

Royal Fireworks Language Arts by Michael Clay Thompson

# The Music of the Hemispheres

Poetics for Young Children

*Second Edition*

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# The Music of the Hemispheres




In the medieval ages,  
philosophers believed that each planet,  
as it zoomed around in orbit,  
made a sound...

a note.

The sound of all the planets in space  
was called *the music of the spheres*.

Today, we say the human brain  
has two hemispheres,  
and through the magic of human language,  
we have poetry,  
the *music of the hemispheres*.



Language is human.  
Many animals make sounds,  
but only human beings make language.

We love language for lots of reasons,  
and one of the most important  
is that we love the beautiful  
sounds of language.

Words are made of sounds.

When we write words,  
we show the sounds with letters.



Some sounds sound like  
woodwinds,  
or horns,  
or wind in the trees.

*ee<sub>e</sub>*

*whwh*

*u*

Some sounds in words are like  
sounds in *nature*:

This little piggy cried  
*Wee wee wee*  
all the way home.

This is called  
*onomatopoeia*  
(AH no MAH toe PEE uh).

*wshwshwshwsh*



plop

trickle

*Wash*  
drip

*splash*



There are two main kinds of sounds:  
**vowels** and **consonants**.

Vowels sound like singing:

*a e i o u y*

and consonants sound like clicks, and taps, and bumps:

*b c d f g h j k l m n p q r s t v w x z*

We can even do a  
**vowel-consonant split**  
by putting vowels and consonants  
on different lines.

What words are these?

i e  
cr ck t

o e  
fl w r

u e  
p ddl



Are you beginning to think  
that poets are aware  
of every sound in their poems,  
just as composers know  
each note in their compositions?

You are right.  
Poets know all the vowel sounds,  
and all the consonant sounds,  
and all the stresses,  
and they arrange these sounds  
at the same time that they arrange  
the meanings of words.

# Rhyme

*time*



Poets often put **rhymes** in poems.

A rhyme is a similar sound found  
in two different words,  
such as *rhyme* and *time*,  
*monarchy* and *malarkey*.

The sounds do not  
have to be spelled alike.

*eeem*

*The team  
had a scheme  
it would seem!*



If the lines  
rhyme at their ends,  
that is called

end rhyme.

end



Weary with toil, I haste me to my **bed**, a  
The dear repose for limbs with travel **tired**, b  
But then begins a journey in my **head** a  
To work my mind when body's work's **expired**. b

from Sonnet 27  
William Shakespeare

### Rhyme Scheme

If we want to study the **rhyme scheme** of a poem,  
we assign the letter **a** to the first rhyme sound,  
and the letter **b** to the second rhyme sound, and so on.  
So the **rhyme scheme** of this poem is **abab**.

The **a** rhymes are **bed** and **head**,  
and the **b** rhymes are **tired** and **expired**.



Emily Dickinson  
used **end rhyme**  
in this poem about a flower,  
the gentian.  
Dickinson rhymed the even lines,  
2, 4, 6, and 8,  
but not the odd ones.

ROSES

God made a little gentian: a  
It tried to be a **rose** b  
And failed, and all the summer laughed. c  
But just before the **snows** b  
There came a purple creature d  
That ravished all the **hill**; e  
And summer hid her forehead, f  
And mockery was **still**. e

from XLVII  
Emily Dickinson

OWS



Rhymes put  
inside the lines are called

**internal rhyme.**

Shakespeare used internal rhyme in:

**Double, double, toil and trouble.**

William Blake  
used both end rhyme  
and internal rhyme  
in his poem “The Tiger.”

In what distant deeps or **skies** a  
Burnt the **fire** of thine **eyes!** a  
On what wings dare he **aspire?** b  
What the hand, dare seize the **fire?** b

from "The Tiger"  
William Blake



# Alliteration

Rhyme is not all that poets use to compose the sounds of poems.

Another technique is **alliteration**, the repetition of the first, *initial*, sounds of words:

“**B**aa, **b**aa, **b**lack sheep.”

Alliteration lets us emphasize a sound that is perfect for the meaning.

Robert Burns used alliteration:

# ration

John Anderson my jo, John,  
When we were first aqent:  
Your locks were like the raven,  
Your **bony brow** was **brent**.

from “John Anderson, My Jo”  
Robert Burns

(The word *brent* means smooth in Scottish.)



William Shakespeare  
used **alliteration** on the letter **s** in Sonnet 30.  
Notice the interesting eye rhyme  
with *past* and *waste*.

When to the **s**essions of **s**weet **s**ilent thought  
I **s**ummon up remembrance of things **p**ast,  
I **s**igh the lack of many a thing I **s**ought,  
and with old woes new wail my dear Time's **w**aste.





Alliteration often takes the form  
of an adjective and its noun  
that begin with the same letter.  
A.E. Housman used alliteration this way  
in “To an Athlete Dying Young”:

So set, before its echoes fade,  
the fleet foot on the sill of shade,  
And hold to the low lintel up  
The still-defended challenge cup.

adj.	n.
fleet	foot



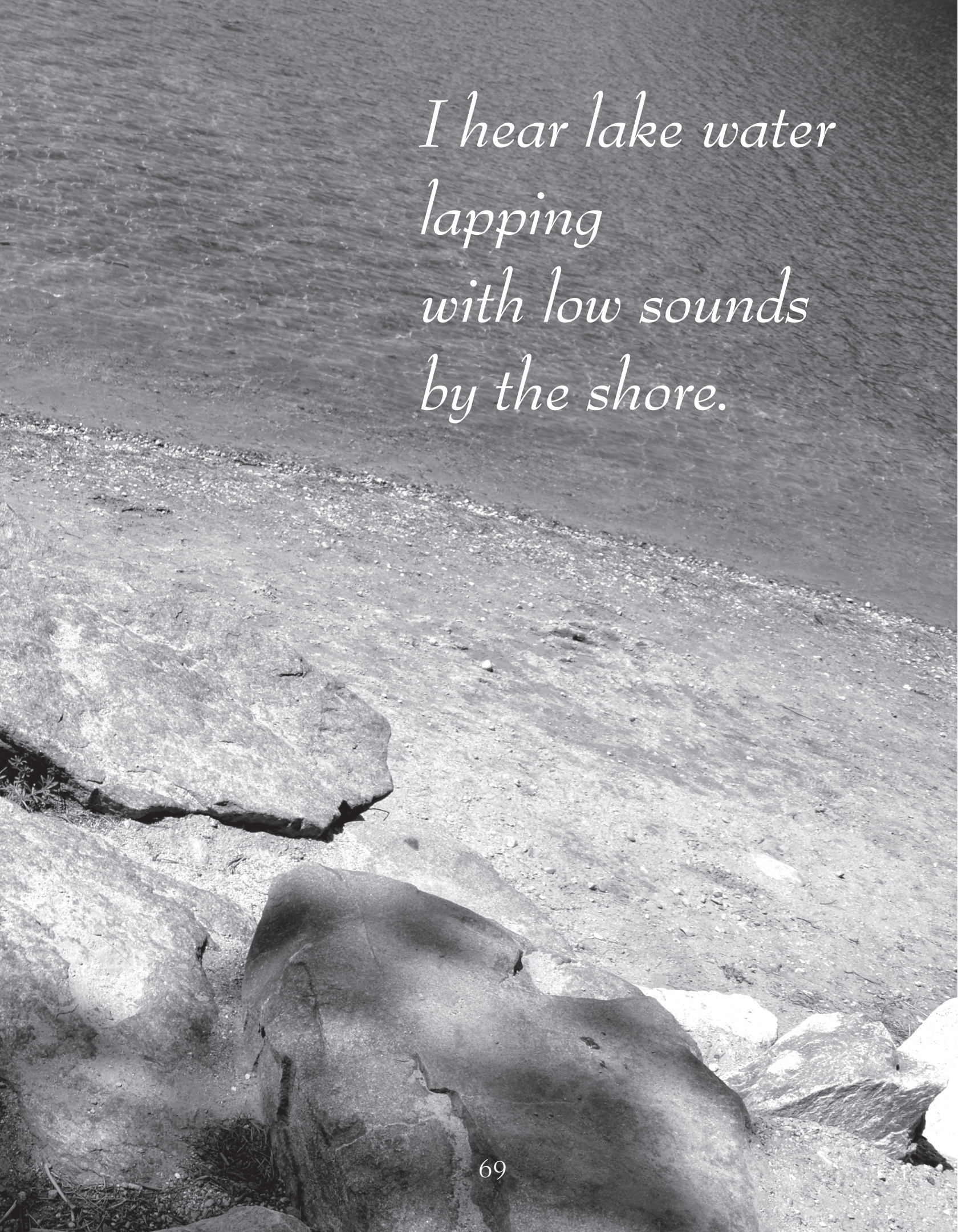
One poem may have  
end rhyme, internal rhyme,  
eye rhyme and alliteration, and more.

Look at these lines from  
William Butler Yeats's (pronounced Yates) poem  
"The Lake Isle of Innisfree."  
Innisfree is a lake in County Sligo, Ireland.

I will arise and go now, for always night and **day**  
I hear **l**ake water **l**apping with **l**ow sounds by the **sh**ore:  
While I stand on the **roa**d**w**ay, or on the pavements **gr**ay,  
I hear it in the deep heart's **co**re.

Notice how Yeats supports the alliterated *l*'s  
with lots of other *l*'s inside words in this passage.



A black and white photograph of a rocky shoreline. The foreground is dominated by large, dark, textured rocks. A sandy beach with small pebbles runs along the water's edge. The water is dark and shows gentle ripples. The text is overlaid in the upper right quadrant in a white, elegant script font.

*I hear lake water  
lapping  
with low sounds  
by the shore.*