



RYE  
POETRY  
PATH

# Children's Poetry Path

## Rye Town Park



RYE HISTORY



With ideas for educators, parents, and caregivers by Dr. Molly Ness

# Welcome to the Rye Poetry Path

The Rye Poetry Path is a collaborative public art installation designed to spark reflection and conversation around themes of community, conservation, and social justice.

When complete, it will include 82 poems in four public spaces - Rye Town Park, the Edith G. Read Wildlife Sanctuary, the Rye Nature Center, and the Knapp House.

The poems were curated by award-winning Westchester poet [Iain Haley Pollock](#) and the installations were imagined by a Design Team guided by the Rye Arts Center. Each installation has been created by a different artist, some local and others who sent their work to us from studios around the country.

We are so grateful to [ArtsWestchester](#), the [Rye Town Park Commission](#), the [Friends of Rye Town Park](#), and the many individual sponsors and volunteers who have made the project happen. And we are deeply indebted to the featured poets and artists for the gifts of their perspectives, voices, and talents.

For more information on the Rye Poetry Path visit our website hosted by the Rye Free Reading Room [ryepoetrypath.ryelibrary.org](http://ryepoetrypath.ryelibrary.org) and follow us on Instagram and Facebook [@ryepoetrypath](#).

For our younger visitors we have created a [Children's Poetry Path](#) at Rye Town Park featuring nine special poems - six around the pond and three along the beachfront promenade. The poems cover a range of themes from animals to nature to music using a variety of poetic forms and devices.

The talking points and conversation starters in this guide are thanks to [Dr. Molly Ness](#), children's literacy expert and advocate and Rye parent. Molly is the author of five books and numerous articles on reading, and speaks, consults, and researches extensively across the country. She is also the creator of the End Book Deserts podcast and founder of the Coalition for Literacy Equity which works to ensure that all children have access to books and reading culture. Learn more about Molly's extraordinary work at [drmollyness.com](http://drmollyness.com) and [litequity.com](http://litequity.com).

## Charlie Northshield, Jr. Outdoor Classroom

In 2023, the Friends of Rye Town Park built an outdoor seating area on the pond as a gathering spot for park visitors. It is dedicated to Charlie Northshield in celebration of his long time service to the Friends of Rye Town Park and his over 30 year career as an educator in Rye. The curved teak bench and stone walls provide ample seating for educators and students to use the park as an "outdoor classroom" to study nature, poetry, pollinators, and more, and to simply enjoy this unique view at this special place.



## Suggested Route

1. The Song of the Bee
2. The Wind
3. A Circle of Sun
4. The Duck
5. Sunset
6. Dragonfly
7. The Little Turtle
8. Butterfly Cloth
9. from The House at Pooh Corner



Scan to see a map of all poems in Rye Town Park



# The Song of the Bee

## Marian Douglas



Scan to read the full text of  
The Song of the Bee

Buzz! buzz! buzz!  
The sweet-smelling clover,  
He, humming, hangs over;  
The scent of the roses  
Makes fragrant his wings:  
He never gets lazy;

From thistle and daisy,  
And weeds of the meadow,  
Some treasure he brings.



### About the Poet

Marian Douglas was the pen name for author and poet Annie Douglas Green Robinson (1842-1913). She was born in Plymouth, NH and published several works for children in the 1870s and a book of verse entitled *Days We Remember* in 1903.

### About the Installation

You will find this rhyming tribute to our bee friends on a children's bench tucked among the flowers in the beautiful pollinator garden created by landscape designer Sue Drouin between the two pavilions. Up in the Adirondacks artist Queenie at ADK Dream Creations hand engraved this gorgeous live edge wood slab and we paired it with some logs kindly donated by the Rye Nature Center to make a rustic bench. We're so grateful to ArtsWestchester for sponsoring this installation.

### Talking Points

- Explain what "clover" is
- Explain the meaning of "fragrant"
- Explain "thistle" and "daisy"

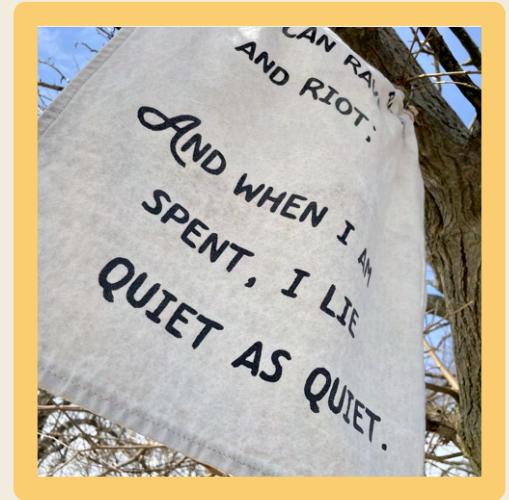
### Conversation Starters

1. Who is the "he" in the poem?
2. Who never gets lazy?
3. What treasures do you think the bee brings here?
4. What is the poet trying to tell us?
5. What messages does the author want us to know about bees?
6. What might happen if bees got lazy?

# The Wind

## James Reeves

I can get through a doorway without any key,  
And strip the leaves from the great oak tree.  
I can drive storm-clouds and shake tall towers,  
Or steal through a garden and not wake the flowers.  
Seas I can move and ships I can sink;  
I can carry a house-top or the scent of a pink.  
When I am angry I can rave and riot;  
And when I am spent, I lie quiet as quiet.



## About the Poet

John Morris Reeves (1909-1978), known as James Reeves, was a British poet, editor, and playwright. He published several books of poems including a collection for children in 1973 called *The Wandering Moon and Other Poems*.

## About the Installation

The enormous, beautifully striated rock outcropping along the promenade is well-suited for climbing or simply enjoying sea breezes and the view. When we thought of the windy Long Island Sound we thought of kites and sailing, and artist Ace from Flying Junction studio in Brooklyn made just what we needed by hand painting these four canvas banners. Our thanks to ArtsWestchester for sponsoring this installation.

## Talking Points

- Explain what “stripping the leaves” means
- Define “rave” and “riot”

## Conversation Starters

1. Who is the “I” here? Who is doing all of these actions?
2. What have you witnessed the wind do?
3. What are the positive/good things the wind does in the poem?
4. What are the negative/bad things the wind does?
5. Why do you think the poet repeated “quiet” in the last line?
6. What message is the author sending us about the wind?

"The Wind" by James Reeves. Reprinted with the permission of the Estate of James Reeves.

# A Circle of Sun

## Rebecca Kai Dotlich

I'm dancing.  
I'm leaping.  
I'm skipping about.  
I gallop.  
I grin.  
I giggle.  
I shout.

I'm Earth's many colors.  
I'm morning and night.  
I'm honey on toast.  
I'm funny.  
I'm bright.

I'm swinging.  
I'm singing.  
I wiggle.  
I run.  
I'm a piece of the sky  
In a circle of sun.

### About the Poet

Rebecca Kai Dotlich is an award-winning children's poet and picture book author who was inspired to write for children after her own children were born. She lives in the Midwest and gives workshops, visits classrooms, and speaks at conferences, libraries, and schools to help teachers and aspiring writers. Read more at [rebeccakaidotlich.com](http://rebeccakaidotlich.com).

### About the Installation

A few steps from The Wind we come to a poem that celebrates the joy of being alive. The gazebo can become a space for imagination to take over and transform it into a cave, a castle, a stage, a pirate ship ... whatever young minds might conjure! Queens-based illustrator, storyteller, and muralist Yuke Li has left us treasure to discover on the gazebo floor. Our thanks to ArtsWestchester for sponsoring this installation.

### Talking Points

- Explain any unfamiliar words including "gallop"



### Conversation Starters

1. Who is the "I" here? Who is doing all of these actions?
2. There is so much action in this poem. Pick three things and show me how your body looks as you do them.
3. How can something be both morning and night? Explain what you think the poet means with these opposites.
4. What does the author mean by "Earth's many colors"? What are the colors that you see right now?
5. Explain what the author means by "honey on toast".
6. What is the tone of this poem? What words make you think that?
7. What action words is the sun doing right now?

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# The Duck

## Ogden Nash

Behold the duck.  
It does not cluck.  
A cluck it lacks.  
It quacks.  
It is specially fond  
Of a puddle or pond.  
When it dines or sups,  
It bottoms ups.



## About the Poet

Frederic Ogden Nash (1902-1971) was born in Rye, NY and became the most widely known, appreciated, and imitated American creator of light, whimsical verse during his lifetime. His famous 1936 poem for children *The Tale of Custard the Dragon* later became the inspiration for the song *Puff, the Magic Dragon*.

## About the Installation

This poem was hand-painted by Therese Karl and Dawn Pineault, the talented artists of Rye's own hometownlove, on a footpath built by volunteers from Rye Presbyterian Church to enable children to visit the ducks without getting their feet too muddy. It was generously sponsored by positive parenting educator and education advocate Ann Magalhaes and the Magalhaes family.

## Talking Points

- Explain any unfamiliar words including “sups” (as in short for “supper” or eats)
- Explain “lacks” - restate that the line means the duck does not cluck
- Define “fond” and “dines”

## Conversation Starters

1. What does the poet want us to know about ducks?
2. What does the author mean by “bottoms ups”?
3. What do you see the ducks doing? How do you know these ducks are fond of this pond? Do you see any ducks dining? Tell me if you see a duck that is “bottoms ups”.
4. What are you fond of? How do you dine?
5. What is the tone of this poem? Is it a serious poem or a silly one? What makes you say that?
6. Do you see any other animals around that are “specially fond” of this park? How does their body or action show that they are fond?

"The Duck" by Ogden Nash, from *I Wouldn't Have Missed It: Selected Poems of Ogden Nash* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1975). Copyright 1940, 1942, 1944, 1949 by Ogden Nash, renewed. Reprinted by permission of Curtis Brown, Ltd.

# Sunset

Lilian Moore

There's dazzle  
in the Western Sky  
Colors spill and  
run  
The pond mouth  
lies open  
greedy  
for the last drop  
of  
melting  
sun



## About the Poet

Lilian Moore (1909-2004) was born in New York City and wrote numerous poems and stories for children. From 1957-1967 she was the first editor of the newly established Scholastic Arrow Book Club and pioneered the program that made quality paperback books accessible and affordable for elementary school children throughout the United States.

## About the Installation

The pond gate offers an excellent view of the dazzling spectacle that unfolds every evening in the western sky. We chose these colors with the intention of offering young visitors a moment to explore science, literature, and visual arts as the ducks and turtles paddle by. We are so grateful to education, healthcare, and public park advocate Jamie Jensen and the Jensen family for sponsoring this poem and to artists Stephanie and Dillon of My Metal Works Studio in CA for thoughtfully bringing pond gate, words, and color together into this sunny installation.

## Talking Points

- Explain any unfamiliar words or terms including “Western sky”, “dazzle”, and “greedy”
- Relate the Western sky to where the sun sets

## Conversation Starters

1. Why do you think the author chose the word “dazzle”? What does that show us about the sky?
2. Why would a pond be greedy for sun? What does the author mean here?
3. Why do you think people enjoy sunset so much? Have you ever seen a sunset? What does it look like and feel like?



# Dragonfly

Rebecca Kai Dotlich

This sky-ballerina,  
this glimmering  
jewel,  
glides in a gown  
of lucid blue-  
with wings that you  
could whisper through.



## About the Poet

Rebecca Kai Dotlich is an award-winning children's poet and picture book author who was inspired to write for children after her own children were born. She lives in the Midwest and gives workshops, visits classrooms, and speaks at conferences, libraries, and schools to help teachers and aspiring writers. Read more at [rebeccakaidotlich.com](http://rebeccakaidotlich.com).

## About the Installation

This whimsical installation was designed by artist Caitlin McMenamain at the Rye Arts Center using clear acrylic to allow our young visitors to read the poem while seeing the pond and its happenings at the same time. The Friends of Rye Town Park generously sponsored this poem.

## Talking Points

- Explain any unfamiliar words including “glimmering”, “jewel”, and “lucid”

## Conversation Starters

1. Who is the sky ballerina in this poem? Explain why a dragonfly could be a ballerina.
2. What does the author compare a dragonfly to?
3. What is the tone of this poem? What words show you that?
4. What sense does this poem tap into?

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# The Little Turtle

## Vachel Lindsay

There was a little turtle.  
He lived in a box.  
He swam in a puddle.  
He climbed on the rocks.

He snapped at a mosquito.  
He snapped at a flea.  
He snapped at a minnow.  
And he snapped at me.

He caught the mosquito.  
He caught the flea.  
He caught the minnow.  
But he didn't catch me.



## About the Poet

Vachel Lindsay (1879-1931) was an American poet known as the founder of modern singing poetry, in which verses are meant to be sung or chanted. His dramatic delivery in public readings and his commitment to performance art helped keep appreciation for poetry alive in the American Midwest in the early 20th century.

## About the Installation

When the weather is warm have you noticed who likes to gather and bask in the sunshine on the rocks, especially in the northwest corner of the pond? We hope these three green hexagonal panels by artists Jessica and Curtis at Langley Metalworks will help you figure out which little friends this poem is about. We are so grateful to educator Dr. Julie Engerran and the Engerran family for sponsoring this poem.

## Talking Points

- Explain any unfamiliar words including “snapped” (its meaning here), “flea”, and “minnow”

## Conversation Starters

1. Why does the turtle snap at all these things? What is the author really saying here?
2. What are some words you might use to describe this turtle?
3. How do you think the narrator of this poem feels about this turtle? What makes you say that?

# Butterfly Cloth

## Victoria Forrester

How fragile  
Floats the butterfly,  
A banner barely cloth.  
Woven of sterner stuff  
it seems,  
The tapestry of moth.



## About the Poet

Victoria Forrester wrote eight books of poems and stories for children, known for their lyrical style and inspired by the redwood forests of Northern California where she lived.

## About the Installation

We love the RyesAbove butterflies so much we incorporated some into the Children's Poetry Path, but in this case our generous artists are the fifth graders of Rye's own public elementary schools! RyesAbove is a special public art project and fundraiser led by The Rotary Club of Rye and The Rye Arts Center in which artists transform blank butterflies into original works of art that are displayed around Rye and then auctioned. For this installation the blank steel butterflies were made by talented metal artists Mike and Claudia in nearby South Windsor, CT, ready for our elementary students to paint. We are so grateful to Kim Mulcahy of Sew Happy for sponsoring this poem. Kim is a talented seamstress and crafter and gifted teacher of textile arts from which many a Sound Shore child has learned to sew.

## Talking Points

- Explain any unfamiliar words including “fragile”, “sterner”, and “tapestry”

## Conversation Starters

1. Why does the author use “cloth” for a butterfly? What does the author really mean here?
2. What is a tapestry of moth in this poem? What is this showing us about butterflies compared to moths?
3. What’s the tone of this poem? How do you think the author would describe butterflies?

"Butterfly Cloth" by Victoria Forrester from *A Latch Against the Wind* (Atheneum, 1985). Reprinted with the permission of the author.

# from The House at Pooh Corner

A.A. Milne

“But it isn't easy,' said Pooh. 'Because Poetry and Hums aren't things which you get, they're things which get you. And all you can do is to go where they can find you.”



## About the Author and Illustrator

Alan Alexander Milne (1882-1956) was a British writer best known for his books about a teddy bear named Winnie-the-Pooh. He wrote the stories for his son Christopher Robin Milne who loved a bear at the London Zoo named Winnipeg. A.A. Milne's books were illustrated by British artist E.H. Shepard (1879-1976). Shepard's drawings of Pooh were modeled on Growler, a toy bear owned by his own son.

## About the Installation

We complete our journey along the Children's Poetry Path with a very special one - an excerpt from A. A. Milne's classic book The House at Pooh Corner. It's placed by a brand new Polywood children's picnic table - made of 99% captured ocean plastic - a place where you might sit and wait for Poetry and Hums to find you.

In this chapter, the tree with Owl's house had blown over in the wind and his house was destroyed, leaving Pooh and Owl trapped. Piglet rescued them and Pooh promised Piglet he'd make up a song (a Hum) about Piglet's friendship and bravery. So he did, a seven verse song. But before making up the song he said these words to his dear friend. And if you look across the pond near Rye Town Park's bee hives you just might see a pot of Hunny in his honor.

This adorable installation was truly a collaborative effort ... artists Charley and Nikki in TX built the cedar sign and hand painted the text for us, then Rye artist Meera Agarwal added three gorgeous book-inspired illustrations and painted our Hunny pot - then she and Park Director Russ Gold and Friends of Rye Town Park member Jamie Jensen put it all together. Our thanks to ArtsWestchester for sponsoring this installation.

## Talking Points

- Explain “hum”



## Conversation Starters

1. Why do you think Pooh likes honey so much? What is something that you enjoy as much as Pooh enjoys honey?
2. How does this poem make you feel? What is the tone?
3. Why do we make up hums? Tell me about a time that you made up a hum?
4. Let's make up a hum together. You start and I'll join in. It can be a silly hum or a serious one.
5. How do you feel when you hum? How do you think Pooh feels?
6. What do you think Pooh means when he says that poetry and hums are things that get you? What does it mean to go where they find you?