Ask students to work in pairs to read the poem aloud quietly while their partner underlines the words or syllables that are *stressed* (emphasised, clapped). Explain that sometimes just a syllable, rather than a whole word, is stressed.

- Point out to students that the poem *rhymes*. Ask them to mark the rhyming pairs of words on their copy of the poem.

- More able students might like to investigate the term 'chorus' and how this relates to the form of the poem (ie it's like the chorus of a song: a repeated section which rhymes, has a strong rhythm, and during which everyone joins in the singing).

Independent Activities

- Ask students, working in pairs, to think of a nursery rhyme e.g. Humpty Dumpty; Twinkle, twinkle little star; Baa, baa black sheep; or even 'Happy birthday'.

- Ask students to write out the first two lines of the poem from memory and mark the *stressed* words; alternately, model this for students on the board.

- Ask students to make up their own nonsense poem, using rhythmic pattern of one of their nursery rhymes as a model if they wish, e.g.

  higgledy, piggledy smitherly smoo,
  amberly rambly ditherly doo.

  Students may naturally include a rhyming sequence in their work.

- Further ideas for using poems like this include performing them for the whole group; turning them into songs, turning them into raps or chanting them as kids skip rope, do star jumps or clap. Poems could also be collected into a book with a title and cover created by members of the group.

- Ask students to work in pairs and look at the funny poems on the website http://www.poetry4kids.com/poems.html Record in their workbooks:

- o The name of the poem.
- o The author of the poem.
- o Whether it rhymed.
- o Whether it had a strong rhythm.
- o Their suggestions about *why* the author might have written the poem using rhythm and rhyme.
- Able students might independently draw the inference that rhyme and rhythm make the poem funny! Assist less able students to this insight.

(Teaching session written by Emma Heyde, The School Magazine Unit)