

This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Neil

Hello, this is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Neil.

Pippa

And I'm Pippa. In this episode we're discussing poetry. For some, poetry is what you study at school, then forget, while for others it becomes an important part of their life. Have you ever read or written any poetry, Neil?

Neil

Well, I haven't written any poetry since I was at school. I would love to read more poetry, but I just don't get it, really. I find it difficult to understand.

Pippa

A good place to hear poetry is an **open mic night**, a live event where anyone is allowed to stand up on stage to sing or recite poems. Here, BBC reporter Maria recites her **open mic** poem about a friend who suffered a stroke, for BBC World Service programme People Fixing the World.

Maria

This first poem, I wrote it about a friend who I love dearly. It's called Stroke.

You're awake
And trying to grasp who it is.
I pull my mask past my lips and you study my face,
Eyes wide.
I've enough stuff to tell you, I say,
Sinking into a chair.
I stare.

Sometimes if you go to an **open mic night**, people can really **touch your soul** with what they're saying. And even if you're having a bad day, life can feel so much better after going to an **open mic night**.

Neil

For Maria, poetry has the power to heal emotions and **touch your soul**, meaning to affect you deeply on an emotional or spiritual level.

Pippa

In this episode, we'll hear more about the positive power of poetry and, as usual, we'll learn some useful new words and phrases. And remember, you'll find all the vocabulary, plus a quiz and worksheet on our website, bbclearningenglish.com.

Neil

But first, I have a question for you, Pippa. Just now you used the phrase the positive power of poetry, repeating the same initial 'p' sound across a string of words. Doing this is a common feature of poetry, but what's it called? Is it:

- a) assonance,
- b) alliteration, or
- c) simile?

Pippa

Hmm. Finally, my English degree might come in handy! And I'm going to say b) alliteration.

Neil

Well, we'll find out at the end, and I hope you don't get embarrassed, Pippa! Now, poetry helped Maria overcome sadness, but could its power to heal work in other areas too? Hot Poets is a group helping people understand the science behind global issues like climate change. They go to meetings like the UN Climate Conference and listen to scientific papers being presented. Then they write a poem about it all and perform that back to the audience. Here's Hot Poet Liv Torc, reciting her poem to BBC World Service's People Fixing the World.

Liv Torc

It starts with an adventure at sea,
A big blue murder mystery, where the killer is not the whale
But an epic humanity fail
Of overfishing and polluting at unimaginable scale.

Pippa

Liv's poem is based on a study into biodiversity. It's a complex research project that many find hard to understand. Here, Liv discusses this with Myra Anubi for BBC World Service programme People Fixing the World:

Myra Anubi

And Liv, I mean, so what you've identified is that there is an issue around the communication of science.

Liv Torc

Yes, a lot of this **jargon** is really hard to understand, or a lot of the science is quite **impenetrable** to normal people, so it's instantly a **turn-off**.

Neil

Science uses lots of **jargon** – specialist or technical vocabulary which is quite different from everyday language. For example, a scientist might use the word precipitation, while in everyday English we would say rain.

Pippa

Jargon can make scientific papers **impenetrable**, an adjective meaning impossible to understand. And worse, it makes science a **turn-off** – something that people dislike or find uninteresting.

Neil

Hot Poets try to change all of that by making complex environmental ideas easy to understand through poetry. And it works, says Kat Bruce, the environmental scientist whose study Liv based her poem on, talking here with Myra Anubi for BBC World Service's People Fixing the World.

Myra Anubi

What did it mean for you, Kat, hearing the poem, having actually experienced everything she's saying?

Kat Bruce

It still gives me **goosebumps** when I hear it now. I think it's everything that I wish I could say and put into words myself. I feel like Liv just, you know, has done that.

Pippa

Liv's poem gave Kat **goosebumps**, meaning she was so emotionally affected that the hairs on her skin stood up, making tiny bumps. Maybe poetry can't fix everything, but for Kat, it's making an impact for good. Now, what was the answer to your question, Neil?

Neil

Well, you seemed very clear, Pippa, that when you use a string of words beginning with the same sound, it's called alliteration... and you're absolutely right.

Pippa

Phew!

Neil

OK. Let's recap the vocabulary we've learned, starting with **open mic night**, a live event where anyone is allowed to perform poems or music on stage.

Pippa

If something **touches your soul**, it affects you deeply on an emotional or spiritual level.

Neil

Jargon means special words and phrases that are used in a particular profession or subject.

Pippa

The adjective **impenetrable** means impossible to understand.

Neil

A **turn-off** is something that people dislike or find uninteresting.

Pippa

And finally, if you get **goosebumps**, the hairs on your skin stand up because you're cold, emotionally affected, or afraid. Once again, our six minutes are up, but remember, you'll find lots more episodes as well as a quiz and worksheet for this one on our website, bbclearningenglish.com. See you again soon. But for now, it's goodbye.

Neil

Goodbye!

VOCABULARY

open mic night

live event where anyone is allowed on stage to perform music, tell jokes or recite poetry

touch your soul

affect you deeply on an emotional or spiritual level

jargon

special words and phrases that are used by a particular profession or group

impenetrable

impossible to understand

turn-off

something that people dislike or find uninteresting

get goose bumps

become so cold, emotionally affected, or afraid that the hairs on your skin stand up to make tiny bumps