



PETERBOROUGH DRAMA FESTIVAL 2025



CHORAL SPEAKING SYLLABUS

The Peterborough Drama Festival is a registered charity: 1032610

Affiliated to the British and International Federation of Festivals



 www.peterboroughdramafestival.org.uk



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SYLLABUS 2025

Choral Speaking (select one of the two choices):

Years 1 & 2:

The Morning Rush by John Foster
The Ceremonial Band by James Reeves

Years 3 & 4:

The Owl and the Pussycat by Edward Lear
The Sound Collector by Roger McGough

Years 5 & 6:

Jabberwocky by Lewis Carroll
The Ghostly Visitor by Roger Stevens

Key Stage 3:

Skimbleshanks: The Railway Cat by T S Eliot
Tarantella by Hilaire Belloc



Key Stage 4:

The Daniel Jazz by Vachel Lindsay
Beleaguered Cities by Frank Lucas

CATEGORY RULES

Choral Speaking

Groups are required to perform a poem, or an extract from a poem, in a lively and imaginative style. This may include vocal sound effects, occasional solo voices, small groups speaking separately, juxtaposition, echoes and many other effects to create the atmosphere of the poem. The group must work as a disciplined choir, speaking and moving together. Some groups even set the tone of the poem in the way they move onto the stage. The use of props and costume is not allowed. The piece must have a title. A copy of the poem must be given to the adjudicator's clerk before the performance. Choirs must be no fewer than eight and no more than thirty. The time limit is ten minutes and poems must be taken from themes listed in the year's festival syllabus. With the exception of Key Stage One classes, all performances must be unaided.

Time limit: 10 minutes

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www.peterboroughdramafestival.org.uk

Email contact list



YEARS 1 & 2

The Morning Rush by John Foster

Into the bathroom,
Turn on the tap.
Wash away the sleepiness –
Splish! Splosh! Splash!

Into the bedroom,
Pull on your vest.
Quickly! Quickly!
Get yourself dressed.

Down to the kitchen.
No time to lose.
Gobble up your breakfast.
Put on your shoes.

Back to the bathroom.
Squeeze out the paste.
Brush, brush, brush your teeth.
No time to waste.

Look in the mirror.
Comb your hair.
Hurry, scurry, hurry, scurry
Down the stairs.

Pick your school bag
Up off the floor.
Grab your coat
And out through the door.

YEARS 1 & 2

The Ceremonial Band by James Reeves

The old King of Dorchester,
He had a little orchestra,
And never did you hear such a ceremonial band.
'Tootle-too,' said the flute,
'Deed-a-reedle,' said the fiddle,
For the fiddles and the flutes were the finest in the land.

The old King of Dorchester,
He had a little orchestra,
And never did you hear such a ceremonial band.
'Pump-a-rum,' said the drum,
'Tootle-too,' said the flute,
'Deed-a-reedle,' said the fiddle,
For the fiddles and the flutes were the finest in the land.

The old King of Dorchester,
He had a little orchestra,
And never did you hear such a ceremonial band.
'Pickle-pee,' said the fife,
'Pump-a-rum,' said the drum,
'Tootle-too,' said the flute,
'Deed-a-reedle,' said the fiddle,
For the fiddles and the flutes were the finest in the land.

The old King of Dorchester,
He had a little orchestra,
And never did you hear such a ceremonial band.
'Zoomba-zoom,' said the bass,
'Pickle-pee,' said the fife,
'Pump-a-rum,' said the drum,
'Tootle-too,' said the flute,
'Deed-a-reedle,' said the fiddle,
For the fiddles and the flutes were the finest in the land.

The old King of Dorchester,
He had a little orchestra,
And never did you hear such a ceremonial band.
'Pah-pa-rah,' said the trumpet,
'Zoomba-zoom,' said the bass,
'Pickle-pee,' said the fife,
'Pump-a-rum,' said the drum,
'Tootle-too,' said the flute,
'Deed-a-reedle,' said the fiddle,
For the fiddles and the flutes were the finest in the land,
Oh! the fiddles and the flutes were the finest in the land!

YEARS 3 & 4

The Owl and the Pussycat by Edward Lear

I

The Owl and the Pussy-cat went to sea
In a beautiful pea-green boat,
They took some honey, and plenty of money,
Wrapped up in a five-pound note.
The Owl looked up to the stars above,
And sang to a small guitar,
"O lovely Pussy! O Pussy, my love,
What a beautiful Pussy you are,
You are,
You are!

What a beautiful Pussy you are!"

II

Pussy said to the Owl, "You elegant fowl!
How charmingly sweet you sing!
O let us be married! too long we have tarried:
But what shall we do for a ring?"
They sailed away, for a year and a day,
To the land where the Bong-Tree grows
And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood
With a ring at the end of his nose,
His nose,
His nose,
With a ring at the end of his nose.

III

"Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling
Your ring?" Said the Piggy, "I will."
So they took it away, and were married next day
By the Turkey who lives on the hill.
They dined on mince, and slices of quince,
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,
They danced by the light of the moon,
The moon,
The moon,
They danced by the light of the moon.

YEARS 3 & 4

The Sound Collector by Roger McCough

A stranger called this morning
Dressed all in black and grey
Put every sound into a bag
And carried them away

The whistling of the kettle
The turning of the lock
The purring of the kitten
The ticking of the clock

The popping of the toaster
The crunching of the flakes
When you spread the marmalade
The scraping noise it makes

The hissing of the frying pan
The ticking of the grill
The bubbling of the bathtub
As it starts to fill

The drumming of the raindrops
On the windowpane
When you do the washing-up
The gurgle of the drain

The crying of the baby
The squeaking of the chair
The swishing of the curtain
The creaking of the stair

A stranger called this morning
He didn't leave his name
Left us only silence
Life will never be the same

YEARS 5 & 6

Jabberwocky by Lewis Carroll

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

“Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!”

He took his vorpal sword in hand;
Long time the manxome foe he sought—
So rested he by the Tumtum tree
And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

“And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!”
He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

YEARS 5 & 6

The Ghostly Visitor by Roger Stevens

I woke up last night
In a pool of blue moonlight
The curtains were swaying
But there was no wind
The night was still and silent

Silent
Except for the clock
Ticking the minutes past midnight
And in the garden I hear
An eerie sound

An eerie sound
Like bones clicking
Or a body
Dragging itself over the autumn leaves
On the lawn
The sound of a rasping breath
Far away

Far away
But growing louder
Getting closer
The rustle of branch against the wall
Or a claw
Scrabbling

Scrabbling
Beneath my window
Climbing
Trying to gain a purchase on the brick
I am frozen in my bed
Too scared to get up
And turn on the light
I lie still, listening.
Until at last the sound recedes
Leaving my garden

Leaving my garden
But clearly heading
In the direction of
Your house

Your house...

KEY STAGE 3

Skimbleshanks: The Railway cat by T.S. Eliot

Page 1/2

There's a whisper down the line at 11.39
When the Night Mail's ready to depart,
Saying "Skimble where is Skimble has he gone to hunt the thimble?
We must find him or the train can't start."
All the guards and all the porters and the stationmaster's daughters
They are searching high and low,
Saying "Skimble where is Skimble for unless he's very nimble
Then the Night Mail just can't go."
At 11.42 then the signal's nearly due
And the passengers are frantic to a man—
Then Skimble will appear and he'll saunter to the rear:
He's been busy in the luggage van!

He gives one flash of his glass-green eyes
And the signal goes "All Clear!"
And we're off at last for the northern part
Of the Northern Hemisphere!

You may say that by and large it is Skimble who's in charge
Of the Sleeping Car Express.
From the driver and the guards to the bagmen playing cards
He will supervise them all, more or less.
Down the corridor he paces and examines all the faces
Of the travellers in the First and the Third;
He establishes control by a regular patrol
And he'd know at once if anything occurred.
He will watch you without winking and he sees what you are thinking
And it's certain that he doesn't approve
Of hilarity and riot, so the folk are very quiet
When Skimble is about and on the move.
You can play no pranks with Skimbleshanks!
He's a Cat that cannot be ignored;
So nothing goes wrong on the Northern Mail
When Skimbleshanks is aboard.

KEY STAGE 3

Skimbleshanks: The Railway cat by T.S. Eliot

Page 2/2

Oh, it's very pleasant when you have found your little den
With your name written up on the door.
And the berth is very neat with a newly folded sheet
And there's not a speck of dust on the floor.
There is every sort of light-you can make it dark or bright;
There's a handle that you turn to make a breeze.
There's a funny little basin you're supposed to wash your face in
And a crank to shut the window if you sneeze.
Then the guard looks in politely and will ask you very brightly
"Do you like your morning tea weak or strong?"
But Skimble's just behind him and was ready to remind him,
For Skimble won't let anything go wrong.
And when you creep into your cosy berth
And pull up the counterpane,
You ought to reflect that it's very nice
To know that you won't be bothered by mice—
You can leave all that to the Railway Cat,
The Cat of the Railway Train!

In the watches of the night he is always fresh and bright;
Every now and then he has a cup of tea
With perhaps a drop of Scotch while he's keeping on the watch,
Only stopping here and there to catch a flea.
You were fast asleep at Crewe and so you never knew
That he was walking up and down the station;
You were sleeping all the while he was busy at Carlisle,
Where he greets the stationmaster with elation.
But you saw him at Dumfries, where he speaks to the police
If there's anything they ought to know about:
When you get to Gallowgate there you do not have to wait—
For Skimbleshanks will help you to get out!
He gives you a wave of his long brown tail
Which says: "I'll see you again!
You'll meet without fail on the Midnight Mail
The Cat of the Railway Train."

KEY STAGE 3

Tarantella by Hilaire Belloc

Do you remember an Inn, Miranda?
Do you remember an Inn?
And the tedding and the spreading of the straw
for a bedding,
And the fleas that tease in the High Pyrenees,
And the wine that tasted of tar,
And the cheers and the jeers of the young
muleteers
Under the vine of the dark veranda?
Do you remember an Inn, Miranda?
Do you remember an Inn?
And the cheers and the jeers of the young
muleteers
Who hadn't got a penny,
And who weren't paying any,
And the hammer at the doors and the din;
And the Hip! Hop! Hap!
Of the clap
Of the hands to the twirl and the swirl
Of the girl gone chancing,
Glancing,
Dancing,
Backing and advancing,
Snapping of the clapper to the spin,
Out and in
And the Ting! Tong! Tang! of the guitar?
Do you remember an Inn, Miranda?
Do you remember an Inn?
Never more;
Miranda,
Never more.
Only the high peaks hoar:
And Aragon a torrent at the door.
No sound
In the walls of the Halls where falls
The tread
Of the feet of the dead to the ground
No sound:
But the boom
Of the far Waterfall like Doom.

KEY STAGE 4

The Daniel Jazz by Vachel Lindsay

Page 1/2

LET the singer train the audience to roar like lions, and to join in the refrain:—"Go chain the lions down," before he begins to lead them in this jazz.

Darius the Mede was a king and a wonder.
His eye was proud, and his voice was thunder.
He kept bad lions in a monstrous den.
He fed up the lions on Christian men.
With a touch of Alexander's ragtime band.

Daniel was the chief hired man of the land.
He stirred up the jazz in the palace band.
He whitewashed the cellar. He shovelled in the coal.
And Daniel kept a-praying:—"Lord save my soul."
Daniel kept a-praying:—"Lord save my soul."
Daniel kept a-praying:—"Lord save my soul."

Daniel was the butler, swagger and swell.
He ran up stairs. He answered the bell.

And he would let in whoever came a-calling:—
Saints so holy, scamps so appalling.
"Old man Ahab leaves his card.
Elisha and the bears are a-waiting in the yard.
Here comes Pharo and his snakes a-calling.
Here comes Cain and his wife a-calling—
Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego for tea.
Here comes Jonah and the whale, and the sea.
Here comes St. Peter and his fishing pole.
Here comes Judas and his silver a-calling.
Here comes old Beelzebub a-calling."
And Daniel kept a-praying:—"Lord save my soul."
Daniel kept a-praying:—"Lord save my soul."
Daniel kept a-praying:—"Lord save my soul."

His sweetheart and his mother were Christian and meek.
They washed and ironed for Darius every week.
One Thursday he met them at the door:—
Paid them as usual, but acted sore.

He said:—"Your Daniel is a dead little pigeon.
He's a good hard worker, but he talks religion."
And he showed them Daniel in the lion's cage.
Daniel standing quietly, the lions in a rage.

KEY STAGE 4

The Daniel Jazz by Vachel Lyndsay

Page 2/2

His good old mother cried:—

“Lord save him.”

And Daniel's tender sweetheart cried:—

“Lord save him.”

And she was a golden lily in the dew.

And she was as sweet as an apple on the tree.

And she was as fine as a melon in the corn-field,

Gliding and lovely as a ship on the sea,

Gliding and lovely as a ship on the sea.

And she prayed to the Lord:—

“Send Gabriel. Send Gabriel.”

King Darius said to the lions:—

“Bite Daniel. Bite Daniel.

Bite him. Bite him. Bite him.”

Here the audience roars with the leader.

Thus roared the lions:—

“We want Daniel, Daniel, Daniel,

We want Daniel, Daniel, Daniel.

Grrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr

Grrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr.”

And Daniel did not frown,

Daniel did not cry.

He kept on looking at the sky.

And the Lord said to Gabriel:—

Go chain the lions down,

Go chain the lions down.

Go chain the lions down.

Go chain the lions down.”

And Gabriel chained the lions,

And Gabriel chained the lions,

And Gabriel chained the lions,

And Daniel got out of the den,

And Daniel got out of the den,

And Daniel got out of the den.

And Darius said:—“You're a Christian child,

Darius said:—“You're a Christian child,

Darius said:—“You're a Christian child,”

And gave him his job again,

And gave him his job again,

And gave him his job again.

KEY STAGE 4

Beleaguered Cities by Frank Lucas

Build your houses, build your houses, build your towns,
Fell the woodland, to a gutter turn the brook,
Pave the meadows, pave the meadows, pave the downs,
Plant your bricks and mortar where the grasses shook,
The wind-swept grasses shook.

Build, build your Babels black against the sky -
But mark yon small green blade, your stones between,
The single spy
Of that uncounted host you have outcast;
For with their tiny pennons waving green
They shall storm your streets at last.

Build your houses, build your houses, build your slums,
Drive your drains where once the rabbits used to lurk,
Let there be no song there save the wind that hums
Through the idle wires while dumb men tramp to work,
Tramp to their idle work,
Silent the siege; none notes it; yet one day
Men from your walls shall watch the woods once more
Close round their prey.

Build, build the ramparts of your giant town;
Yet they shall crumble to the dust before
The battering thistle-down.

Festival rules:

Competitors work hard preparing for the Festival. Please make their experience enjoyable by following the rules of all festivals:



No mobile phones

Please switch off all mobile phones.



No photography

To comply with Safeguarding regulations photography is strictly forbidden.



No videography

To comply with Safeguarding regulations videography is strictly forbidden.



Quiet please

Please show consideration by being as quiet as possible at the festival.

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.

Copyright rules and conditions of entry:

The Peterborough Drama Festival has entered into an agreement with the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society which means that entrants do not have to seek copyright permission for any poetry, prose or solo dramatic items performed to a time limit of 10 minutes.

Solo and dramatic items must be announced with title and author at the time of performance to qualify for copyright indemnity and the performers must not change the words or gender of the character.

Duologues and group dramatic performances are not covered by this agreement and copyright for these should be sought by the performers at the time of entry.

Performers and teachers should know that authors are directly reimbursed as a result of their works being performed.

All time limits must be strictly adhered to, otherwise penalty points will be imposed.

Adjudicators' decisions are final.

Ages must be reckoned as at the first day of the Festival. In duologue and group classes the class is determined by the oldest competitor.

Competitors should give a copy of their script/readings to adjudicators at the time of performance.

Further information about entries will be requested in February 2025 to enable the committee to submit relevant copyright performance information.

Trophies:

A trophy agreement must be signed.

Responsibility for engraving trophies rests with the winning competitor.

Trophies won at the Festival must be returned. Arrangements to return can be made via email to the festival secretary.