



# Reading the Poem

## The Poison Tree

### Teacher Preparation

Teachers should be aware that while this poem appears to be a simple short work of just four verses using rhyming couplets it has a mature theme. It can be a useful means for discussing anger.



### Teacher Strategy A

1. The following questions are aimed at having students focus on how they react to anger.
  - If you 'fall out' with a friend and become mad at them what do you do?
  - How do you react if the person you are mad at is not a friend?
  - What could happen if you continue to "bottle up" your feelings of anger?
2. Explain that the poem you are about to share with the class is about such a situation. However some words in the poem need explaining. Display the words that may need explaining in the context of the poem.  
e.g. *wrath, sunned, wiles, bore, veil'ed, pole.*
3. Read the poem to the class.



# Reading the Poem

## The Poison Tree

### Teacher Strategy A

4. Following the reading allow a brief period with no comment for class to reflect on what they have heard.
5. Ask students to explain what they think the poem is telling them. Depending on the maturity of the group some students may need additional time to examine the text.
5. Have students describe how the poem makes them feel.
6. When discussion is exhausted have class complete **THE POISON TREE BLM 1**.





# Reading the Poem

## The Poison Tree

### Teacher Strategy B - Symbols



1. Draw attention to the fact that all around us in our everyday life we see symbols and signs that represent message. Display sketches of several well known symbols that class is familiar with. e.g. No Parking, Stop, Give way, No U turn.
2. Have the poem available for class to see.
3. Explain that in creative writing authors may use symbols where one thing represents something else. In ***The Poison Tree*** the developing plant is a symbol for the author's hidden anger.
4. Have class read the poem to themselves. Do they see/ understand the symbolism?
5. Discuss whether the symbol of a growing tree being nurtured in secret is an effective symbol.
6. Have class complete **BLM Poison Tree 2**.



# Reading the Poem

## The Poison Tree

### Teacher Strategy C - Metaphor

Teacher will need a copy of *The Highwayman* by Alfred Noyes.

1. Another device used in creative writing is **metaphor** where an author says that one thing **is** another.
2. Read the first verse of *The Highwayman* by Alfred Noyes.
3. Can the class see how the author has used metaphors to build the scene? Re-read the verse to show how he describes the wind, the moon and the road.
4. When class understands the concept, explain that Blake has used one extended metaphor of a garden to describing the nurturing of the poison tree.
5. Have class identify the development of the metaphor from the first verse (my wrath did grow) to the second (nurturing by watering and sunning it) and into the 3<sup>rd</sup> ( plant grew during day and night and bore an apple) through to the last verse (here he explains that the tree is in his garden.)

