

English

# Poetry



## For Upper Primary

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Title: **Poetry** For Upper Primary  
Published by **Ready-Ed Publications** © 2019  
Taken from: The English Series - English: Year 6  
Author: Brenda Gurr      Illustrator: Alison Mutton

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# THE COOKERNUP MONSTER

by N.R. Palmer

## Poet's note ...

*This poem is based on a steam-powered whim (a huge steam-powered tractor used to haul timber) reportedly built at the Yarloop workshops in Western Australia, near the town of Cookernup, circa 1900. Historical notes and oral accounts indicate that it was not a success, though it is not known if it actually crashed and burnt. "Whims" were developed during the transition from horses to motorised power.*

At a logging camp in the western hills where the jarrah forests grow,  
trouble brewed among the men with the timber they had to tow.

The loggers were having smoko, billy tea with jam all thick on bread,  
brought up by full-skirt ladies, from the mainline bush camp shed.

Big Mick, who now had eaten well, rubbed his portly rounded girt,  
he wiped his jaw, leant on his axe and adjusted a worn grey flannel shirt.

"Them logs must weigh five tons or more, far too big for whim and horse,  
the bosses at the mill below must change, or the men won't stay the course."

"But none of us can write, that we'll," said his mate from by his side,  
"We'll get my eldest, Harry," said Mick, with the smallest hint of pride.

"With all this schooling and learning he'll write and help us make a fuss,  
it's bound to cause us trouble, but I don't give a tinker's cuss."

So Harry with nib and inkwell, dipped in his steel-tipped pen,  
scratched a letter that finished politely, "Thank you kindly sirs, amen."

The bosses needed more production to keep their coffers full to brim,  
so they invented the first one of its kind, a four wheel, steam-powered whim.

But the problems started soon enough when they took it up the hill,  
they hitched up the strongest horse teams and they barely moved it still.

The teamster finally dragged it there, and the boiler fired up with wood,  
and for a start to those close by, it was doing what it should.

But then they put it into gear and moved it slowly down the track,  
then quicker, ever quicker, there was no turning back.

It hurtled down among the trees and vanished from whence it came,  
leaving loggers scattered in its wake and the monster wreathed in flame.

The scene was utter devastation with smoking trees and logs,  
horses galloping wild with fear, and barking half-breed dogs.

The girls they fled in terror, holding up their flowing tresses,  
screaming loudly as they ran away, sparks caught in their sweeping dresses.

Men with water buckets ran to fill them from the fire tank,  
young boys watched on from hiding, thinking, "What a lively prank!"

And when at last the scene was quiet, Big Mick said, "What a mess!  
give thanks that not a soul was hurt, the Lord above each one of us did bless."

At a certain place in the western hills, where the jarrah forests grow,  
wild tales of the Cookernup Monster seem each year to rise and flow.

And whether they are true or no, the chainsaw now reigns supreme,  
and together with the logging truck, we've seen the last of steam.

For never again will we see the like, never among the standing trees,  
will a four wheel, steam-powered whaler leave smoke on an easterly breeze.



○ Read the poem below, then complete the activity pages which follow.

# HOUSE ON THE HILL

*by N.R. Palmer*

I live in a house where the hills rise, and the wind through the gum trees does sigh.

I listen most nights as the light dies, when travellers pass quietly by.

Is that noise in the roof timbers creaking? Is the breeze blowing through the bare floor?

And rain on the roof, is it leaking? Do I hear a footfall pass my door?

The candle snuffs out, it's a mystery; are the ghosts of this house now on show?

For this is a place full of history and tales of folk long, long ago.

No cure for disease in a life short, where death is a part of our time.

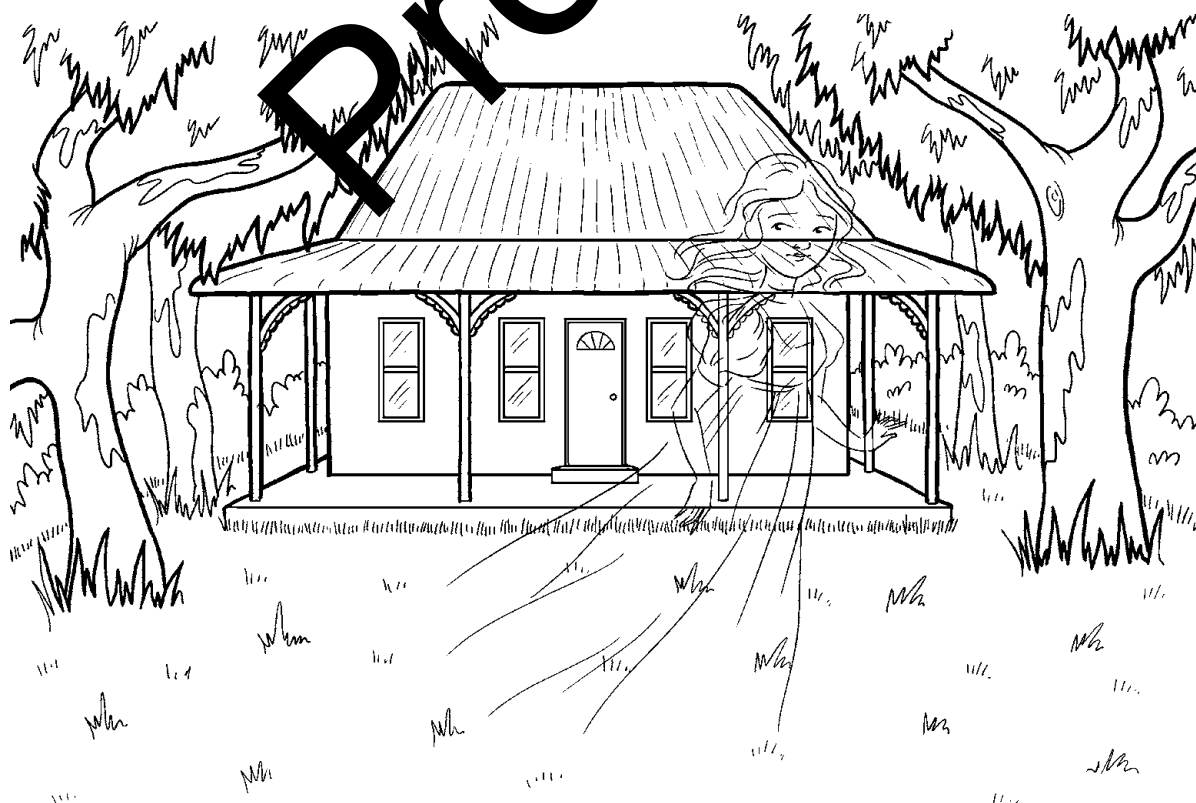
Cruel sickness is always our consort, with many cut down in their prime.

I live in a house where the hills rise, and the wind through the gum trees does sigh.

Will my life be as fleet as a raindrop that falls from a darkening sky?

I dream of a place on a hillside; yes, I dream of those people of old.

They travel on past like a flood tide, I can see how my life may unfold.





- Read the two poems *The Cookernup Monster* and *House On The Hill*, then complete this activity page.

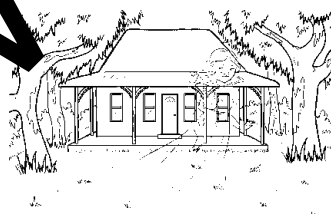
Using powerful and precise verbs in a text can enhance its impact and meaning. For example, instead of using the verb “walked”, you could use “sauntered”, “trudged” or “shuffled”. Such verbs provide a more detailed image of the character and the situation.

1. Write a list of 10 precise verbs that you liked the best from the poems. Remember that a verb is a word that describes an action.

### *The Cookernup Monster*



### *House On The Hill*



2. Which poem do you think makes the best use of powerful and precise verbs? Give reasons for your answer.

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3. Read through both poems again. Choose four verbs that you feel could be replaced by more precise ones. Write at least two possible replacement verbs for each one.

Current verb	What does it describe?	Replacement

4. Find a partner to work with. Read aloud the lines of the poem that contain the verbs from question 3, inserting your replacement words one at a time. Ask a partner to circle the replacement words they liked the best. Do the same for your partner. Choose two of their words that you liked the best and explain why they are so effective on the back of this sheet.



- Choose either *The Cookernup Monster* or *House On The Hill* to answer the questions.

Poets use language connected to the senses to create ideas or pictures in a reader's mind - these ideas and pictures are known as images.

1. Explain in one sentence what your chosen poem is about.

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2. Give two examples of descriptive phrases that the poet has used for each of the senses below.

Sight	Sound

3. Neither poem includes imagery about the senses of touch, taste or smell. Write a descriptive phrase involving each of these that fits with the themes or stories of the poems. For example, "I felt the harsh, stinging heat of the fire". (Note: Taste is difficult! Remember that it could be about food or something creative like "the taste of fear".)

Touch	
Smell	
Taste	

4. Circle one of the poet's descriptive phrases from question 2 and one of your own from question 3 that you found particularly striking. Explain why you liked them. Draw what they make you imagine.

Phrase 1: \_\_\_\_\_

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Phrase 2: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Creating A Monologue

## Activity

- A monologue is a speech delivered by one speaker. Monologues are often found in plays, although they can be adapted from other texts. Use aspects of the poem *The Cookernup Monster* to create a monologue by following the steps below.

1. Choose the character who will deliver the monologue. For example, Big Mick, Harry, one of the running girls, a logger. It might even be a person who experienced the events of the poem, but wasn't described by the poet. Write down the name of your chosen character and a description.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Description: \_\_\_\_\_



2. Explain what you think this character would like the audience to feel as they listen to the monologue.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. **Plan** a beginning, middle and end for your monologue in the space below. Use precise describing words that clearly express what your character experienced.

**Beginning** (Where was the person before the "Monster" went out of control? What was he/she doing and how did he/she feel about it?)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Middle** (What did the person experience when the "Monster" went out of control?)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**End** (How did your character feel when it was all over? How did it affect him/her?)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Write your monologue on a separate sheet of paper, choosing one of the starting lines below - or create your own!

• *It was never supposed to happen...* • *I remember it so well....*

5. Practise your monologue, then perform it for your class and a younger class in the school. Remember to talk to the audience directly and use your voice to emphasise the most important words to help them understand the meaning.





## Writing A Structured Poem

### Activity

- In the poem *House On The Hill*, the narrator relates his/her feelings about an old house. Plan and write your own poem about an old building that has echoes of the past, based on the structure of *House On The Hill* (three verses containing four lines each). It doesn't need to rhyme.



1. Describe the building that you wish your poem to be about. It might be somewhere you know well or have visited or it might come completely from your imagination. Where is this place? Is it in peaceful or busy surroundings? Sketch it to help you visualise it.

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2. From whose point of view will your poem be told? What connection does this person have to the building? What sense does this person have of its history or the people who used to live in it?

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3. Write notes about what each verse of your poem will be about.

<b>VERSE 1:</b> In this verse describe the building and its location and what makes it special or different. What does the narrator sense or imagine?	
<b>VERSE 2:</b> What is the narrator's life like? How does it compare to the people who used to live here?	
<b>VERSE 3:</b> Repeat the first line of verse 1. Explain how the narrator thinks his/her life will continue. What does he/she dream of and how has the building affected this dream?	

4. Draft your poem on a separate sheet of paper, then share it with a small group. Listen to the poems written by other group members and talk about any similarities and differences. Report back to the class.

## Answers

### Page 6

1) Verbs in *The Cookernup Monster* may include: grow, brewed, tow, rubbed, wiped, leant, adjusted, write, dipped, dragged, hurtled, scattered, fled. Verbs in *House On The Hill* may include: sigh, listen, pass, snuffs, falls, dream, travel.

2) Answers will vary.

3) Answers will vary.

4) Answers will vary.

### Page 7

1) *The Cookernup Monster*: a steam-powered whim that went out of control and crashed. *House On The Hill*: thoughts and feelings about an old house.

2) Sight in *The Cookernup Monster*: "moved it slowly down the track"; "smoking trees and logs"; "holding up their flowing tresses". Sight in *House On The Hill*: "travellers pass quietly by"; "candle snuffs out"; "darkening sky".

Sound in *The Cookernup Monster*: "scratched a letter"; "barking half-wood logs"; "screaming loudly". Sound in *House On The Hill*: "wind through the gum trees does sigh"; "noise in the roof timbers creaking?"; "breeze blowing through the bare floor".

3) Answers will vary.

4) Answers will vary.

Preview