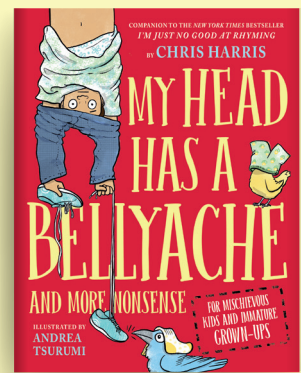


# MY HEAD HAS A BELLYACHE

AND MORE NONSENSE FOR MISCHIEVOUS KIDS AND IMMATURE GROWN-UPS

BY CHRIS HARRIS,

ILLUSTRATED BY ANDREA TSURUMI



9780316592598 HC

This collection of humorous poems bends, breaks, and blows up the rules of how poems work! Many of the poems are perfect for reading aloud as a group, many promote creative art, drama, and music activities, and many provide creative models for young writers to experiment with. Here are just a few options for exploring this clever, engaging, and ground-breaking collection.

## READING ALOUD

### CHORAL READING WITH KEY WORDS/PHRASES

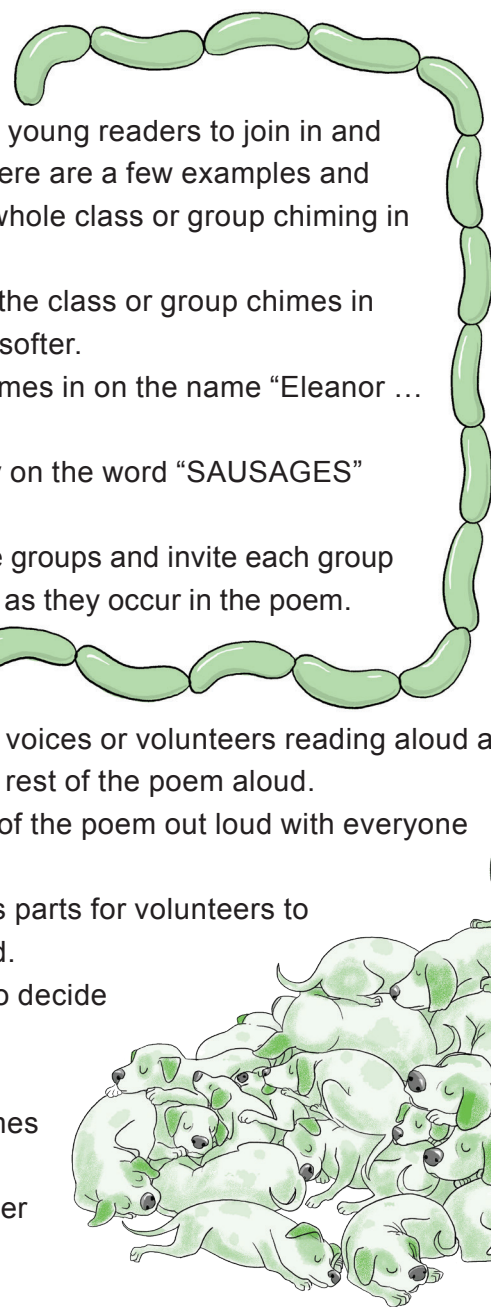
There are so many fun poems in this book that can come alive when we invite young readers to join in and read them aloud together through **choral reading** or **poetry performance**. Here are a few examples and strategies with the teacher or leader reading the poem out loud and then the whole class or group chiming in on a key word or phrase as it occurs in the poem:

- “My Buffalo” (p. 35) A teacher or leader reads the poem out loud and the class or group chimes in whenever the word “buffalo” occurs, chanting it softer and softer and softer.
- “The Story of Eleanor ... Plame...” (pp. 84-87) The class or group chimes in on the name “Eleanor ... Plame” with a nice long pause between the first and last name.
- “My Favorite Word” (pp. 116-118) The class or group chimes in loudly on the word “SAUSAGES” each time it occurs in the poem.
- “I Couldn’t Decide...” (pp. 140-141) Divide the class or group into three groups and invite each group to chime in loudly on one of the key words “NOW,” “THIS,” and “THAT” as they occur in the poem.

### LINE-BY-LINE READ ALOUD

Several poems also lend themselves to a **line-by-line reading** with individual voices or volunteers reading aloud a single line (often with multiple volunteers) while a leader or narrator reads the rest of the poem aloud.

- “Okay, Listen Up,...” (p. 49) Invite 9 volunteers to each read one line of the poem out loud with everyone joining in on the final line.
- “Dare to Be the Same” (p. 58) Use the lines within quotation marks as parts for volunteers to read aloud while a narrator or leader reads the rest of the poem aloud.
- “I Have a Million Friends...” (p. 99-102) Students can work together to decide how to read aloud this poem with multiple choices in lists A and B. Have fun with it!
- “This Year Went By SO Fast...” (p. 159) The word “Eve” occurs 59 times in this poem, so invite students to chime in on this key word, one volunteer after another, in a “round robin” way, while the narrator or leader reads the rest of the poem aloud.

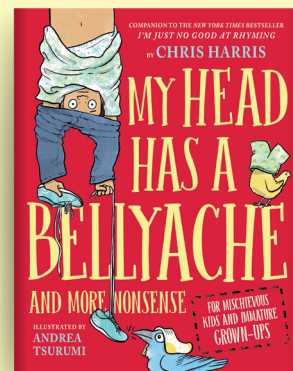


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## READERS THEATER (FOR TWO VOICES)

Many poems can be very effective when read aloud by two strong voices. Take turns reading the poems often with different volunteers each time.

- “I Love My Siblings So Much!” (p. 21) One volunteer reads the poem aloud once “as is” and then a second time, a second volunteer reads the footnotes aloud as the first reader reads the original poem.
- “Wait, Who’s Reading to Whom?” (p. 26-27) One volunteer reads aloud the lines on the left (“The Grown Up”) and a second volunteer reads aloud the lines in green (“The Child”).
- “Synonym Cookies” (p. 30-31) One volunteer reads aloud the lines on the left; another reads the green lines on the right.
- “The Corrector” (p. 42-43) One volunteer reads aloud the lines on the left; another reads the green lines on the right, with both volunteers reading the final line in the speech bubble together.
- “Orloc, the Destroyer” (p. 62-64) One volunteer reads aloud the lines on the left; another reads the (Mom’s) green lines on the right.



## DRAMA

Dramatizing or pantomiming can add extra enjoyment to reading a poem aloud.

- “In the Bright Light of Day” (p. 104-105) Read the first stanza in a cheerful way with happy movements, then read the second stanza (with lights turned off) in a tentative and fearful way.
- “Song of the Mayfly” (p. 144) Read each line slowly with motions and expressions that express the words and ideas in each line.

## SINGING/MUSIC/DANCING

Adding music or movement can also add a lot of fun to reading a poem out loud. Try these examples:

- “If You’re Happy...” (p. 36) This poem spoofs the traditional song, “If You’re Happy and You Know It,” so if the song is familiar, sing this poem to that tune with an abrupt stop for the baby’s cry!



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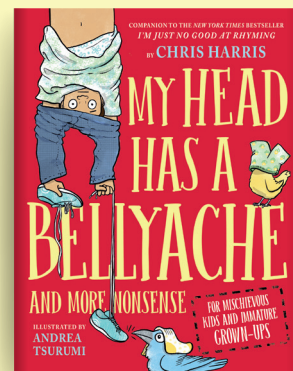
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- “Aaargh, That Darn Melody!” (p. 44) This poem is a mashup of the lyrics of several traditional nursery songs and can be sung to the tune of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.” Sing the poem and then “unpack” the lyrics and identify which parts refer to which children’s songs—and sing those songs, too.
- “The Dance of the Misfits” (p. 74-77) Obviously, this poem calls for dancing while reading it out loud and the dance can be as silly as necessary.
- “The Perfectly Still” (p. 135-136) Invite students to stand and dance while you read this poem aloud; they may be surprised by the total lack of movement suggested in the poem.

## DRAWING

The creative design of this book and the wacky and engaging illustrations by Andrea Tsurumi add a lot of playful fun to this collection. Students who enjoy drawing may have fun creating their own cartoon art for a favorite poem or hand drawing the letters for a poem of their own (as on p. 123). They may also enjoy the challenge of using only three colors (in this book: black, white, and green) to illustrate a favorite poem or trying their hands at drawing an imaginary square or triangular merry-go-round (for the poem, “It Turns Out...” p. 95). Several poems employ speech bubbles for key lines or stanzas and that’s something budding writers and artists might try may try to make their poems more graphic.



## WRITING

This fun, energetic, and slightly subversive poetry collection has so many elements that can inspire young writers to view poetry differently and try writing their own poems. Begin with “I Open My Eyes” (p. 12) and read it aloud slowly and quietly with time for reflection. This encourages thoughtful observation and then “My Very First Memory” (p. 106) could serve as a possible writing prompt. Sharing “Detritus” (pp. 176-177) is a fun model of what a poem can look like based on all the discarded phrases and stanzas that are NOT included in a final draft!

Plus, there are so many other elements of writing poetry included in this collection that can be fun to explore with aspiring poets. Talk about the poem titles that Harris chooses for his poems; some are longer than the poems themselves! Consider how often he uses rhyme in his poetry and how that sometimes contributes to the humorous effect of the poem. And invite students to notice all the surprise endings that pop up in so many poems and how Harris builds expectations in the poem and then flips things around at the end (pp. 28, 46-48, 78, 91, 121, 124, 138).



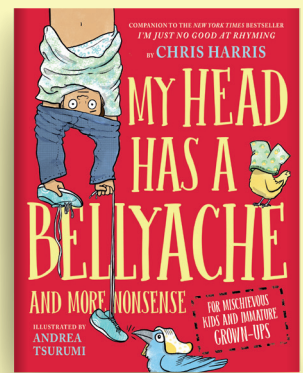


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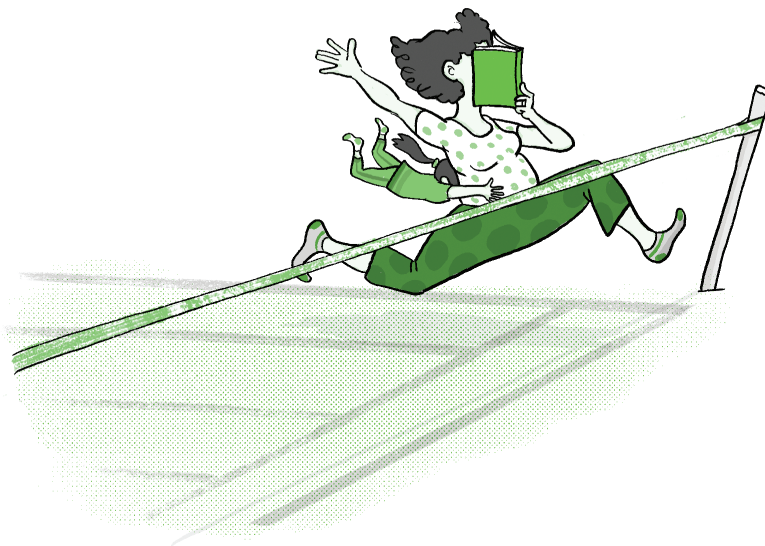
Harris also models several different types and forms of poetry that young writers may enjoy emulating. Encourage them to experiment with some of these:

- Concrete Poems (pp. 6-7; 72-73)
- Haiku, Limericks, Villanelles (pp. 50-53)
- Opposite Poems (pp. 8-11, 20-21, 28, 40-41, 65, 150-151)
- Homage (to Shakespeare) (p. 166-167)
- Incorporating Footnotes (pp. 21, 37-39, 46-48)
- Fill in the Blank Poems (p. 29)



## BACKMATTER

Finally, there are so many more clever, playful book elements to explore in this collection in the front and back matter of the book. For example, the Glossary of helpful terms is also a poem and not just a list of words and definitions. The Subject Index is full of hilarious commentary and the page numbers at the bottom of each page are full of sidenotes, facts, and quirky details. Students can return to this book often and notice new things with each reading; encourage that!



These Teaching Tips were created by Sylvia Vardell