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 say,
You'll learn a language you never will say.
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 sea.
For this is where everyone is trying to be.
You aren’t alone, and what you have you must seize.
Your time and your money plus all you can seize.

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 tears in vain?
Yes, but I haven’t felt sorrow as much as my pain.

When I was a child just like you, my young mind.
We were poor, with no home, we lived in a shanty kind.
We couldn’t do what we liked, free thought they frown.
We were always worried and always a knot.

We had to build courage and decide we should fear.
To a place where we’d feel in peace and cheer.
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 a chance.
The learning and skills they hadn’t chance.

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 tend.
Became a carpenter’s aid, I would saw, polish and Mend.

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 all.
I saw how they grew, became tall and so neat.

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

I’m talking to you, I’m telling you to see.
I expect you to listen—not a single word must be.
I want you to be quiet—and nothing must be.
I’d like you to focus and my thoughts to be.

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

Copyright QualityTime-ESL
So isn’t this poem worth trying to l__________?

The effort you make, you will never r__________

Reciting complex lexis is not our c__________

And my story, I dare say, you’ll never f__________

I don’t ask you to know the names of all b__________

I just want you to speak well and use the right w__________

May you find good fortune through work and through l_______

I trust your family will help you if ever you’re s__________

Won’t you make an attempt? Yes, just do your b__________

But I know that the skills you learn when you’re y__________

No one will mock you; we won’t give you a t__________

Are those that will make you the man you’ll b__________

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 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Symbol IPA</th>
<th>Words from the poem (end of line rhymes) D = Diphthongs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>day (D)</td>
<td>/eɪ/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>here</td>
<td>/ɪ/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bed</td>
<td>/e/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feet</td>
<td>/iː/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>five (D)</td>
<td>/aɪ/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>/ɒʊ/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>food</td>
<td>/uː/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cat</td>
<td>/æ/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heard</td>
<td>/ɜr/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>where (D)</td>
<td>/eʊr/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ship</td>
<td>/ɪ/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hot</td>
<td>/ɔ/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cup</td>
<td>/ʌ/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leg</td>
<td>/æ/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assignment: Learn the poem by heart and be able to recite it to your partner.