

EPISODE # 140: How to Fold Poetry into Your Routine, with Sally Thomas

- Sally Thomas: [00:00](#) I think sometimes we really hamstring ourselves when we think poetry's got to be serious. It's got to be exalted. It's got to be ... and I've got to teach it. I'm going to make you people like poetry. You know. Which is like, oh yeah, how's that going to work out? What could possibly go wrong?
- Sarah Mackenzie: [00:19](#) Yeah, exactly.
- Recorded Intro: [00:33](#) You are listening to the Read Aloud Revival podcast. This is the podcast that helps you make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [00:50](#) Hello, hello, Sarah Mackenzie here with another episode of the Read Aloud Revival podcast. Today I've got a show for you all about poetry. Now, we receive quite a lot of emails from listeners who say they want to integrate poetry more into their homeschool day. They want their children to enjoy poetry, maybe cultivate a love of poetry, but either you maybe feel intimidated, like you don't know how to teach poetry, like you're not really sure where to start, or you just want to know the right way to do it.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [01:20](#) Well, today I've brought on a wonderful guest, Sally Thomas. We're going to talk about integrating poetry into your homeschool so that your kids and you can fall more in love with poetry. But before we get there, I want to answer a listener question.
- Abby: [01:34](#) Hi Sarah. My name is Abby and I'm from Salt Lake. My question is, what do you recommend doing if you find out your eight year old budding reader is skimming books and skipping portions entirely so that they've finish the book uncharacteristically fast? These are books that they're supposed to be reading for enjoyment, not assigned. Is there anything I can do about this? Thank you so much.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [01:55](#) Okay, so this is a little bit of a tricky question to answer without being able to ask a few follow up questions, but I'm going to give it a try anyway. First, I'm wondering if maybe there is a family culture of reading that he's trying to fit into? Maybe a desire to keep up with other people who are finishing books and excited to track the number of books they read, or just happy about the number of books that they read. That's not a bad thing. Of course, it's not a bad

EPISODE # 140: How to Fold Poetry into Your Routine, with Sally Thomas

thing to have a family culture of reading, but I think kind of understanding maybe where he's coming from or what his desire is, like what's the goal for him in finishing books that he's not really read?

Sarah Mackenzie: [02:34](#) Especially because you mentioned they're not assigned, and they're for his pleasure reading. There's got to be some reason why finishing the books feels very appealing. I think if we can kind of backpedal and figure out why that feels so appealing, and maybe shift things. I have a couple ideas for that. One thing I noticed with my older son when he became a fluent reader is that after a while, I realized he wasn't reading quite as well as I thought he was. He was able to read. He could,, in fact read fluently and when we would sit and do a reading together, he would understand what he was reading.

Sarah Mackenzie: [03:06](#) But when I would ask him, just maybe his favorite parts of the books or who is the most courageous or what surprised you about this story, I realized over time ... and it took me a little while ... I realized over time that maybe he wasn't reading as thoroughly as he should. He was skipping large sections, maybe if there weren't as many paragraph breaks, or words or names that were difficult to read.

Sarah Mackenzie: [03:27](#) So, one thing that helped a lot is an idea my husband came up with. I got two copies of a book. We chose The Magician's Nephew, and I read it aloud to him while he followed along on the page. So we both had the book in our hands. I was reading it aloud, and he was just following along on the page. I didn't tell him it was for any specific purpose. We just did it, and he really enjoyed it because it was The Magician's Nephew.

Sarah Mackenzie: [03:49](#) This helped a lot, actually. I think, for a lot of kids, when they don't know how to pronounce a word or a name or they get to an intimidating paragraph, they sort of gloss over it. So, getting into the practice of not glossing over it with their eyes while someone does the hard work of reading it out loud, taking care of the cadence and the rhythm and the pitch and the pacing, that kind of gives them practice in helping their eyes read the words without having to do 100 percent of the work, because you're doing some of that work by reading it aloud to him.

EPISODE # 140: How to Fold Poetry into Your Routine, with Sally Thomas

- Sarah Mackenzie: [04:18](#) You know, adults do this too, when we get into sticky situations in our reading. We don't know what a word means or we don't know how to pronounce it, or maybe it's a weird name that we've never come across before, and we don't really know how to pronounce it, so we sort of just gloss over in our mind. If we had to tell somebody about this story, we wouldn't really know how to pronounce that word or that name or even maybe a whole section that seems a little bit descriptive for a really long time.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [04:44](#) I'm raising my hand here. I've done it too. I think it's something that happens, and we can mitigate that a little bit by helping them get less intimidated by blocks of text, or by words and phrases they don't understand, by reading it aloud to them while their eyes are reading it, to give them the practice, so then they can slowly sort of move into being able to tackle it 100 percent on their own. You said your son's eight, and I wonder if, honestly, he might mostly want to look at pictures rather than read the words.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [05:11](#) Sometimes, I think, there's this period of time, about maybe age six to nine ... I mean, it kind of depends on when our kids become readers, but I would say between six to nine seems like a typical time for this to happen ... where we encourage our kids to step into chapter books or novels a little earlier than is best for them. A lot of times, that's instigated by their desire, because they want to read "real" books, right? Long books. Books with chapters by themselves.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [05:38](#) They might be picking up on our desire for them to do that, or they might just have their own desire. But I think it's possible that maybe books that have more pictures and less text will help him feel more successful. I know there's this tendency I have as soon as my kids can read, are able to read, just sort of shoot them up the ladder and give things that they can read, but are not necessarily easy for them to read.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [06:00](#) So I wonder if even stepping down the reading level of what he's reading in his pleasure reading time, and making it easier so he can be more successful, might be helpful. One more idea, maybe as a way to drive home. This idea that the number of books finished doesn't really matter. Right? Is if you're tracking in your home, if you're tracking reading ... this is a question I'd love to ask you follow up, but I can't, so

EPISODE # 140: How to Fold Poetry into Your Routine, with Sally Thomas

I'm just going to suggest that if you are tracking reading in any way ... for example, keeping track of the number of finished books or whatever, maybe consider switching to tracking the time spent reading instead of the number of books that you've finished, because then the focus is on the enjoyment of reading, on the actual minutes that are spent reading, rather than on the getting through or the completion of books.

- Sarah Mackenzie: [06:48](#) What we want to do is cultivate kids who enjoy reading because they enjoy reading, not because they enjoy having read. Right? So, part of that might be in celebrating the number of minutes we read instead of celebrating the number of books we complete. I hope that's helpful. I hope something in there sticks out for you. Thanks so much for your question and for calling in.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [07:27](#) Okay, so let's talk poetry now. First of all, I want you to know that we have a brand new resource for you. It's a book list of excellent resources where you can find great poems to share with your kids; our favorite books and collections of poetry. It's in the show notes at read aloud revival dot com slash one four zero. That's where you can find it, and it's a really good one. We had a lot of fun putting this book list together.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [07:53](#) Now our guest today is Sally Thomas. She's a poet, a fiction writer, she's taught in high schools, at the university level, and she's taught homeschoolers both in her own home and online. Her poetry and fiction have received several awards, and her work has been featured in First Things, in the New Yorker and in several other publications in the U.S. and the United Kingdom. She's joining us today to talk about how we can incorporate poetry in our homeschools, and help our kids develop a true affection for poetry.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [08:25](#) Well, Sally, we are delighted to have you with us. Thank you so much for joining us on the show today.
- Sally Thomas: [08:30](#) Well, thank you. Thank you for having me. I'm delighted to be here.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [08:34](#) Well, one of the things I am really eager to talk with you about is, why poetry? I'd love to hear from you about why we should be, or why we might want to, incorporate poetry into our homes.

EPISODE # 140: How to Fold Poetry into Your Routine, with Sally Thomas

- Sally Thomas: [08:46](#) Gosh, well, I mean, thousands of reasons, really. I can distill it down to three that occurred to me as maybe the most pressing. One, poetry is our cultural inheritance, and it really doesn't even matter what culture we are. Every culture has some form of poetry. In just about every culture, poetry actually predates written language.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [09:14](#) Wow.
- Sally Thomas: [09:15](#) You think about it, Homer is the obvious example, right?
- Sarah Mackenzie: [09:19](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah.
- Sally Thomas: [09:20](#) Holding those Epic poems in his head and chanting them. You know, that all of this is older even than writing. Stories were old, poems were old, before they were ever written down. So just the fact that we have this, it's something that is a tradition that is almost as long as humanity, and as spoken language, and that we're the heirs to that is pretty amazing. You don't want to put that out with the trash. Right?
- Sally Thomas: [09:47](#) So, that's huge. Another thought that I had, and again, I could go on all night just answering this one question, but another thought that I had was that, poetry is really uniquely valuable, I think, in the context of an education, whether you are listening to it or whether you're reading it yourself, because it is a kind of language that commands your full attention.
- Sally Thomas: [10:19](#) You have to read poetry with your ... You can't just slide your eyes over it, because you'll miss it completely. In a way, it's almost like linguistic nature study, right? If you're doing nature study, you are honing your skills of observation and attention to the created order around you, and engaging with that. And this is valuable in and of itself, but also, it's invaluable in terms of what it's doing for your whole, I guess, cognitive self, that you are learning to turn your mind with intensity to something.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [10:56](#) Yeah.
- Sally Thomas: [10:57](#) Engage with it immensely.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [10:57](#) That makes so much sense to me, that cultivating that power of attention or that habit of attention.

EPISODE # 140: How to Fold Poetry into Your Routine, with Sally Thomas

- Sally Thomas: [11:03](#) Right.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [11:03](#) I can't think of another way through language, we could do that better than poetry, now that you're saying that. That makes so much sense to me.
- Sally Thomas: [11:10](#) Right. And I mean, you can read any ... and you should read anything with attention and especially if you're coming at this from the Charlotte Mason paradigm where your whole thing is about, cultivate the habit of attention and be able to narrate and to engage and assimilate. You're supposed to be doing that with everything you read, but I think poetry really provides a unique opportunity because so much of it is so small.
- Sally Thomas: [11:39](#) There are big long poems. Everybody has to deal with Horatius at the Bridge and Casey at the Bat, and Paul Revere's Ride, and all those big long ones. But most of the poems that you encounter, especially when you're a little child, are really small. So you can focus on them, and you want to pay attention to them, because you're going to miss the fun of them, if it's a nursery rhyme or something like that. They're great from that standpoint of just being something that absolutely demands your heightened attention if you're going to engage with it at all. There's no other way to do that.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [12:14](#) One of my favorite things, Sally, right now, is that my twins, who are six at the time we're recording this, we've been memorizing poems during our school day, and at night when they're laying in their beds, I can hear them as they're falling off to sleep, reciting them with different voices and stuff. It's very cute.
- Sally Thomas: [12:32](#) Oh, that's great. Oh, that's wonderful.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [12:33](#) But it's like this tiny bit of beauty that they get to keep for themselves. It's tucked into their pocket that they can pull out anytime and look at it. That's what it feels like. When I'm listening to them, I just think, "Aw. That's a gift." Right?
- Sally Thomas: [12:44](#) Yeah. That's so wonderful. And really, the third thing that I was going to say is really, it's valuable because it gives us a chance to find our own language thrilling. We usually think that language is for communication. We have this utilitarian view of language-

EPISODE # 140: How to Fold Poetry into Your Routine, with Sally Thomas

- Sarah Mackenzie: [13:04](#) Yeah.
- Sally Thomas: [13:05](#) ... where it's to communicate. It's to convey something. It's a vehicle for a story. We always think of it serving some other purpose. But poetry is really where language is just there for its own sake. And again, you think about ... not that a poem can't tell a story, not that a poem can't think through a problem or make an argument ... Poems do most of the same things that prose does in some ways. But what's always important about a poem is just the language itself is primary, and anything else is secondary.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [13:46](#) Yeah.
- Sally Thomas: [13:46](#) And that's exactly why children will latch on to poems and say them, and enjoy them, and shout them while they're hopping down the stairs or whatever, just because they're fun to say.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [14:01](#) Yeah. Yeah.
- Sally Thomas: [14:03](#) Those would be my three big reasons.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [14:04](#) There was a third one. Did you name all three?
- Sally Thomas: [14:06](#) Yeah, I did. I did. I said cultural inheritance, all the business about attention and then just the thrill of language.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [14:14](#) Yes. Okay.
- Sally Thomas: [14:16](#) Just to be able to savor that. So yeah, I think that would be my big three.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [14:21](#) When did you begin with poetry in your homeschool?
- Sally Thomas: [14:23](#) Oh wow. Yeah, I like this question, because I guess the answer would be birth? I was chanting nursery rhymes to my babies while I was nursing them and I was bouncing them on my foot and doing Ride a Cock-Horse. We started, really from infancy, with nursery rhymes. I think when people think about poetry, and especially when they think I can't do poetry-
- Sarah Mackenzie: [14:54](#) Yes.

EPISODE # 140: How to Fold Poetry into Your Routine, with Sally Thomas

- Sally Thomas: [14:55](#) ... they're automatically excluding lots of things that are poetry, that yes, they can do. And nursery rhymes are a good example.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [15:04](#) Yeah. That's so good.
- Sally Thomas: [15:05](#) They have rhyme. They have meter. They have fun with language. You don't have to know ... I mean, a lot of them were apparently political and religious and cultural commentary. That's all kind of coded in there, but you don't have to know that. Your baby doesn't care if Ring Around the Rosie is about the black plague.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [15:31](#) Right. And they wouldn't imagine it either on their own.
- Sally Thomas: [15:34](#) Right. Right. Yeah. Yeah. So no, you don't have to teach this whole lesson about what everything ... "Well, really, the roses are like the rash." No. You don't have to do that. You can just enjoy what's enjoyable about nursery rhymes. Actually, when I was in graduate school, one of the first classes I took in graduate school was a poetry writing class, and we listened to recordings of nursery rhymes as a way of hearing meter and rhyme and pattern in language.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [16:08](#) Oh, is that right?
- Sally Thomas: [16:08](#) Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. So, we're all 25 and listening to Hector Protector and all of these nursery rhymes. That was probably the moment, really, when the light bulb went on in my head, and I thought, oh yeah, that is poetry, isn't it? You're reading that to your child from a really young age, and you are priming their ear to hear those things.
- Sally Thomas: [16:31](#) They know what rhyme is without having to be taught it. They know what rhythm is like. They know that language can be rhythmic. Those ones ... Finger rhymes are really good too. My two oldest children, when they were little, we lived in England. My son, who's now 21, went to a series of little playgroups and nursery schools. At every single one, they would learn little songs and hand rhymes that I haven't heard as much here. I had not grown up with them. But counting rhymes, things like five fat sausages frying in the pan. All of a sudden, one went bang, and you've got four fat sausages frying in the pan.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [17:13](#) Yes.

EPISODE # 140: How to Fold Poetry into Your Routine, with Sally Thomas

- Sally Thomas: [17:14](#) You fall into this rhythm. You're not singing, but it is almost like music in the way that it gets kind of incantatory, because it's so repetitive and it's so rhythmic and everything. The Poet Dana Gioia, who's the poet Laureate of California, who is very well known ... He was a head of the National Endowment for the Arts, has just been a prominent figure in the poetry world ... has written an essay called Poetry is Enchantment, in which he talks about ... which is available. He has a website, Dana Gioia dot com, and all his essays are available for free on this website.
- Sally Thomas: [17:49](#) But in this essay, he talks about the way that ... the purpose of poetry really is to almost cast a spell. That you're not just experiencing it as this intellectual thing, like I'm going to understand all the symbolism and follow the argument. It's something that works on you, even like your pulse rate, you feel it in your body and that was what made me think of that is little kids and their love of rhythm. It feels good. You feel that in your body when you're saying those rhymes.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [18:26](#) This whole idea that ... I think a lot of us feel intimidated by poetry. We feel like, well, we don't really ... How can we teach poetry to our children if we don't really know poetry well? Or maybe a lot of our listeners are thinking, I don't even really like poetry, which I think is something that a lot of us get into the ... gets in the way of us feeling like we're going to be able to help our kids fall in love with poetry.
- Sally Thomas: [18:51](#) I think a lot of people are afraid to trust the surface of the poem, because they've been taught that it's just a mask for something else, and that you haven't really understood the poem until you've taken the mask off. But it's not like you've missed the point. If you just read the surface. You've still gotten it.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [19:18](#) Yeah. Let's talk about some more practical ways, some ideas, that families can use to weave poetry, especially into our homeschools. I think a lot of us want to integrate poetry. We don't know where to start. So, what I see is a lot of us will go, "Okay, we're going to do poetry." So we look for a poetry curriculum or something, or we just feel like we don't really know where to start, so we might get like a collection of poetry and then just kind of read haphazardly from it. Maybe we just read the poems once, we don't really have a plan. I would just love to know some simple ways that you would recommend families can use to weave poetry into our

EPISODE # 140: How to Fold Poetry into Your Routine, with Sally Thomas

homeschools, in a way that will make a more likely ... kind of set the environment or set the stage for our children to enjoy it and for us to enjoy it.

- Sally Thomas: [20:01](#) Right, right. Well I really think ... I mean, gosh, we've done ... I mean, haphazard-r-us, really. And a lot of the poetry that we've just enjoyed the most, that's become part of us ... I mean, a lot of it's what I read to my children when they were little and then everybody just liked certain poems, so we kept saying them.
- Sally Thomas: [20:24](#) We have kind of weird taste. We had this book when my two oldest children were little of comic poetry, and I really encourage comic poetry. It's very easy to memorize. It's very fun. I mean, again, poetry doesn't have to be serious or exalted. It can be about anything. So, we had this book called Marguerite, Go Wash Your Feet by Wallace Trip, which just had these quirky little illustrations all the way through it, and all of these ... the most bizarre collection of funny poems. Poems that I can recite are largely from that book. Like the limerick, "When I sat next to the Duchess at tea, it was just as I feared it would be. Her rumblings abdominal were something phenomenal and everyone thought it was me." Okay, there's an ear worm for you.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [21:14](#) Yeah, totally, I love it.
- Sally Thomas: [21:15](#) All kinds of things like this, and we just read it. We weren't homeschooling though in those days. We just read it for fun, because it was funny and the kids liked it. And so I mean something like, if people do a morning basket, that's an obvious place to have poetry. And it doesn't have to be anything schematic or like a lesson or anything like that. I mean the main thing ... and so, just say, I've got this little slot in my morning time, and at least a couple of times a week, I'm going to pick up an anthology of poetry and we're going to read something.
- Sally Thomas: [21:50](#) Maybe we'll read the same poem both times and see how we feel about it the second time around. Or maybe we don't.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [21:58](#) Well, I love this because it gives us so much freedom. You can really make this work for you. I think that's the biggest key is realizing, if we're the kind of people who go, "Okay, I want to do poetry so I'm going to come up with an elaborate plan or get a curriculum," but really what you're saying is just, you can read poetry today. Just read a poem.

EPISODE # 140: How to Fold Poetry into Your Routine, with Sally Thomas

- Sally Thomas: [22:15](#) Yeah. Right.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [22:15](#) And then maybe read the same one tomorrow, or maybe read something else by the same poet or by somebody else. I love ... Okay, so have you seen the book, I'm Just No Good at Rhyming?
- Sally Thomas: [22:25](#) I've heard of it. I have never seen it.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [22:26](#) Oh, goodness. I mean you're talking about comic poetry, and it is really funny. It's a really funny collection. There's a couple in there that are like, body humor jokes that maybe not everybody will appreciate, but you'll be able to tell those as your skimming, listeners, and you can skip over those if you want to. But the majority of them in that, they're just really, really funny.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [22:44](#) They're the kind where, somebody will be sitting on the couch reading them and start giggling, and they just automatically start reading it out loud to everybody else, because they can't keep it to themselves.
- Sally Thomas: [22:54](#) Yeah. Right. Again, I think sometimes we really hamstring ourselves when we think poetry's got to be serious. It's got to be exalted. It's got to be ... and I've got to teach it. I'm going to make you people like poetry. You know? Which is like, oh yeah, that's going to ... How's that going to work out? What could possibly go wrong?
- Sarah Mackenzie: [23:15](#) Yeah, exactly.
- Sally Thomas: [23:15](#) I just think any way that you yourself can be drawn in and not intimidated and actually experience it as something pleasurable and fun that you're just sharing with your children as an experience, that's the foundation that you're going to lay for somebody who will be literate enough and un-intimidated enough, maybe to tackle harder stuff later on.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [23:46](#) Yeah. What I hear you saying, and you said it twice now I think, is you don't need to teach poetry. Just need to read poetry. Right?
- Sally Thomas: [23:52](#) Right. Exactly.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [23:53](#) Then if we're reading poetry with our kids, instead of feeling like, okay, not only do we need to read Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening, but we need to teach it. Well that

EPISODE # 140: How to Fold Poetry into Your Routine, with Sally Thomas

seems intimidating. But if we can just share it together and enjoy it ... And I also love that you pointed out that your family has kind of quirky taste, because-

- Sally Thomas: [24:10](#) Yeah, we're kind of quirky.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [24:12](#) It's so good. I think for a lot of us, we kind of worry. We worry about this with classics, and I think we also worry about it with poetry, that I might not have good enough tastes to know what's good. So I need someone else to tell me what our kids should read, or what our families should read, because I might not know. And the same kind of idea with poetry of, well, tell me what we should read, because otherwise I think I might just read something that's not great.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [24:34](#) You're just saying, "Just read something that you all enjoy." Right?
- Sally Thomas: [24:40](#) Yeah. My own preferences, especially for really young children, tilt toward rhyme and meter because of the music. I really want them to get that into their ear, into their whole body, that experience. That is consciously what I've looked for. Lots of comic poetry, again, is very good about this, because the joke is often in the perfection. I mean, it's like comic timing, right? If it goes clunk, it's not funny.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [25:13](#) Yeah.
- Sally Thomas: [25:14](#) But if the rhyme and the meter are just perfect, spot on, it's like a little watch. It clicks into place and the timing is right. And that's what makes it funny.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [25:21](#) Yeah.
- Sally Thomas: [25:22](#) And then they know what rhyme and meter sound like.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [25:26](#) What do you think about copywork and memorization? Do you think those are important pieces of poetry? I don't know if it's a routine, but our poetry experience, let us say?
- Sally Thomas: [25:37](#) Yeah, I think so. Certainly, I love copywork, for all kinds of reasons. I think copying poems is really ... because it's meditative and it gives you a way physically to internalize the poem and listen to it maybe a little more closely than you would if you were just reading it. You think about monks in the scriptorium, copying things and how peaceful that always seems, and how much they must have internalized

EPISODE # 140: How to Fold Poetry into Your Routine, with Sally Thomas

what they were writing. I think that's always a powerful thing,, no matter what your child is copying as long as it's excellent language.

Sally Thomas: [26:15](#) But poetry obviously lends itself to that in a particular way. It's a great way ... Just like I think part of the value of copywork is that it really does teach composition by imitation. While I'm really not into putting kids on the spot to write poems, like-

Sarah Mackenzie: [26:34](#) Oh good. That was my next question for you.

Sally Thomas: [26:35](#) Like, write a summary of ... Yeah, yeah. I've never been comfortable doing that, because it always felt like maybe it was going to be arbitrary or forced. If somebody wanted to, and I've had ... None of my kids have really written poems much. I have had kids write stories and novels and things like that, that I would just never assign that. But I sure want to plant the seeds so that they can.

Sarah Mackenzie: [26:59](#) Yeah. Right. And then, memorization-

Sally Thomas: [27:03](#) Meanwhile, serves a good purpose.

Sarah Mackenzie: [27:05](#) Yeah. For those of us who kind of ... we want to integrate poetry, but we're thinking like, when am I going to fit that in? Well, first of all, I think you've already answered that question for us. It can be like, three minutes.

Sally Thomas: [27:18](#) Right.

Sarah Mackenzie: [27:18](#) It doesn't have to be a big chunk of your day. It can be three minutes during your morning routine. You do your prayers. Your morning time, you do three minutes of poetry. Or it can be longer. But that's a good start. But also, if you're already having your child do some copywork ... and actually,, maybe I should define that just for any listeners who aren't familiar with the term of copywork - copywork is having your child copy work. How simple is that? Right? Have them copy a sentence. Usually it can be a sentence, or when they get older, a paragraph. Sometimes that's pulled out of literature, so you might copy a sentence from Charlotte's Web or something.

Sarah Mackenzie: [27:51](#) And copying poetry not only helps them with their handwriting, but teaches them composition by imitation, like Sally just said. And then, that's just another way to sort of ...

EPISODE # 140: How to Fold Poetry into Your Routine, with Sally Thomas

I was going to say reinforce the poem, but I don't think reinforce is the right word. I guess, experience again, or experience in a new way.

Sally Thomas: [28:09](#) Yep. Right. And slow down too, because you're usually copying maybe line or two at a time, not the whole poem. So you really have to slow down and pay attention word by word.

Sarah Mackenzie: [28:21](#) Yes. That's true.

Sally Thomas: [28:23](#) Slower even than your slowest and most careful reading. So again, it brings that active attention to bear on things.

Sarah Mackenzie: [28:32](#) Yeah. And then memorization too. You did mention that your family memorized poems. Did you do that systematically, or was it pretty haphazard?

Sally Thomas: [28:41](#) It was pretty hap ... It was very informal. I often worked on memorizing. Because we'd read a poem ... Usually if you read something repeatedly and it's not very long, you're going to memorize it without even having tried it. I memorized Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening just because I had to teach it five classes a day for-

Sarah Mackenzie: [29:02](#) That'll do it.

Sally Thomas: [29:03](#) ... when I taught high school. So, by the end of that day, I knew that poem. I didn't even have to look at the book. Often, it's just much easier than it often, I think, seems to us, that you don't have to work at it that hard. Again, if it's funny, if it's just pleasurable as an auditory experience, those things just really ... Rhyme and meter, again, are mnemonic devices. They help you because they're patterns. They help things lodge in your brain. So poems that have a lot of that, especially if you read them more than once, you can't help memorizing them.

Sarah Mackenzie: [29:43](#) What are some of your favorite resources or good resources for finding poetry to share with our kids?

Sally Thomas: [29:49](#) Really just collections. I've gone through ... It's funny, my 25 year old daughter does this now. She goes to Half Price Books and she will just buy up anthologies of children's poetry. The more you have, the more you have to choose from. There are some really good ones. Actually, one of my favorite anthologies isn't for children, but I used a lot. It's a

EPISODE # 140: How to Fold Poetry into Your Routine, with Sally Thomas

- book called the Rattle Bag, edited by Ted Hughes and Seamus Heaney -
- Sarah Mackenzie: [30:14](#) Oh, I don't know that one.
- Sally Thomas: [30:16](#) I think there might be a second one. I only have the first one. Also, just for a free online resource, the Ambleside Online curriculum has poetry rotations with it. They have a three term year and a poet for each term, and they've got the poems compiled and collected. Obviously, they're age appropriate, because they're keyed to the different years in that curriculum. They're usually keyed to history too, which is nice.
- Sally Thomas: [30:46](#) But for people just looking for a structure and a resource, it's just right there at your fingertips online.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [30:55](#) So good. Well Sally, thank you so very much for your time. We have just loved having you here.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [31:07](#) Now it's time for let the kids speak. This is my favorite part of the podcast, where kids tell us about their favorite stories that have been read aloud to them.
- Natalia: [31:20](#) Hi, my name is Natalia. I live in Pennsylvania, and I'm eight years old and my favorite book is Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.
- Speaker 6: [31:30](#) Why do you like Charlie and the Chocolate Factory?
- Natalia: [31:33](#) Because it has lots of fun things in it.
- Rose: [31:37](#) Hello. My name is Rose, and I am eight years old. I live in Tanzania, and my favorite book is the Mysterious Benedict Society, because it is about four kids who solve mysteries, and I like it when they disable the evil machine, the whisperer.
- Everett: [31:54](#) My name is Everett. I live in Africa and I'm seven years old. My favorite book is the Bible. Is that even allowed? Well, if it is, then I like it because it tells us about how things are made, and also mostly God.
- Sarah Mackenzie: [32:21](#) Everett, Sarah Mackenzie here. It is most definitely allowed to say your favorite book is the Bible. Thanks for calling in and leaving your message.

EPISODE # 140: How to Fold Poetry into Your Routine, with Sally Thomas

- Brayden: [32:31](#) Hi, my name is Brayden. I am five years old, and I live in [inaudible 00:32:38] California, and my favorite book is Jose, Can You Say Dinosaur by Dr. Seuss. My favorite part is where Cat in the Hat soars.
- Julianne: [32:53](#) Hello. My name's Julianne and I'm three years old. My favorite book is Here Comes a Big Bad Dust Bunny, because it the big, bad dust bunny learned how to be nice.
- Speaker 7: [33:12](#) What's your name? You're in.
- Joanna: [33:14](#) Joanna.
- Speaker 7: [33:15](#) Joanna?
- Joanna: [33:16](#) Yeah.
- Speaker 7: [33:16](#) And how old are you?
- Joanna: [33:17](#) Two.
- Speaker 7: [33:18](#) Two? And what's your favorite book?
- Joanna: [33:23](#) Mercy Watson.
- Speaker 7: [33:25](#) You like Mercy Watson?
- Joanna: [33:26](#) Yeah.
- Speaker 7: [33:26](#) And what do you like about Mercy Watson?
- Joanna: [33:33](#) That she loves a great deal of butter.
- Speaker 7: [33:35](#) That she loves a great deal of butter?
- Joanna: [33:35](#) Yeah.
- Sylvia: [33:38](#) My name is Sylvia. I live in Spokane, Washington, and I am nine years old. My favorite book is Little House in the Big Woods. I liked that Laura has a corn doll, and I laughed when Laura said, "It isn't Susan's fault, as she is just a corn cob."
- Ben: [33:56](#) Hi, I'm Ben. I'm 12 years old. I live in Vermont. My favorite book is Trumpet of the Swan, but E.B. White. I like this book because it's funny and exciting.

EPISODE # 140: How to Fold Poetry into Your Routine, with Sally Thomas

Kennedy: [34:08](#) My name is Kennedy. I'm seven years old and I live in Texas. My favorite book is the Prince Warriors, and I like that book because of the characters. My favorite character is Ruwach. I like him because he gives special gifts to the kids.

Speaker 8: [34:32](#) What's your name?

Eloetta: [34:36](#) [Eloetta 00:35:04].

Speaker 8: [34:36](#) And how old are you?

Eloetta: [34:37](#) One.

Speaker 8: [34:37](#) You're one. You're 19 months. And where do you live?

Eloetta: [34:42](#) Seattle.

Speaker 8: [34:43](#) Seattle, Washington. What's your favorite book? Pan ...

Eloetta: [34:46](#) ... for Breakfast.

Speaker 8: [34:49](#) Pancakes for Breakfast.

Eloetta: [34:51](#) Pee pee, ma. Pee pee.

Speaker 8: [34:52](#) Oh. Okay.