

Course  
**ENG-4111-1**  
English in Poems and Songs

**English Language Arts**





## Introduction

Poetry is a common feature in texts that are written, recited, read and sung for numerous celebratory and commemorative occasions. It is deeply woven into the fabric of our culture. We need only think of the reams of poetic texts that appear on the Internet following a national or global tragedy to see that they are a natural vehicle for expressing emotions and ideas of every description. Indeed, even the simplest poetic texts can deal with universal themes and illuminate the human condition. Essentially, these texts are meant to be heard. When we listen to them attentively, we discover that the human voice is a powerful communication tool that can be enhanced by the gestures, movements and facial expressions of a speaker or singer. In short, we learn that in these and other oral texts, words are only part of the message.

In this 25-hour course, the first of three courses in Secondary IV (for which adult learners earn credits in language of instruction), adult learners participate in a variety of learning situations and activities to develop their ability to discuss and analyze traditional and free-verse poems and songs. (Traditional texts employ regular poetic meter and rhyme schemes, whereas free-verse texts do not.) Although poems and songs belong primarily to the Narrative genre, whose main social function is to depict human experiences and themes in an imaginative way and stimulate an interpretive, reflective or affective response, they may contain persuasive, explanatory and informative elements as well. (See the explanation on social functions and their corresponding genres in Chapter 1, Section 1.2.)

The course helps adult learners broaden their knowledge of the communication conventions used in traditional and free-verse poetic texts. By the end of the course, adult learners will be able to apply this knowledge when they interpret poetic texts and present readings of both types of poems or songs.

## Subject-Specific Competencies

Competencies are developed and demonstrated through the mobilization and effective use of various resources. Among these resources are language processes, strategies and textual and linguistic knowledge. The subject-specific competencies targeted in the course *English in Poems and Songs* are shaded in the table below.

Competencies	Key Features		
<b>Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn (C1)</b>	Develops resources for communicating orally and for learning	Interacts with others in different contexts	Interprets how speakers shape an oral message to create a relationship with the audience
<b>Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts (C2)</b>	Develops resources to make sense of various written, spoken and media texts	Extends understanding of various written, spoken and media texts	Interprets his/her relationship to the text and the context
<b>Produces texts for personal and social purposes (C3)</b>	Develops resources to produce written and media texts	Follows a process to produce written and media texts	Creates a relationship with his/her audience suitable to the text and context

Although only C1 and C2 are targeted in this course, C3 is implicit as it complements some of the learning situations.

For more information on the subject-specific competencies, refer to the following sections:

- *Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn (C1)*, Chapter 3, Section 3.2
- *Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts (C2)*, Chapter 3, Section 3.3
- *Produces texts for personal and social purposes (C3)*, Chapter 3, Section 3.4

## Processes and Strategies

Language processes are series of actions or operations that support competency development. In other words, they are important resources that adult learners may use to become more effective speakers, listeners, readers, viewers, writers or producers of texts. In all, there are four language processes (Research, Reading, Writing and Production); the processes suggested for this course are illustrated in the table below.

Processes	Phases
<b>Research</b>	Planning task at hand Mobilizing resources
<b>Reading</b>	Reflecting on the resources employed to achieve the task

Communication and learning strategies are actions, behaviours, steps and techniques that enable adult learners to overcome obstacles, attain goals and achieve success. They are additional resources that adult learners may use to become more effective speakers, listeners, readers, viewers, writers or producers of texts. The communication and learning strategies suggested for this course are illustrated in the table below.

Strategies		
<b>Communication</b>		Verbal and nonverbal Rhetorical
<b>Learning</b>	<b>Cognitive</b>	Activating prior knowledge Meaning-making Listening Reading/viewing Interpretation Note-taking
	<b>Socioaffective</b>	Feedback Collaborative
	<b>Metacognitive</b>	Procedural Feedback Self-evaluation

Additional information on processes and strategies is provided in the following sections:

- Chapter 3, Section 3.5
- Appendix (Inventory of Strategies)

### Cross-Curricular Competencies

The cross-curricular competencies are generic skills that can be developed and applied outside the school setting. They are developed in tandem with subject-specific competencies. Given the nature of the course *English in Poems and Songs*, the shaded cross-curricular competencies listed horizontally could easily be developed simultaneously with the shaded subject-specific competencies listed vertically. Since teachers have the option of choosing learning situations other than the ones suggested in this program, they may decide to develop cross-curricular competencies other than those shaded in the table below.

Cross-Curricular Competencies →  Subject-Specific Competencies ↓	Uses information	Solves problems	Exercises critical judgment	Uses creativity	Adopts effective work methods	Uses ICT	Cooperates with others	Achieves his/her potential	Communicates appropriately
Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn				■	■				■
Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts				■	■				

For more information on the key features and manifestations of the cross-curricular competencies, refer to the Diversified Basic Education Program.

### Subject-Specific Content

The subject-specific content includes knowledge and cultural references.

### Knowledge

The prescribed textual and linguistic elements, necessary for the development of the competencies targeted in this course, are listed below in alphabetical order.

<p><b>Textual Elements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ audience and communication context</li> <li>✓ coherence and cohesion</li> <li>✓ emotional/aesthetic/intellectual appeal of text</li> <li>✓ layout of poems/songs (e.g. title at the top of page and author’s name under title or text; text presented in short lines with minimal punctuation)</li> <li>✓ literary elements such as narrative point of view, setting, symbols and theme</li> <li>✓ main theme and its development</li> <li>✓ methods of organization (e.g. analogy, cause/effect, chronological order)</li> <li>✓ comparison/contrast, example, explanation, listing of ideas)</li> <li>✓ social function(s) of text</li> <li>✓ textual features of poems/songs: titles, verses/stanzas and choruses/refrains</li> </ul>
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**Linguistic Elements**

- ✓ adjective and noun phrases
- ✓ agreement (of person, subject and verb, verb tenses, pronoun and antecedent)
- ✓ body language (gestures/movements/facial expressions/eye contact)
- ✓ capitalization for song titles and authors, drop initials for certain poems
- ✓ coordinators and subordinators
- ✓ language (connotative, aesthetic, figurative, colloquial)
- ✓ language devices (e.g. alliteration, assonance, humour, hyperbole, irony, onomatopoeia, personification, sarcasm, repetition, rhyme, rhythm/meter, metaphor, simile)
- ✓ language tone and register (style/level of language suitable to the context)
- ✓ oral communication features (voice tone, speed, volume, emphasis, enunciation, pronunciation)
- ✓ parallel structure
- ✓ synonyms and antonyms
- ✓ syntax
- ✓ time and sequence markers

**Cultural References**

In this course, teachers may decide to have adult learners explore the sociolinguistic aspect of culture by focusing on the social conventions that govern the language in specific types of poems and songs. Adult learners may explore, for instance, common themes in rap songs, the language they contain (swear words, street slang and graphic descriptions of violence, sex, etc.), the social values these songs reflect and promote, and the audience they target. They may explore lullabies and carols, texts that contain language suitable for the general public and often deal with themes such as peace and love. They may also explore national anthems and patriotic songs, texts that typically employ formal language and promote group cohesion of various kinds, surfacing in times of social upheaval, war and international sporting competitions. Adult learners may consider how the difference in the language, formality and tone of these texts is connected to the roles they play in society. In addition, they may examine a specific song type such as country and western, and discuss how the down-to-earth humour and attitude toward life in such songs is conveyed through the language they use.

By considering these aspects, adult learners become more keenly aware of how popular songs and poems have the power to express and influence the world-view of their listeners.

Alternatively, teachers may decide to focus on the aesthetic or the sociological aspect of culture. (See Chapter 4 for additional information on the three cultural aspects.)

## Families of Learning Situations

The term “families of learning situations” refers to groupings of learning situations that vary in style and complexity but share some common characteristics. The family of learning situations targeted in this course is shaded in the table below.

Family of Learning Situations	
▶	Exploring and creating literary diversity
	Seeking and imparting information
	Developing and supporting a stance

Exploring is associated with the communication purposes of examining different types of poems and songs: their expressive language, social/cultural values, and emotional or intellectual impact. It is also associated with appreciating their unique potential for expressing complex themes in a condensed and aesthetic form. Creating is associated with the communication purpose of creating and presenting oral readings and interpretations of traditional and free-verse poems or songs.

## Broad Areas of Learning

The table below illustrates the broad areas of learning. These five areas are selected on the basis of their importance to society. Each comprises an educational aim and focuses of development that help teachers delineate knowledge that can be explored in specific learning situations.

Broad Areas of Learning →	Health and Well-Being	Career Planning and Entrepreneurship	Environmental Awareness and Consumer Rights and Responsibilities	Media Literacy	Citizenship and Community Life
Subject-Specific Competencies ↓					
Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn				■	
Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts				■	

As demonstrated in the chart above and the example of a learning situation below, Media Literacy is a broad area of learning well suited to this course.

When adult learners focus on Media Literacy, they may develop:

- knowledge of and respect for individual and collective rights and responsibilities regarding the different media

Other broad areas of learning could also be selected to create different learning situations.

For more information on the broad areas of learning, their educational aim and focuses of development, refer to the Diversified Basic Education Program.

## Example of a Learning Situation

### ***Song-Search Competition***

In this activity/learning situation, adult learners are presented with the following scenario:

Great Music Canada, a Canadian recording company, is holding a song-search competition and you have decided to participate. To compete, you need to find a poem (published or unpublished) that you believe could be transformed into a popular song by one of your favourite Canadian artists. The poem should be a good match for your chosen artist, in terms of its theme, tone and language. It should also have two to three stanzas that can serve as verses and ideally a refrain that can serve as a chorus. You must then record your reading of the poem. You need to begin your recording by stating the artist's name and, to respect copyright laws, you also need to state the poem's author and title (as well as the publishing company and poetry collection, if applicable). As you deliver your poetry reading, you need to pause between lines and stanzas, and stanzas and refrains to indicate their separation. You need to enunciate clearly and speak slowly and expressively, emphasizing important words to draw out their meaning and intensify their impact.

When you have completed your reading, you must state in less than a minute why you think this text is perfect for your chosen artist. Finally, you must send your recording by regular post or e-mail to Great Music Canada, 300 Queen St. East, Toronto, Ontario, M5A 1S9 or [song-search@gmc.com](mailto:song-search@gmc.com). If you win this competition, your text will be given to your chosen artist for consideration. In recognition of your efforts, the artist will give you a ticket and a backstage pass to his/her next concert in Montréal, and you will have the chance to play your part in today's exciting music scene!

## End-of-Course Outcomes

By the end of the course, adult learners will be able to:

### **Discuss and analyze**

- **traditional and free-verse poems and song texts**
- **song types** (e.g. love songs, rap songs, protest songs, anthems)

When adult learners discuss and analyze traditional and free-verse poems or songs (live/recorded/print versions), they focus on the social function(s), target audience(s) and communication conventions of these texts as well as the usual layout of print texts (e.g. title at the top of page, author's name under text, presentation of text in short lines with minimal punctuation), and adopt a suitable reading stance. When they explore a selected text, they identify the language used in terms of its formality/informality, its relative complexity, and its aesthetic qualities. They identify examples of language devices such as alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, personification, rhyme and rhythm. In addition, they identify examples of colloquial, figurative or aesthetic language, including language that appeals to the sense of sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing. They discuss and analyze the impact of stanzas/verses and refrains/choruses and repeated images or words. They assess the text's tone or mood and connect this to the language used. They identify the text's main theme(s) and evaluate its overall emotional/aesthetic/intellectual appeal. They discuss the text's informative, persuasive, explanatory or narrative elements. Furthermore, they compare the act of silently reading poems and songs with listening to them being read or performed aloud. In other words, they evaluate the differences in the impact of the written and spoken texts. They also appraise the effectiveness of the oral communication devices used in the spoken texts, such as clear enunciation, varied voice tone, speed, volume and emphasis, as well as nonverbal language such as gestures and movements.

When adult learners analyze different types of song texts, such as popular love songs, rap songs, protest songs, country and western songs, anthems, lullabies and carols, they focus on their social function(s), target audience(s), main themes and implicit social/cultural values. They identify some of the language devices used (see examples above) as well as the type or style of language/vocabulary characteristic of a given song type. They may research and compare the characteristics of the same song types over different time periods, for example, love or protest songs from different decades. Adult learners discuss any informative, persuasive, explanatory or narrative elements in the selected songs.

### **Present orally**

- **a traditional poem or song text they have selected or written**
- **a free-verse poem or song text they have selected or written**

When adult learners present a reading of a traditional poem/song, they use oral communication devices characteristic of a poetry reading. (For example, they emphasize key words and use expressive voice tone, pauses, gestures and facial expressions.) They answer questions on various aspects of their text, e.g. its tone, style, word choice, meaning or main theme, and language devices such as rhyme and rhythm. (See above for additional examples of language devices.) Adult learners also answer questions about the oral communication devices they used when presenting their reading, and provide reasons for the choices they made.

**Text length: 3-4 stanzas or verses (at least 4 lines each)**

Communication context: familiar or unfamiliar audience; informal or formal tone and register suitable to the text type and target audience

When adult learners deliver a reading of a free-verse poem or song text, their text includes some characteristic poetic features such as figurative language (e.g. imagery, metaphor, simile) and other language devices such as alliteration, assonance, repetition and rhythm or meter. In addition, they deliver their text in a style characteristic of a poetry reading. In other words, they use some of the oral communication devices previously listed to enhance the oral delivery of their text. After their reading, they answer questions on their oral delivery and on various aspects of the text such as its theme(s), language and language devices, etc.

**Text length/delivery time: 1-2 minutes**

Communication context: familiar or unfamiliar audience; informal or formal tone and register suitable to the text type and target audience

Teachers need to ensure that adult learners use planning tools such as brainstorming, discussions and rehearsing as they begin creating their texts. Teachers also need to ensure that adult learners actively reflect on what they learned and how successfully they communicated in the texts they created. For example, adult learners may use self-evaluation checklists or participate in feedback discussions to appraise how adequately they responded to questions about the main theme and the language or language devices in the poetic text they presented, as well as to appraise how effectively they communicated their interpretation of this text when they gave their reading. Learners may use the same type of evaluation tools to identify the communication strategies they used and to reflect on what they learned as a result of discussing and presenting these texts.

**Evaluation Criteria for the Competencies Targeted by the Course**

Competencies	Evaluation Criteria
<b>Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn (C1)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective communication of ideas</li> <li>• Effective communication for learning</li> <li>• Appropriate use of language conventions</li> </ul>
<b>Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts (C2)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coherent construction of meaning from texts</li> <li>• Demonstration of understanding contextual connections</li> <li>• Thorough comprehension of structures and features of texts</li> <li>• Critical interpretation of texts</li> </ul>