



PETERBOROUGH DRAMA FESTIVAL 2027



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



pdfsecretary@hotmail.com

SYLLABUS 2027

Choral Speaking (select one of the two choices):

Years 1 & 2:

Cleaning Machine by Diane Humphrey
My Pet Dragon by Michael Alexander

Years 3 & 4:

The Way Through the Woods by Rudyard Kipling
Mr. Nobody by Walter De La Mare

Years 5 & 6:

The Crocodile by Roald Dahl
Sick by Shel Silverstein

Key Stage 3:

A Smuggler's Song by Rudyard Kipling
The Spider and the Fly by Mary Howitt



Key Stage 4:

The Listeners by Walter De La Mare
Macavity: The Mystery Cat by T.S. Eliot

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

KEEP UP TO DATE WITH ALL FESTIVAL NEWS



Follow us on Facebook and X, visit our website and scan the QR code to join our email mailing list.



www.peterboroughdramafestival.org.uk

Email contact list



YEARS 1 & 2

Cleaning Machine by Diane Humphrey

I think I've invented the first ever seen,
All singing, all dancing, cleaning machine.
It goes into corners, where nasty things lurk.
You just press a switch and it gets right to work.

It ferrets out 'undies' worn weeks before.
And folds up your clothes from off of the floor.
It has a wide mouth for sucking up junk
like felt-tip pen tops and garbage and 'gunk'.

One push on the button that's marked
'SMELLY SOCKS!'
They're sucked into pairs, straight into a box.
A flick of a switch, it's making the bed.
Then rolls up your jim-jams and tickles your ted!

The perfect machine for clearing up grot.
And picking up food that's starting to rot.
It has a long handle for reaching the stuff.
Like bits of toe nail and belly button fluff! Yuck!

Two pulls on the lever, and set it to 'ON'
Just leave it ten minutes until it has done.
There's no doubt about it, the best ever seen
All singing all dancing CLEANING MACHINE!

YEARS 1 & 2

My Pet Dragon by Michael Alexander

My dragon is a tricky pet
Last week I took him to the vet
He barely fitted through the door
And caused a terrible uproar
The dogs all whined, the cats they hissed
The rat, I'm told, will be sadly missed

And then, to make things even worse
My dragon ate the lady's purse
Several shoes and an old man's hat
The table where the receptionist sat
If I hadn't given a mighty yell
He might have eaten her as well.

The vet appeared, looking grim
Brought from his office by the din
'My dragon's ill, please don't be mad'
'I need your help, the effects are bad'
My dragon sneezed, I watched him stare
As flames shot out and singed his hair

'You're right' he gasped, his head alight
We must sort out your dragon's plight
If not to stop my surgery from these burning flames
Then from the newspaper's crazy claims
For if they say what they mostly do
We'll all be catching Dragon flu!

YEARS 3 & 4

The Way Through the Woods by Rudyard Kipling

They shut the road through the woods
Seventy years ago.
Weather and rain have undone it again,
And now you would never know
There was once a road through the woods
Before they planted the trees.
It is underneath the coppice and heath,
And the thin anemones.
Only the keeper sees
That, where the ring-dove broods,
And the badgers roll at ease,
There was once a road through the woods.

Yet, if you enter the woods
Of a summer evening late,
When the night-air cools on the trout-ringed pools
Where the otter whistles his mate,
(They fear not men in the woods,
Because they see so few.)
You will hear the beat of a horse's feet,
And the swish of a skirt in the dew,
Steadily cantering through
The misty solitudes,
As though they perfectly knew
The old lost road through the woods...
But there is no road through the woods.

YEARS 3 & 4

Mr. Nobody by Walter De La Mare

I know a funny little man,
As quiet as a mouse,
Who does the mischief that is done
In everybody's house.
There's no one ever sees his face,
And yet we all agree
That every plate we break was cracked
By Mr. Nobody.

'Tis he who always tears our books,
who leaves our doors ajar;
he pulls the buttons from our shirts,
and scatters pins afar,
that squeaking door will always squeak,
because of this you see:
we leave the oiling to be done
by Mr. Nobody.

He puts damp wood upon the fire,
So kettles cannot boil;
His are the feet that bring in mud
And all the carpets soil.
The papers always are mislaid,
Who had them last but he?
There's no one tosses them about
But Mr. Nobody.

YEARS 5 & 6

The Crocodile by Roald Dahl

'No animal is half as vile
As Crocky-Wock, the crocodile.
On Saturdays he likes to crunch
Six juicy children for his lunch
And he especially enjoys
Just three of each, three girls, three boys.
He smears the boys (to make them hot)
With mustard from the mustard pot.
But mustard doesn't go with girls,
It tastes all wrong with plaits and curls.
With them, what goes extremely well
Is butterscotch and caramel.
It's such a super marvelous treat
When boys are hot and girls are sweet.
At least that's Crocky's point of view
He ought to know. He's had a few.
That's all for now. It's time for bed.
Lie down and rest your sleepy head.
Ssh. Listen. What is that I hear,
Galumphing softly up the stair?

Go lock the door and fetch my gun!
Go on child, hurry! Quickly run!
No stop! Stand back! He's coming in!
Oh, look, that greasy greenish skin!
The shining teeth, the greedy smile!
It's Crocky-Wock, the Crocodile!

YEARS 5 & 6

Sick by Shel Silverstein

"I cannot go to school today,"
Said little Peggy Ann McKay.
"I have the measles and the mumps,
A gash, a rash and purple bumps.
My mouth is wet, my throat is dry,
I'm going blind in my right eye.
My tonsils are as big as rocks,
I've counted sixteen chicken pox.

And there's one more—that's seventeen,
And don't you think my face looks green?
My leg is cut—my eyes are blue—
It might be instamatic flu.
I cough and sneeze and gasp and choke,
I'm sure that my left leg is broke—
My hip hurts when I move my chin,
My belly button's caving in.

My back is wrenched, my ankle's sprained,
My 'pendix pains each time it rains.
My nose is cold, my toes are numb.
I have a sliver in my thumb.
My neck is stiff, my voice is weak,
I hardly whisper when I speak.
My tongue is filling up my mouth,
I think my hair is falling out.

My elbow's bent, my spine ain't straight,
My temperature is one-o-eight.
My brain is shrunk, I cannot hear,
There is a hole inside my ear.
I have a hangnail, and my heart is—what?
What's that? What's that you say?
You say today is . . . Saturday?
G'bye, I'm going out to play!"

KEY STAGE 3

A Smuggler's Song by Rudyard Kipling

If you wake at midnight, and hear a horse's feet,
Don't go drawing back the blind, or looking in the street,
Them that ask no questions isn't told a lie.
Watch the wall my darling while the Gentlemen go by.

Five and twenty ponies,
Trotting through the dark -
Brandy for the Parson, 'Baccy for the Clerk.
Laces for a lady; letters for a spy,
Watch the wall my darling while the Gentlemen go by!

Running round the woodlump if you chance to find
Little barrels, roped and tarred, all full of brandy-wine,
Don't you shout to come and look, nor use 'em for your play.
Put the brishwood back again - and they'll be gone next day !

If you see the stable-door setting open wide;
If you see a tired horse lying down inside;
If your mother mends a coat cut about and tore;
If the lining's wet and warm - don't you ask no more!

If you meet King George's men, dressed in blue and red,
You be careful what you say, and mindful what is said.
If they call you " pretty maid," and chuck you 'neath the chin,
Don't you tell where no one is, nor yet where no one's been!

Knocks and footsteps round the house - whistles after dark -
You've no call for running out till the house-dogs bark.
Trusty's here, and Pincher's here, and see how dumb they lie
They don't fret to follow when the Gentlemen go by!

'If You do as you've been told, 'likely there's a chance,
You'll be give a dainty doll, all the way from France,
With a cap of Valenciennes, and a velvet hood -
A present from the Gentlemen, along 'o being good!

Five and twenty ponies,
Trotting through the dark -
Brandy for the Parson, 'Baccy for the Clerk.
Them that asks no questions isn't told a lie -
Watch the wall my darling while the Gentlemen go by!

KEY STAGE 3

The Spider and the Fly by Mary Howitt

"Will you walk into my parlour?" said the Spider to the Fly,
"'Tis the prettiest little parlour that ever you did spy;
The way into my parlour is up a winding stair,
And I have many curious things to shew when you are there."
"Oh no, no," said the little Fly, "to ask me is in vain,
For who goes up your winding stair can ne'er come down again."

"I'm sure you must be weary, dear, with soaring up so high;
Will you rest upon my little bed?" said the Spider to the Fly.
"There are pretty curtains drawn around; the sheets are fine and thin,
And if you like to rest awhile, I'll snugly tuck you in!"
"Oh no, no," said the little Fly, "for I've often heard it said,
They never, never wake again, who sleep upon your bed!"

Said the cunning Spider to the Fly, "Dear friend what can I do,
To prove the warm affection I've always felt for you?
I have within my pantry good store of all that's nice;
I'm sure you're very welcome—will you please to take a slice?"
"Oh no, no," said the little Fly, "kind sir, that cannot be,
I've heard what's in your pantry, and I do not wish to see!"

"Sweet creature!" said the Spider, "you're witty and you're wise,
How handsome are your gauzy wings, how brilliant are your eyes!
I've a little looking-glass upon my parlour shelf,
If you'll step in one moment, dear, you shall behold yourself."
"I thank you, gentle sir," she said, "for what you're pleased to say,
And bidding you good morning now, I'll call another day."

The Spider turned him round about, and went into his den,
For well he knew the silly Fly would soon come back again:
So he wove a subtle web, in a little corner sly,
And set his table ready, to dine upon the Fly.
Then he came out to his door again, and merrily did sing,
"Come hither, pretty Fly, with the pearl and silver wing;
Your robes are green and purple—there's a crest upon your head;
Your eyes are like the diamond bright, but mine are dull as lead!"

Alas, alas! how very soon this silly little Fly,
Hearing his wily, flattering words, came slowly flitting by;
With buzzing wings she hung aloft, then near and nearer drew,
Thinking only of her brilliant eyes, and green and purple hue—
Thinking only of her crested head—poor foolish thing! At last,
Up jumped the cunning Spider, and fiercely held her fast.
He dragged her up his winding stair, into his dismal den,
Within his little parlour—but she ne'er came out again!

And now dear little children, who may this story read,
To idle, silly flattering words, I pray you ne'er give heed:
Unto an evil counsellor, close heart and ear and eye,
And take a lesson from this tale, of the Spider and the Fly.

KEY STAGE 4

The Listeners by Walter De La Mare

'Is there anybody there?' said the Traveller,
Knocking on the moonlit door;
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses
Of the forest's ferny floor:
And a bird flew up out of the turret,
Above the Traveller's head:
And he smote upon the door again a second time;
'Is there anybody there?' he said.
But no one descended to the Traveller;
No head from the leaf-fringed sill
Leaned over and looked into his grey eyes,
Where he stood perplexed and still.
But only a host of phantom listeners
That dwelt in the lone house then
Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight
To that voice from the world of men:
Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark stair,
That goes down to the empty hall,
Harkening in an air stirred and shaken
By the lonely Traveller's call.
And he felt in his heart their strangeness,
Their stillness answering his cry,
While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,
'Neath the starred and leafy sky;
For he suddenly smote on the door, even
Louder, and lifted his head:—
'Tell them I came, and no one answered,
That I kept my word,' he said.
Never the least stir made the listeners,
Though every word he spake
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house
From the one man left awake:
Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,
And the sound of iron on stone,
And how the silence surged softly backward,
When the plunging hoofs were gone.

KEY STAGE 4

Macavity: The Mystery Cat by T.S. Eliot

Macavity's a Mystery Cat: he's called the Hidden Paw—
For he's the master criminal who can defy the Law.
He's the bafflement of Scotland Yard, the Flying Squad's despair:
For when they reach the scene of crime—Macavity's not there!

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,
He's broken every human law, he breaks the law of gravity.
His powers of levitation would make a fakir stare,
And when you reach the scene of crime—Macavity's not there!
You may seek him in the basement, you may look up in the air—
But I tell you once and once again, Macavity's not there!

Macavity's a ginger cat, he's very tall and thin;
You would know him if you saw him, for his eyes are sunken in.
His brow is deeply lined with thought, his head is highly domed;
His coat is dusty from neglect, his whiskers are uncombed.
He sways his head from side to side, with movements like a snake;
And when you think he's half asleep, he's always wide awake.

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,
For he's a fiend in feline shape, a monster of depravity.
You may meet him in a by-street, you may see him in the square—
But when a crime's discovered, then Macavity's not there!

He's outwardly respectable. (They say he cheats at cards.)
And his footprints are not found in any file of Scotland Yard's.
And when the larder's looted, or the jewel-case is rifled,
Or when the milk is missing, or another Peke's been stifled,
Or the greenhouse glass is broken, and the trellis past repair—
Ay, there's the wonder of the thing! Macavity's not there!

KEY STAGE 4

Macavity: The Mystery Cat by T.S. Eliot

And when the Foreign Office find a Treaty's gone astray,
Or the Admiralty lose some plans and drawings by the way,
There may be a scrap of paper in the hall or on the stair—
But it's useless to investigate—Macavity's not there!
And when the loss has been disclosed, the Secret Service say:
'It must have been Macavity!'—but he's a mile away.
You'll be sure to find him resting, or a-licking of his thumbs;
Or engaged in doing complicated long division sums.

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,
There never was a Cat of such deceitfulness and suavity.
He always has an alibi, and one or two to spare:
At whatever time the deed took place—MACAVITY WASN'T THERE!
And they say that all the Cats whose wicked deeds are widely known
(I might mention Mungojerrie, I might mention Griddlebone)
Are nothing more than agents for the Cat who all the time
Just controls their operations: the Napoleon of Crime!

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.

Trophies:

The Peterborough Drama Festival is delighted to award a range of trophies and cups at our classes.

If you are awarded a trophy or cup:

- 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.