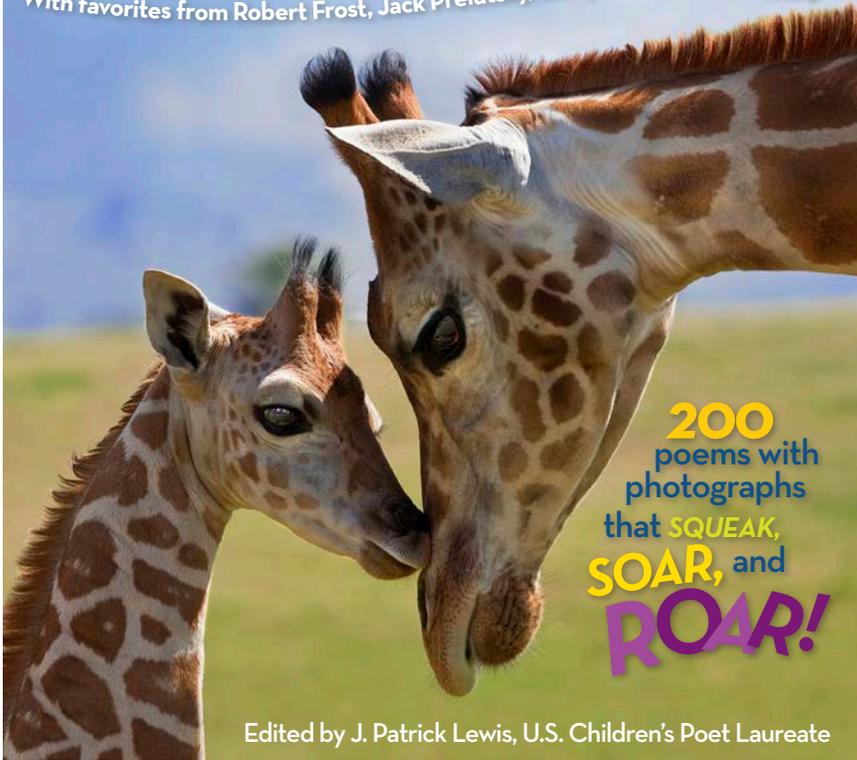


# Book of Animal Poetry

NATIONAL  
GEOGRAPHIC

## book of animal poetry

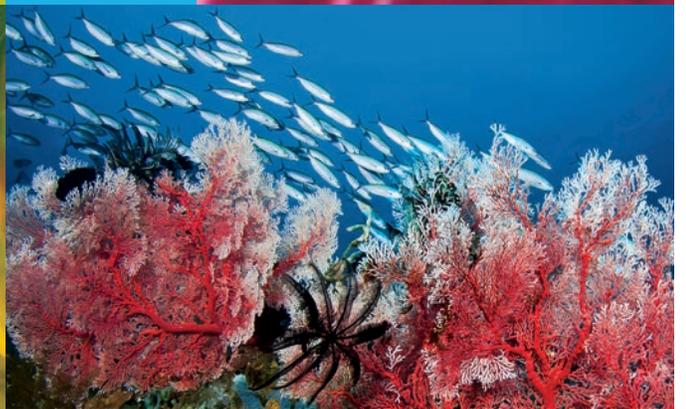
With favorites from Robert Frost, Jack Prelutsky, Emily Dickinson, and more



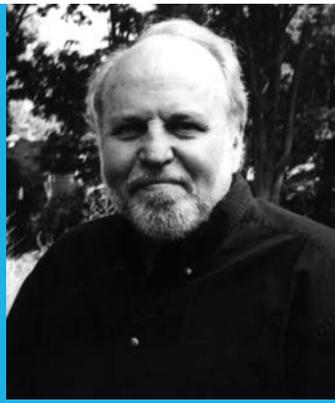
200  
poems with  
photographs  
that **SQUEAK**,  
**SOAR**, and  
**ROAR!**

Edited by J. Patrick Lewis, U.S. Children's Poet Laureate

classroom guide



NATIONAL  
GEOGRAPHIC



J. PATRICK LEWIS  
Children's Poet Laureate  
of the United States  
2012-2013

*National Geographic Book of Animal Poetry*  
200 Poems with Photographs That Squeak, Soar, and Roar!

Edited by J. Patrick Lewis  
Illustrated with full color photographs

On sale: 9/11/12  
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192 pages  
Ages 4-8  
9-1/8" x 10-7/8"

# introduction

*National Geographic Book of Animal Poetry* edited by J. Patrick Lewis, the United States Children's Poet Laureate, is truly a rare thing—a book that can be enjoyed by all ages and that has something wonderful to bring to classrooms from kindergarten through middle school. Professor Lewis tells us at the start that “this book is not for reading straight through.” It is for dipping into; for making discoveries every time you or a student opens its pages; for uncovering revelations about the “variety, beauty, and strangeness of the animal world around us.” With its 200 poems lovingly hand-picked, you'll find something that's right for nearly every day of the school year.

The photographs alone make the book a valuable classroom resource across the grades. Their beauty combined with their unique way of catching and expressing each animal's characteristics will stimulate discussions, research, and creative projects in the early childhood, elementary-, and middle-school grades.

This teacher's guide is meant to offer you ways to integrate the *National Geographic Book of Animal Poetry* into the life of your classroom, to extend various curriculum areas, or simply to share the pleasures that poetry and beautiful photography give us at every age. In this guide, you'll find a baker's dozen of open-ended ideas, ideal to awaken your students' creativity.



**Reading Out Loud** In his brief introduction, J. Patrick Lewis tells us: “Choose a poem and then read it out loud: You want your ears to have as much fun as your mouth is having.” Start each day with a poem. Or use a poem to close the school day. Pick your poem at random or find one that matches the weather or ties into a subject you’ve been studying in class or an experience someone in the classroom talked about.

You don’t have to be the only reader. Students should volunteer to read or memorize and recite a poem aloud to their classmates. A visiting parent or administrator can be a guest reader.

Students can pair up—or team up—to read poems together. They can do a choral reading—where everyone reads the whole poem together; they can do responsive reading, with students alternating lines or stanzas; they might even have fun alternating words.

**Daily Poems** Have the class petition to make a poem part of the school announcements every day. As a group they should write a persuasive essay about why poetry should be included in the school-wide broadcast. All students should sign the petition, and they might even campaign beyond the classroom to get other schoolmates to sign. Once the poetry reading is established, a schedule of readers should be set up. Each reader should do a little research on the poet and, as on Public Radio Readers’ Almanac, present not only the poem, but three or four facts about its author.



All the poems in the collection are great for reading aloud, but here’s a short list of a few that introduce the book’s sections and serve as a sure-fire way to start this classroom habit.

Page 9	“The Egg”	from Welcome to the World
Page 36	“Mountain Gorilla”	from The Big Ones
Page 49	“Rich Lizard”	from The Little Ones
Page 64	“Gray Goose”	from The Winged Ones
Page 91	“Beavers in November”	from The Water Ones*
Page 104	“Moray Eel”	from The Strange Ones
Page 142	from “The Law of the Jungle”	from The Noisy Ones
Page 148	“Rabbit”	from The Quiet Ones

\* Great for responsive reading; this poem breaks nicely into parts for different readers.



**Poetic Forms** Study the various forms of poems that you'll find in J. Patrick Lewis's collection. See pages 170–171 for an explanation of many poetic forms. Have children count syllables and beats; take note of where the emphasis falls in the lines to identify meter; notate rhyme schemes; and count the number of lines and stanzas.

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**What Makes It a Poem?** Poems are defined not only by their form. As you read the poems in the *National Geographic Book of Animal Poetry*, develop a class list of the qualities that define a poem. Have students add examples of surprising or unusual use of words—figurative language, metaphors, similes, onomatopoeia. Gather all the pieces the class accumulates and devise your class's own definition of a poem.



**Word Play** We notice words more acutely in poems than in most of the prose we read. Poets count on that. They often reward us with enjoyable word play that is a treat to read on the page, to say out loud, and to hear. Check out “Wedding Bears” (page 18), “Eletelephony” (page 26), and “A Blue-Footed Booby” (page 119) for starters.

Limber up for reading poems by doing some tongue-twisters with your students. Have your students try reading each of the following phrases five times quickly out loud.

“Red blood, blue blood”

“Six slippery snails slid slowly seaward”

“A big bug bit the little beetle, but the little beetle bit the big bug back”

---

**Be Inspired—Write Poems** At the end of the *National Geographic Book of Animal Poetry*, J. Patrick Lewis encourages us all to write poems about animals. With the poems they are reading as their inspiration and models, join Professor Lewis and get your students writing. Have each student create a special notebook for his/her poems. Each one can select two or three of the poems they like best, and you can create a class collection.



# It's All About Poetry!

Find the words from the list below.

Poetry  
Rhyme  
Limerick  
Haiku  
Couplet  
Cinquain  
Lines  
Verse  
Syllables  
Poems  
Assonance  
Sonnet  
Structure  
Meter

C M I H C R I N A S S O N A N C E K H K W L  
I R O B S K I L A L I Z O A R B A L A L R T  
N A C C Y T S A H C T E N N O S Z L A A H T  
Q L S S L R A H S J A N V M C N O I V N Y T  
U E D A L O G P O E T R Y P G I P G E E M K  
A J Y R A P U S A Y A L S K R A K A R S E F  
I P Q S B N A P U M S E N I L S R T S G E W  
N D A F L A T R T A S T R U C T U R E S J L  
A L R E E A E R K Z S Q V E A J I R Z J I C  
U T I G S R D J J C K A Q R I T I T O E V O  
H Z A L K S E L E K C I R E M I L E G E A U  
A U R E O T T E R R O T T V E E G S G M B P  
I I H P O E M S E G M B S T O O B P C A L  
K A A T S G O R F R O B X W E S S G O D Y E  
U J K N A T I O N A L N A L R S A T R K O T

**First Person** Sprinkled throughout the collection, there are poems written from the point of view of the animal itself. Look at “The Squirrel” (page 51); “Mother’s Pleas” (page 70); “Hummingbird” (page 76); “Bull” (page 129); “Turtle” (page 162); and “Tortoise” (page 163). Have your students put themselves in an animal’s place and write a poem in that animal’s voice. You might suggest they “speak up” for their own pets whether dogs, cats, birds, fish, hamsters, or others.



**Be Inspired—Take Photographs** Ask students to look through the *National Geographic Book of Animal Poetry*—just looking, not reading. Have them keep track of the photographs they feel have the greatest impact. As a class, look carefully at the photos your students have selected. What makes them outstanding? Write a list of the qualities these photos have.

Then send your class out to take photos of animals—their own pets, other people’s pets, animals (rabbits? birds? deer?) which visit their lawns; or photos at a zoo or aquarium. Make prints of the photos to display or create a slide-show and invite parents and others to come to the opening of the exhibit/show.



**Animalia** There may be animals included in the *National Geographic Book of Animal Poetry* that your students have not encountered before. There certainly are animals about which they know very little. Each child should select an animal they want to learn more about. Then, beginning with the poem, they should make a chart detailing the animal’s name; the section in which the animal appears (that will tell them something about it); what they learned about the animal from the poem—its appearance, its behaviors, its environment. Now, set them out to do some research—as much as you wish—about their animal. Be sure they include the animal’s scientific name. The children should present their findings to the class. Organize the presentations following the same poem groupings as in the book.

**Classroom Poetry Zoo** Create a classroom poetry zoo. Students should take their own photos, find photographs in magazines or on-line, or make drawings or paintings of a selection of the animals included in the collection. These should be mounted. Students should create a “caption” to hang below each image. The caption should include the poem and any further information they may have learned in their animal research project.



## Who’s Who?

Identify the animal below that the poem is referring to.

Smaller than a button,  
bigger than a spot  
this crimson queen  
with midnight polished  
polka dots  
journeys in  
her ruby shell,  
across  
the walks,  
along  
the cracks,  
among the petals of a rose—  
carefully,  
tenderly she goes.  
—Rebecca Kai Dotlich

I’m The Nectar Inspector,  
Sweetness Detector—  
I sip—  
I don’t sniff.  
I love juice  
not perfume.  
In its deep-throated scarlet  
cup of a bud  
(Beardtongue) Penstemon’s  
my favorite brew!  
—Janet Wong

A threatening cloud, plumped  
fat and gray,  
Snorts a thunder, rains a spray  
And billows puffs of dust  
away—  
A weather maker every day.  
—Ann Whitford Paul





**Animal Classification** Take a broader look at the *National Geographic Book of Animal Poetry*, paying attention to the groupings J. Patrick Lewis created for the poems. Have the students discuss animals they don't think belong in a particular group. Perhaps they will feel that some of the animals in the section called "the strange ones" fit better in other groups.

Or, conversely, that some of the animals in other sections are truly "strange." They might wonder why pigs are included in "the noisy ones" or why ducks are included among "the quiet ones." Of course, J. Patrick Lewis assembled these groupings from a poet's perspective—not a scientist's. Your students should try shuffling the poems around. Or creating a new category for poems they feel don't properly fit where they are. Categorizing is a key skill for building students' organizing abilities and strengthening comprehension. This activity will give them practice—and they won't even notice.

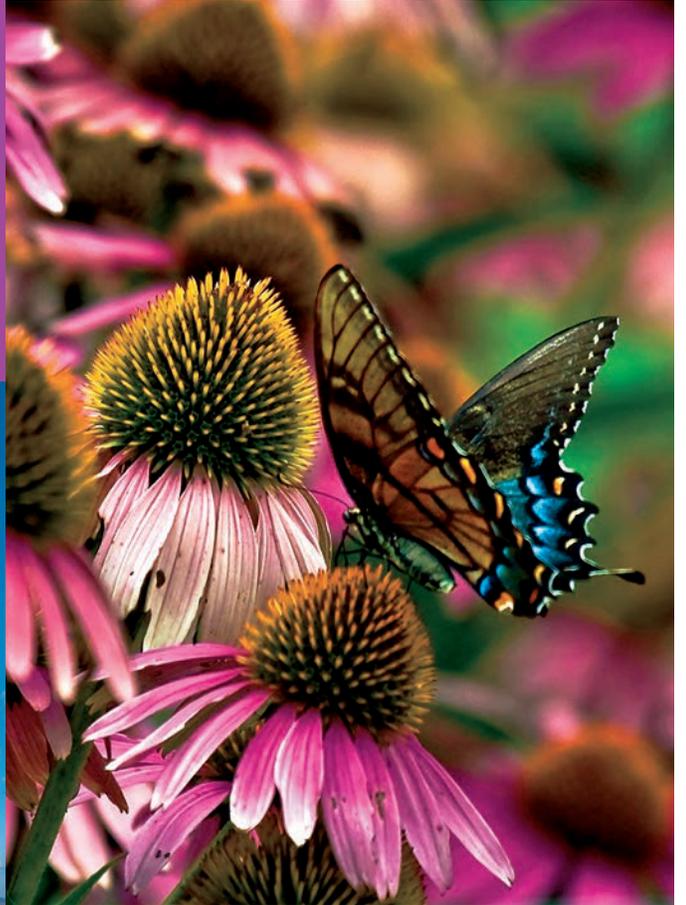
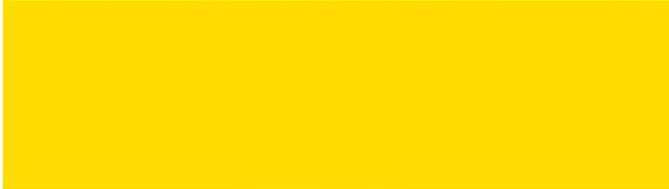
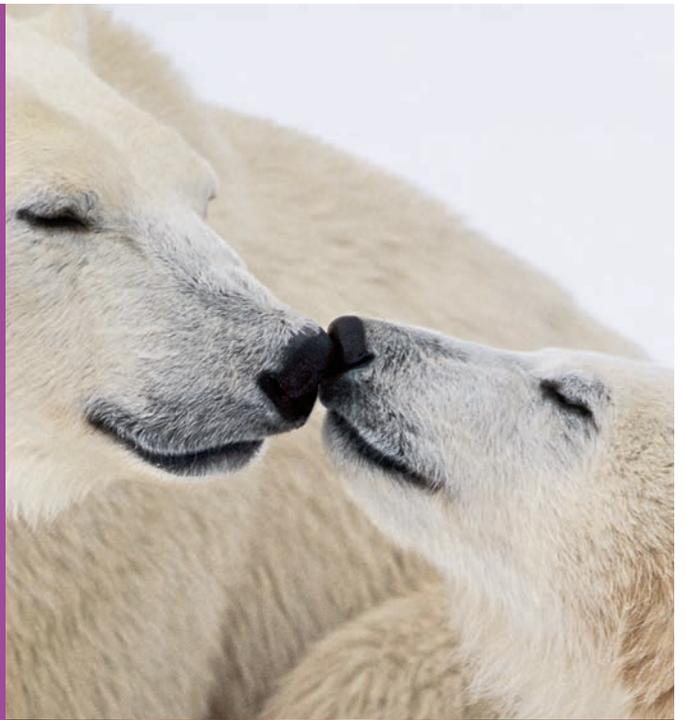
**Points of Departure** Nearly every poem in this collection opens a door to an activity or project that you and your class can pursue. For example:



- The poems on pages 46 and 47 look at the transformation of a caterpillar to a butterfly. Students can research the process and create a graphic that depicts the stages of the transformation.
- "Magic Words" on page 167 will have each student wondering: what is my magic word? Have them write essays about their magic word, showing real or imagined evidence of its power.
- "Luna Moth" on page 151 paints a picture with words. Some students might want to actually translate that picture onto a canvas with paints, collage, pastels, crayons, etc.
- "Hurt No Living Thing" on page 166 was written more than one hundred years ago. If only people had heeded Christina Rossetti's advice, it may be that many endangered animals would never have been threatened. Students might want to start a campaign to save an endangered animal.
- "Make the Earth Your Companion" on page 169 is the closing poem of this collection, but it can be a start for your students. In the poem, J. Patrick Lewis urges us to learn lessons from the natural world and to treat it with loving care. Encourage your students to broadcast this important environmental message. Have them create posters that advocate preserving and protecting our natural resources and our fragile environment.



**Activity While You're Away** Make it easy on a substitute teacher—just leave a note for him/her to take your copy of the *National Geographic Book of Animal Poetry* edited by J. Patrick Lewis and go to town with it.



**ALSO BY J. PATRICK LEWIS:**  
Monumental Verses  
The Brothers' War: Civil War Voices in Verse  
Blackbeard: The Pirate King  
*Available wherever books are sold.*

This guide was created by Clifford F. Wohl, educational consultant.  
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