

NAXOS
AudioBooks

JUNIOR
CLASSICS

Favourite Poems for Children

The Owl and the Pussycat • The Pied Piper of Hamelin
The Jumblies • My Shadow and many more

Read by **Anton Lesser, Roy McMillan, Rachel Bavidge** and others



1	The Lobster Quadrille <i>Lewis Carroll, read by Katinka Wolf</i>	1:58
2	The Walrus and the Carpenter <i>Lewis Carroll, read by Anton Lesser</i>	4:22
3	You Are Old, Father William <i>Lewis Carroll, read by Roy McMillan</i>	1:46
4	Humpty Dumpty's Song <i>Lewis Carroll, read by Richard Wilson</i>	2:05
5	Jabberwocky <i>Lewis Carroll, read by David Timson</i>	1:33
6	Little Trotty Wagtail <i>John Clare, read by Katinka Wolf</i>	0:51
7	The Bogus-Boo <i>James Reeves, read by Anton Lesser</i>	1:17
8	A Tragedy in Rhyme <i>Oliver Herford, read by Anton Lesser</i>	2:25
9	A Guinea Pig Song <i>Anonymous, read by Katinka Wolf</i>	0:47
10	The Jumblies <i>Edward Lear, read by Anton Lesser</i>	4:06

11	The Owl and the Pussycat <i>Edward Lear, read by Roy McMillan</i>	1:35
12	Duck's Ditty <i>Kenneth Grahame, read by Katinka Wolf</i>	0:40
13	There was an Old Man with a Beard <i>Edward Lear, read by Roy McMillan</i>	0:17
14	Old Meg <i>John Keats, read by Anne Harvey</i>	1:24
15	How Pleasant to Know Mr Lear <i>Edward Lear, read by Roy McMillan</i>	1:31
16	There was a naughty boy <i>John Keats, read by Simon Russell Beale</i>	0:35
17	At the Zoo <i>William Makepeace Thackeray, read by Roy McMillan</i>	0:29
18	Dahn the Plug'ole <i>Anonymous, read by Anton Lesser</i>	1:14
19	Henry King <i>Hilaire Belloc, read by Katinka Wolf</i>	0:47
20	Matilda <i>Hilaire Belloc, read by Anne Harvey</i>	2:35

21	The King's Breakfast <i>A.A. Milne, read by Anne Harvey</i>	2:30
22	There was a little girl <i>Anonymous, read by Rachel Bavidge</i>	0:16
23	The Snail <i>William Cowper, read by Katinka Wolf</i>	1:09
24	Framed in a First-Storey Winder <i>Anonymous, read by Anton Lesser</i>	1:37
25	There was a man of double deed <i>Anonymous, read by Katinka Wolf</i>	0:46
26	The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard and Her Dog <i>Sarah Catherine Marine, read by Rachel Bavidge</i>	1:45
27	Colonel Fazackerly <i>Charles Causley, read by Anton Lesser</i>	2:17
28	Topsy-Turvey World <i>William Brighty Rands, read by Rachel Bavidge</i>	0:50
29	The Listeners <i>Walter de la Mare, read by Anton Lesser</i>	2:27
30	The Tyger <i>William Blake, read by Timothy West</i>	1:35

31	The Ballad of Sir Patrick Spens <i>Anonymous, read by Anton Lesser</i>	3:27
32	Bed in Summer <i>Robert Louis Stevenson, read by Roy McMillan</i>	0:40
33	Time to Rise <i>Robert Louis Stevenson, read by Rachel Bavidge</i>	0:15
34	My Shadow <i>Robert Louis Stevenson, read by Roy McMillan</i>	1:09
35	Wagtail and Baby <i>Thomas Hardy, read by Simon Russell Beale</i>	0:51
36	Two Little Kittens <i>Anonymous, read by Rachel Bavidge</i>	1:16
37	If <i>Rudyard Kipling, read by Simon Russell Beale</i>	2:16
38	Eletelephony <i>Laura Richards, read by Rachel Bavidge</i>	0:37
39	The Pied Piper of Hamelin <i>Robert Browning, read by Anton Lesser</i>	5:13
40	Into the street the Piper stepped...	5:41
41	The mayor was dumb, and the council stood...	5:14

Total Time: 74:29

Favourite Poems for Children

Poetry has a special magic. Words are remarkable things anyway (they often have completely different meanings depending on how they're used, for example) but with poems there are extra ingredients.

Rhythm and rhyme – sometimes both together, sometimes on their own – are what make poetry.

It's not just the fact that the lines don't reach the edge of the page (though that helps). It's about how they sound in your head and in your ear and, when you start saying them yourself, in your mouth.

Writers naturally hear the words themselves when they create the poems, which is why they often sound so good when they're read out loud; and it is the right rhythm and the best rhyme that makes their poems so funny, or weird, or touching, or sad, or dramatic, or whatever it is they are trying to create.

The stories that are being told are often interesting enough in themselves – like *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, for instance, which is really quite a scary tale about kidnapping a village-full of children.

But something different happens when it gets turned into verse. You get carried along by the rhythm, and your ear starts listening for the rhymes. And that's when the magic seems to happen. The rhythm sets it up, and gives you a guide to the style and feel of the poem. Take the first lines of these two poems, for example:

The Listeners

'Is there anybody there?' said the
Traveller,
Knocking on the moonlit door;
And his horse in the silence champed
the grasses
Of the forest's ferny floor:

Matilda

Matilda told such Dreadful Lies,
It made one Gasp and Stretch one's
Eyes;
Her Aunt, who, from her Earliest
Youth,
Had kept a Strict Regard for Truth,
Attempted to Believe Matilda:
The effort very nearly killed her,

In the first one, the atmosphere is set up immediately with that opening question and that rather mysterious 'Traveller' (where from? Where to?); and the fact that it's at night makes it a bit eerie, too.

Then there's the rhythm. It doesn't allow you to just bounce through the words – you have to slow down a bit: 'And his horse in the silence champed the grasses' requires a little bit of careful mouth-work to say it. This adds to the sense of drama in itself, as does the information that it's so quiet, you can hear the horse munching the grass. Except it's 'champing', not munching – munching sounds too cheerful. Champing suggests discomfort, eagerness to get away.

In the second poem, you're laughing

almost before you realise why. The immediacy of it, the speed of the rhythm and that quick rhyme all work together to create little punchlines. You know the beat of the poem immediately, and you know there's a rhyme coming any second, and the chances are it'll be funny.

Rhyming 'Matilda' with 'killed her' would probably get a laugh anyway, but when it's added to the rather snooty-sounding Aunt, it's not just funny but clever. You don't expect to hear an expression like that about someone who 'had kept a Strict Regard for Truth' (Belloc uses capitals to make the point about how Very Proper this Aunt is). All this makes the line even funnier, but it's driven by the swift, short lines, and their rhythmic effect. Then there is the rhyme.

There doesn't seem to be any logic in the idea – after all, just because one word sounds like another it shouldn't make any difference. But it does. The rhymes seem to connect the words somehow, in a fashion that is not necessarily about the meaning.

This has quite a few different effects. First is the expectation. Whether you like

it or not, if a poem has a strong rhythm and rhyme, you will start to expect the rhyme word. What could he rhyme with 'Matilda'?

Before you have a chance to run through the options, you find out what it is; and the surprise and delight of it makes you laugh, especially because of the way it makes sense – not just that it has the same noise as the first word. But somehow the fact that it does, indeed, sound much the same as the first word adds to the pleasure of it.

(Some poems deliberately don't rhyme things exactly, because the writers know that you can't help expecting the rhyme; and when it doesn't happen, it can have a slightly unsettling effect).

Once you realise that there is a connection, and expectation, then rhyme has another neat trick. It makes things *memorable*. It seems to work the way magnets do – one of them attracts the other. So if you have a word like 'door', your mind seems to find it much easier to remember that the word 'floor' is on the way. This makes filling in the bits in between easier, too; as does the rhythm,

which sticks in your mind the way a tune does.

Poetry also allows you to do things that you can't always do with other kinds of writing. In *The Tyger* (which is just an old-fashioned way of spelling 'tiger'), the poet starts with:

Tyger! tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night

What on earth does he mean? A burning tiger in a forest at night... well, not quite. To start with, it's a forest of the night, which is a strange but compelling idea. Does the night have forests? Or is it just that the night is dark and frightening, and then forests are also dark and frightening, which means combining the two would be so much more frightening and dark.

And that 'burning' – he doesn't really mean on fire, surely; so maybe it's about the extraordinary colours of the tiger's skin, those oranges and blacks, being like flames; and bright flames, too, despite the extra layers of darkness. Whether or not the image makes logical sense, it's

fascinating, powerful and pretty much unforgettable. See whether you can ever look at a tiger again without thinking of it.

With powerful images, extraordinary ideas, humour, drama, rhythms, rhymes, expectations and all kinds of other tricks (alliteration, assonance, paradox, opposition – there are loads – you’ll have to look them up in a dictionary if you don’t know them already), poetry works hard to get into your head and stay there.

It does this just the way that music does, creating hooks and links and ideas and pictures that stay with you forever. Poems are relatively easy to learn – you know the lyrics to most of your favourite songs, after all.

What’s more, if you take a little time to learn the ones you like, you’ll never be stuck trying to remember that funny bit when you tell your friends (which can be really annoying). You can have something you know is well-written to hand whenever it’s needed (the next time you see an elephant in a telephone box, you’ll have just the thing). But most importantly, there are wonderful poems; why not have

something wonderful with you whenever you want it?

Notes by Roy McMillan



One of Britain's leading classical actors, **Anton Lesser** has worked extensively at the National Theatre, and is an associate artist of the Royal Shakespeare Company. His many television appearances include roles in *The Cherry Orchard*, *King Lear*, *The Politician's Wife*, *Vanity Fair*, *Perfect Strangers*, and *Dickens*. Films in which he has appeared include *Charlotte Gray*, *Fairytale – A True Story*, *Imagining Argentina*, *River Queen* and *Miss Potter*. He is a familiar voice on radio, and has become particularly associated with his award-winning readings of Dickens and Milton for Naxos AudioBooks.



Roy McMillan is a director, writer, actor and abridger. For Naxos Audiobooks he has read *The Body Snatcher and Other Stories*, *Bulldog Drummond*, *The French Revolution – In a Nutshell* and the introductions to works by Nietzsche and the Ancient Greeks. He has directed readings of Hardy, Hopkins, Kipling, Milton and Blake; Austen, Murakami, Conrad and Bulgakov, among many others; and has written podcasts and sleevenotes, as well as biographies of Milton and Poe. He has also directed plays for Radio 3 and Radio 4.



Rachel Bavidge was born in North Shields in Tyneside and moved to Oxford in her early teens. She has narrated numerous audiobooks and has completed six months as a member of the BBC Radio Drama Company. Her theatre credits include Mrs Boyle in *Whose Life is it Anyway?* (West End) and Margaret in *Much Ado About Nothing* (Theatre Royal, Bath), both directed by Peter Hall. Her television credits include *The Bill*, *Casualty*, *Doctors*, *The IT Crowd*, *Inspector Lynley*, *Wire in the Blood* and *Bad Girls*. She has also read the part of Marion Halcombe in *The Woman in White* and featured on *The Great Poets: Barrett Browning and Rossetti* for Naxos AudioBooks.



Katinka Wolf trained at the Drama Studio, London and was part of the Stalhouderij Company, Amsterdam, where she appeared in numerous productions of classical and modern plays. She is a well-known figure in fringe theatre having taken a variety of roles in both classical and modern drama, including *The Duchess of Malfi* in the West End. She has appeared on British television and is the voice of Anne Frank at the Anne Frank Museum, Amsterdam. She has also read *The Scarlet Letter* for Naxos AudioBooks.



Richard Wilson's portrayal of Victor Meldrew in *One Foot in the Grave* has won him numerous awards including the British Comedy Awards Top Television Comedy Actor Award and two Light Entertainment BAFTA Awards. In 1994 he was awarded the OBE for services to drama as a director and actor. He is the visiting professor for Drama at Glasgow University, and has honorary degrees from both Glasgow University and the University of Caledonia. He is an associate director of the Royal Court Theatre.



David Timson has made over 1,000 broadcasts for BBC Radio Drama. For Naxos AudioBooks he wrote *The History of the Theatre*, which won an award for most original production from the Spoken Word Publishers Association in 2001. He has also directed for Naxos AudioBooks four Shakespeare plays, including *King Richard III* (with Kenneth Branagh), which won Best Drama Award from the SWPA in 2001. In 2002 he won the Audio of the Year Award for his reading of *A Study in Scarlet*. He reads the entire Sherlock Holmes canon for Naxos AudioBooks.



Anne Harvey is a poet, anthologist, adjudicator and broadcaster well-known for her poetry readings both on stage and radio.



Simon Russell Beale is one of Britain's leading classical actors. He won Best Actor in the Evening Standard Awards for his individual interpretation of *Hamlet*, and his Ariel in *The Tempest* was marked by an Olivier Award. Among his many other starring roles in London theatre was *Candide* and *Mosca* in *Volpone*. He has a busy career in TV and film too, with appearances in Branagh's production of *Hamlet* and in the outstanding TV dramatisation of *Persuasion*. For Naxos AudioBooks he has also recorded *The Life of Oscar Wilde*, *Great Speeches and Soliloquies of Shakespeare* and *William Shakespeare – A Biography*.



Timothy West's numerous London stage performances began in 1959 with the farce *Caught Napping*. He has appeared with the National, Royal Shakespeare Company and Prospect Theatre companies playing, among others, *King Lear*, *Prospero*, *Shylock* and *Macbeth*. Among his many TV appearances are: *Edward VII*, *Beecham*, *Brass* and *Churchill and the Generals*. His films include *Ever After*, *Joan of Arc* and *Villa of Roses*. In 1984 he was awarded a CBE for his services to the profession. He also read the part of Chorus in *Henry V* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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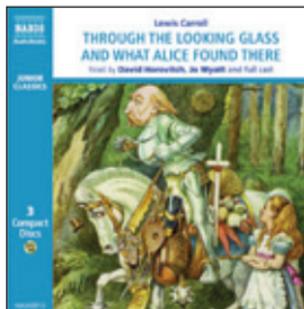
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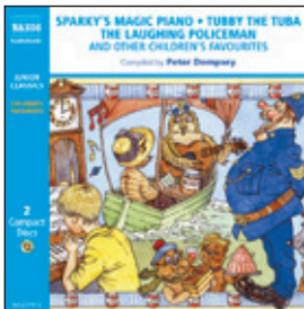
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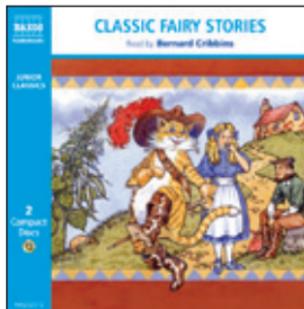
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**The Owl and the Pussycat • The Pied Piper of Hamelin
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