# Audio file – “The power of poetry”

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Any sensible person might ask what practical advantage there is to studying poetry. Why would reading and learning to recite poetry help anyone outside of an English class? I'd like to offer you four reasons why poetry, especially the recitation of poetry, might be one of the most practical and important things you learn in school.

First, poetry is a powerful way of mastering language. Poetry improves your command of both spoken and written language. It stalks the mind with powerful images and ideas expressed in unforgettable language. Successful people are people who speak well and speak clearly. People who understand both the intellectual and emotional power of language.

Second, poetry is a way of training and developing our emotional intelligence. Unlike science or mathematics, poetry reveals how language nearly always communicates feeling, sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly, through images and associations.

Third, poetry helps us realize that language is holistic. Poetry demonstrates that how something is said is an essential part of what is actually being said. That literal meaning is only one part of total meaning. The recitation of poetry develops an appreciation that tone of voice, inflection, even rhythm all carry real meaning.

Fourth and finally, poetry helps both to enlarge our humanity and to give us the power to express it. One of the chief uses of poetry, and all literature, is to enlarge our experience. To allow us to see the world through the eyes of other people and other ages. It develops our understanding of important life events like love and desire, birth and death, loneliness and loss. Literature prepares us imaginatively and spiritually for our journey through life, and it helps develop an inner life capable of facing, comprehending and mastering our external life.

Language, perception, communication, compassion, these are the practical gifts that mastering poetry can develop.