

Simply Charlotte Mason presents

# Enjoy the Poems

## Paul Laurence Dunbar

SAMPLE



Compiled by Ruth Smith

With additional material by Sonya Shafer and Katie Thacker

## *Make poetry study simple and enjoyable!*

- Get to know a poet and his style through 26 complete poems and a living biography.
- Encourage imagination with helpful tips for Setting the Imaginary Stage.
- Nourish a love for poetic expression by allowing the poems to speak for themselves.
- Enjoy powerful use of language with occasional definitions.
- Gain confidence with practical and inspiring Poetry Notes from Charlotte Mason and others.
- Cultivate good character through beautiful words well put.

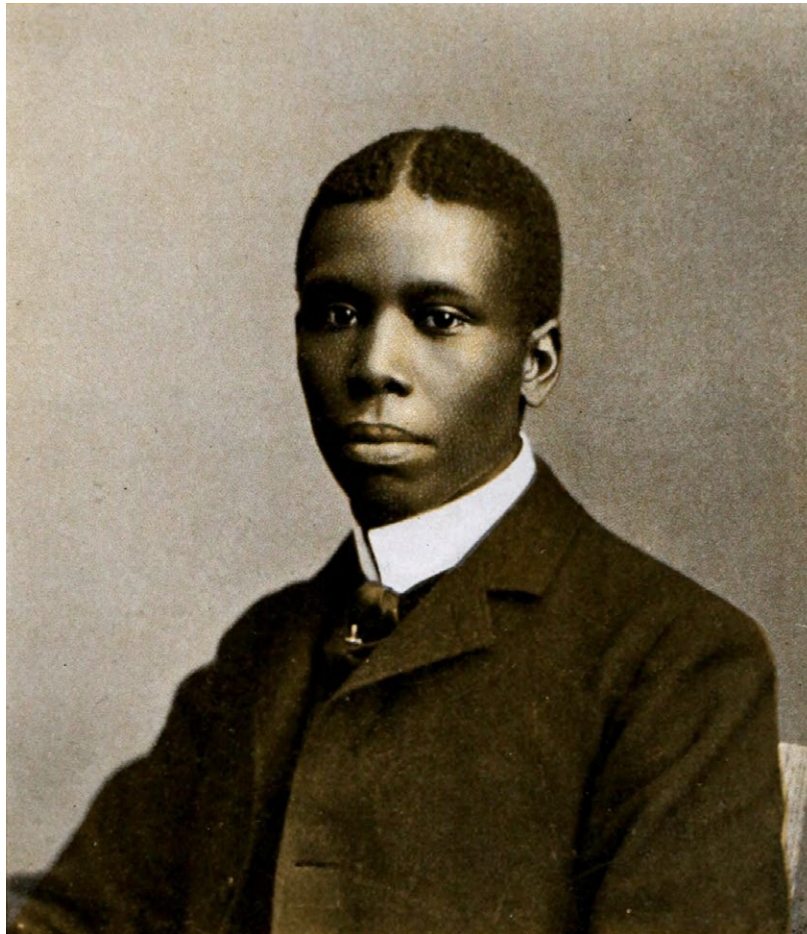
*“The line that strikes us as we read, that recurs, that we murmur over at odd moments—this is the line that influences our living.”*

—Charlotte Mason

Give your children the gift of poetry with the  
Enjoy the Poems series!

*Simply*  
**Charlotte Mason**

# Enjoy the Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar



*Compiled by Ruth Smith*  
*With additional material by Sonya Shafer and Katie Thacker*

Excerpts from Charlotte Mason's Original Home Schooling Series are surrounded by quotation marks and accompanied by a reference to which book in the series they came from.

Vol. 1: Home Education

Vol. 2: Parents and Children

Vol. 3: School Education

Vol. 4: Ourselves

Vol. 5: Formation of Character

Vol. 6: A Philosophy of Education

Enjoy the Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar

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ISBN 978-1-61634-602-7 printed

ISBN 978-1-61634-603-4 electronic download

Published by

Simply Charlotte Mason, LLC

930 New Hope Road #11-892

Lawrenceville, Georgia 30045

[simplycharlottesmason.com](http://simplycharlottesmason.com)

Printed by PrintLogic, Inc.

Monroe, Georgia, USA

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# Suggested Schedule

To linger with this poet for a year, you might follow a schedule something like this. Also try to memorize and recite one poem each 12-week term.

Week 1: Read a new poem.  
Week 2: Read a new poem.  
Week 3: Read the poet's biography and narrate it.  
Week 4: Read a new poem.  
Week 5: Read a new poem.  
Week 6: Enter the poet into your Book of Centuries.  
Week 7: Read a new poem.  
Week 8: Read a new poem.  
Week 9: Choose one of the previous poems and illustrate it.  
Week 10: Read a new poem.  
Week 11: Read a new poem.  
Week 12: Tell what you know about this poet.

Week 13: Read a new poem.  
Week 14: Read a new poem.  
Week 15: Read a new poem.  
Week 16: Read a new poem.  
Week 17: Children read aloud favorite poems so far.  
Week 18: Read a new poem.  
Week 19: Read a new poem.  
Week 20: Read a new poem.  
Week 21: Choose one of the previous poems and illustrate it.  
Week 22: Read a new poem.  
Week 23: Read a new poem.  
Week 24: Revisit favorite poems.

Week 25: Read a new poem.  
Week 26: Read a new poem.  
Week 27: Read a new poem.  
Week 28: Read a new poem.  
Week 29: Children read aloud favorite poems so far.  
Week 30: Read a new poem.  
Week 31: Read a new poem.  
Week 32: Read a new poem.  
Week 33: Choose one of the previous poems and illustrate it.  
Week 34: Read a new poem.  
Week 35: Read a new poem.  
Week 36: Revisit favorite poems.

# How to Enjoy the Poems

1. Gather the children and read a poem aloud at least once a week. Focus on one poet's work for many months. Linger and get to know his or her ideas.

“Collections’ of poems are to be eschewed; but some one poet should have at least a year to himself, that he may have time to do what is in him towards cultivating the seeing eye, the hearing ear, the generous heart.” (*Formation of Character*, p. 224)

2. Read complete poems, not just portions or snippets. We have included only complete poems in this book.

“Selections should be avoided; children should read the whole book or the whole poem to which they are introduced.” (*A Philosophy of Education*, p. 340)

3. Share poems that are suitable for your children during each season of life. All of the poems in this book are appropriate for children of various ages.

“What can we do to ensure that the poetry our children learn shall open their eyes to beauty, shall increase their joy? In all humility I would offer one suggestion on this point to-day, this: The poetry must be such as to delight them, (1) by being in itself delightful; and (2) by being suitable to their years.” (“An Address on the Teaching of Poetry” by Rev. H. C. Beeching, *The Parents’ Review*, Vol. 3 (1892–93), edited by Charlotte Mason, pp. 893–898)

4. Understand that the purpose of poetry is to cultivate the imagination, right emotions, and the power of vivid expression.

“The purpose of poetry is to communicate or extend the joy of life by quickening our emotions. . . . It teaches us how to feel, by expressing for us, in the most perfect way, right human emotions, which we recognise as right, and come ourselves to share. It is good for all of us to be taught how to feel; to be taught how to feel in the presence of Nature; how to feel to one’s country, to one’s lover, or wife, or child; to be taught to feel the mystery of life, the glory of it, the pathos of it; good for us to be shaken out of our lethargic absorption in ourselves, and to have our eyes anointed with salve, that we may look round us and rejoice, and lift up our hearts. . . .

“. . . It will be readily seen that if the poems become real and vivid to them, the children gain, besides the immediate joy in the life represented, and the right training of the emotions by their right exercise thus administered (which I maintain is the true function of poetry), they gain, I say, besides this, exercise to their own powers of imagination; the wings of their own fancy become fledged, and they can fly at will. And, secondly, they gain skill in the use of language.” (Rev. Beeching, *The Parents’ Review*)

5. Don't turn the poetry readings into lessons. Give only enough explanation necessary to help your children realize the situation of the poem. We have included occasional Setting the Imaginary Stage and Learning the Language notes to help you do this.

“Poetry must not on any pretence be made into a poetry lesson; all that is at enmity with joy must be banished from this ideal province. What one wants, of course, is that the poem shall become to the reader what it was to the writer; a few words may need explaining, but the explanation must not be elaborate . . . ; the chief thing will be to make sure that the child realises the facts, the situation.” (Rev. Beeching, *The Parents' Review*)

6. Allow your children time and space to feel the force and beauty of words.

“The thing is, to keep your eye upon words and wait to feel their force and beauty; and, when words are so fit that no other words can be put in their places, so few that none can be left out without spoiling the sense, and so fresh and musical that they delight you, then you may be sure that you are reading Literature, whether in prose or poetry.” (*Ourselves*, Book 1, p. 41)

7. Encourage your children to make the poetry their own. Let them

- Read it aloud, being careful to say beautiful words in a beautiful way.
- Act it, presenting the dramatic poems in their own style.
- Draw it, portraying a favorite scene in art.
- Copy it, transcribing a favorite stanza in their best handwriting.
- Memorize and recite it, conveying their own interpretation of the ideas.
- Treasure it, entering favorite passages or phrases in a personal journal for years to come.



# Getting to Know Paul Laurence Dunbar

by Katie Thacker

In a little house on Howard Street in Dayton, Ohio, in the summer of 1872, a mother and father gazed at their beautiful little boy. They were thrilled to be new parents but stuck in debate—for what should the baby’s name be?

“Don’t you think Paul is too old-fashioned of a name?” asked the baby’s sweet mother, Matilda.

The father quickly returned, “Matilda, Madam, don’t you know that the Bible says Paul was a great man? This child will be great some day and do you honor.”

And so, Joshua and Matilda Dunbar smiled at their baby boy, now christened Paul Laurence Dunbar. Paul’s father had been right; he would indeed become a great poet, writer, and champion for the people he loved.

Although Joshua Dunbar had high hopes for his son Paul, he struggled to find happiness for himself. A former slave, Joshua had never received a formal education and was limited to what he could teach himself. His lack of education and his skin color kept a good job out of his reach, even in Ohio. Defeated and discouraged, he left Paul and his mother when Paul was just a boy.

Matilda, also a former slave, passed on to Paul her love for words. Matilda had grown up hearing poetry and beautiful stories in the home of her owners, though she had never learned to read as a child. Resourceful and passionate, she found a way to learn. She used her skills as a talented cook to make treats for neighborhood school children in exchange for reading lessons.

Paul and his mother worked together to keep a happy home. Paul helped Matilda with her washerwoman work, and Matilda told him stories about her life growing up. Paul was often sick as a boy, but he didn’t let poor health stop him. By age seven he was already scribbling out lines of verse whenever he had a few moments and enjoying the melodic tones of the words. By high school, his poems and articles were appearing in local publications, including the newspaper published by brothers Orville and Wilbur Wright, later to be known as the inventors of manned flight.

When Paul graduated from Central High School, he was well known to his fellow students and teachers as a talented poet. They enthusiastically selected him to write the lyrics to the commencement song for graduation day. As Paul walked up to receive his diploma, he held his head high with hope for a good job and a stable income for himself and his mother.

Sadly, even with a high school degree and clear talent as a writer, the only job Paul could find was work as an elevator attendant at the Callahan Building for four dollars a week. With a notebook by his side at all times, Paul took advantage of the quiet moments he could snatch at work to write out a few lines of verse between rings of the elevator bell.

A year after Paul graduated, a former teacher of his recommended him to deliver the welcome address to a meeting of the Western Association of Writers. Paul got permission to step away from his elevator post just long enough to walk down the hall straight to the podium, deliver his address in flawless meter, and then walk

*Dunbar lived  
1872–1906.*

## OCTOBER

### *Setting the*

### *Imaginary Stage:*

*It's a good idea to read the title of the poem and prepare a mental canvas for the picture the poet is about to describe.*

October is the treasurer of the year,  
And all the months pay bounty to her store;  
The fields and orchards still their tribute bear,  
And fill her brimming coffers more and more.  
But she, with youthful lavishness,  
Spends all her wealth in gaudy dress,  
And decks herself in garments bold  
Of scarlet, purple, red, and gold.

She heedeth not how swift the hours fly,  
But smiles and sings her happy life along;  
She only sees above a shining sky;  
She only hears the breezes' voice in song.  
Her garments trail the woodlands through,  
And gather pearls of early dew  
That sparkle, till the roguish Sun  
Creeps up and steals them every one.

But what cares she that jewels should be lost,  
When all of Nature's bounteous wealth is hers?  
Though princely fortunes may have been their cost,  
Not one regret her calm demeanor stirs.  
Whole-hearted, happy, careless, free,  
She lives her life out joyously,  
Nor cares when Frost stalks o'er her way  
And turns her auburn locks to gray.

### *Poetry Note:*

*"These two things—a faculty of realising vividly, and a power of vivid expression—are of the essence of culture."*

*—Rev. H. C. Beeching, The Parents' Review*

# Pages for Poem Illustrations

An Illustration of \_\_\_\_\_

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