

***A Poem To Learn English** - A poem a day keeps the mind at play*

*By Marianne Raynaud*

*Fill in using the words at the end. The first letter is given. It will be easy to find them if you remember that they should rhyme. Words/syllables to be stressed as the poem is read are in bold.*

Who **am** I, you **ask** and **patiently wait**  
For **me** to **explain** my **life** and my **fate**  
Well, for **you**, dear **child**, I'll **tell** you a **tale**  
You'll forever **recall** every **day** without **fail**

With this **story** and **all** of the **words** that I **choose**  
You'll **learn** a **language** you **never** will **lose**  
You'll **find** out **about** all my **joys** and my **pain**  
And my **verse** will echo in your **mind** once **again**

I **come** from a **country** where the **flowers** smell **sweet**  
Where **farmers** give **people** fine **crops** they can **eat**  
Where the **sky** is blue, the **lakes** pure and **clear**  
The **children** play **games** with nothing to **fear**

The **neighbors** they **hail** you, "How **are** you **today**?"  
"Are you **happy**, **contented**? Are you **planning** to **stay**?"  
For this is a **land** where the **people** are **free**  
The **smiles** on their **faces** is a **joy** to **see**

But it **isn't** so **easy** to find this **place** in the **sun**  
For **this** is where **everyone** is **trying** to **come**  
You aren't **alone**, and what you **have** you must **share**  
Your **time** and your **money** plus **all** you can **spare**

I've been through **hardships**, I have had **pain**  
I have felt great **anguish** **over** and **over** **again**  
Have I **suffered** a **lot**? Have I **shed** real **tears**?  
Yes, but I **haven't** felt **sorrow** as **much** as my **peers**

When I was a **child** just like **you**, my young **man**  
We were **poor**, with no **home**, we **lived** in a **clan**  
We couldn't **do** what we **liked**, free **thought** they forbade  
We were **always** **worried** and **always** **afraid**

We **had** to build **courage** and **decide** we should **flee**  
To a **place** where we'd **feel** in **peace** and **harmony**  
So we **traveled** for **weeks** with no **firm** land in **sight**  
Till we **reached** our **journey's** **end** far into the **night**

My **parents** there **settled**, worked **hard** all their **life**  
I was **sent** to **school**, and **later** they **found** me a **wife**  
They **wanted** for **me**, what they **hadn't** **achieved**  
The **learning** and **skills** they **hadn't** **received**

So I **studied** at **high** school and **made** some good **friends**  
But **that** is not **where** this **long** story **ends**  
I **learned** a profession, then found **work** I could **do**  
Became a **carpenter's** **aid**, I would **saw**, **polish** and **glue**

So I **earned** my **living** and could **make** ends **meet**  
We had **food** on the **table** and our **neighbors** we'd **greet**  
My **wife** she was **pleased** and our **kids** got **along**  
I **saw** how they **grew**, became **tall** and so **strong**

They **studied** **Chinese**, **higher** **physics**, and **French**  
Their **thirst** for **knowledge** they **never** could **quench**  
They **played** the piano and their **parents** did **please**  
They **went** onto **college**, got **prestigious** **degrees**

I'm **talking** to **you**, I'm **telling** you **this**  
I **expect** you to **listen**—not a **single** word **miss**  
I want **you** to be **quiet**—and **nothing** **demand**  
I'd **like** you to **focus** and my **thoughts** **understand**

If **you** learn by **heart** just **half** of these **lines**  
 Respecting word **order**, **stress** and all of the **rhymes**  
 You'll speak good **English** and wherever you **go**  
 You'll be **welcomed** by **people**—acts of **friendship** they'll **show**

So **isn't** this **poem** worth **trying** to **learn**?  
 Reciting **complex** **lexis** is not our **concern**  
 I don't **ask** you to **know** the **names** of all **birds**  
 I just **want** you to **speak** well and **use** the right **words**

Won't **you** make an **attempt**? Yes, **just** do your **best**  
**No** one will **mock** you; we won't **give** you a **test**  
 The **effort** you **make**, you will **never** **regret**  
 And my **story**, I **daresay**, you'll **never** **forget**.

May you **find** good **fortune** through **work** and through **luck**  
 I **trust** your **family** will **help** you if ever you're **stuck**  
 But I **know** that the **skills** you **learn** when you're **young**  
 Are **those** that will **make** you the **man** you'll **become**

oo

*Below are the words to be placed in the poem. When you transcribe them be sure to mark the stressed syllable, which is indicated in bold lettering. Two words are used twice.*

- |           |         |         |          |        |            |
|-----------|---------|---------|----------|--------|------------|
| achieved  | concern | forget  | lose     | regret | sweet      |
| afraid    | degrees | free    | luck     | rhymes | tale       |
| again (2) | demand  | French  | man      | see    | tears      |
| along     | do      | friends | meet     | share  | test       |
| become    | eat     | glue    | miss     | show   | this       |
| best      | ends    | go      | night    | sight  | today      |
| birds     | fail    | greet   | pain (2) | spare  | understand |
| choose    | fate    | harmony | peers    | stay   | wait       |
| clan      | fear    | learn   | please   | strong | wife       |
| clear     | flee    | life    | quench   | stuck  | words      |
| come      | forbade | lines   | received | sun    | young      |

**Exercise on vowel sounds and the IPA International Phonetic Alphabet (with American pronunciation) - Place the same words as above in the right boxes. Mark the stressed syllable. It is indicated in bold.**

Example	Symbol IPA	Words from poem (end of line rhymes) D = Diphthongs
<i>day</i> (D)	/eɪ/	afraid again fail fate <b>forbade</b> pain stay tale <b>today</b> wait
<i>here</i>	/ɪ/	clear fear peers tears
<i>bed</i>	/e/	ends <b>forget</b> French friends quench <b>regret</b>
<i>feet</i>	/i:/	<b>achieved</b> degrees eat flee free greet <b>harmony</b> meet please <b>received</b> see sweet
<i>five</i> (D)	/aɪ/	life lines night rhymes sight wife
<i>no</i>	/oʊ/	go show
<i>food</i>	/u:/	choose do glue lose
<i>cat</i>	/æ/	clan demand man understand
<i>heard</i>	/ɜr/	birds <b>concern</b> learn words
<i>where</i> (D)	/ər/	care share spare
<i>ship</i>	/ɪ/	miss this
<i>hot</i>	/ɒ/	along strong
<i>cup</i>	/ʌ/	<b>become</b> come luck stuck sun young
<i>leg</i>	/ə/	best test