

# Kennings

A National Poetry Day  
resource from James Carter

**Key Stage 1-2**



**#NationalPoetryDay**  
[www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk](http://www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk)



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from James Carter

## Sun Kenning

We thank you, Sun  
for all you've done

You're always such an . . .

early - riser  
life - inspirer  
moon - eclipsing  
summer - sizzler  
winter - ender  
lolly - melter  
shadow - maker  
dehydrator  
earth - creator  
nothing - greater

Brilliant  
that's what you are -  
we call you 'sun'  
but you're a S T A R !

James Carter

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[www.jamescarterpoet.co.uk](http://www.jamescarterpoet.co.uk)  
Most recent KS1 poetry titles – *Zim Zam Zoom*  
(Otter-Barry Books) and *Once Upon a Big Idea – the story of inventions* (Little Tiger Press)



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## WHAT IS IT?

Kennings are great for reading, writing and even performing. But what is a kenning? It's simple - it's just two words, often nouns, brought together - and in doing so they give something a new image or meaning. Most often the second word ends in the -er sound. What kenning are you right now? A 'word – reader'! The Vikings invented kennings over a thousand years ago, and their kenning for a sword was 'skull – splitter'!

## READ IT

Read through 'Sun Kenning'. Notice how this poem both begins and ends with a short rhyme then in the middle it has a whole list of sun-themed kennings. Do you have any favourite lines in this poem? Or can you think of other kennings for the sun?

## THINK ABOUT IT

The theme for this year's National Poetry Day is THE ENVIRONMENT, and that means us thinking about and taking better care of the earth. What environment-based topic could you choose? Trees? Rivers? Forests? The seas? Water? The sky? Or even the earth itself?

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## WRITE IT

Let's start with a tree. Below is a short opening rhyme then two kennings, 'air-giver' and 'fruit bringer'. Now add your own kennings. Make a list of all the many things a tree does – such as grow / give shade / drop leaves / get taller / builds forests / dances in the wind and so on. But there are many, many other things as well. Okay. Let's change 'drops leaves' into 'leaf - dropper' and 'dances in the wind' to 'wind - dancer'. Try and make as many tree kennings as you can, and also think of a little rhyme to finish your poem off with. If you prefer, you could do a kenning about the earth, the sea, a forest, a river and so on. Whatever topic you do, your kenning poem would be great in an assembly or put up in a display or could be included in a class poetry anthology.

### Tree Kenning

We thank you, Tree  
for all you've done  
you're always such an . . .

air - giver  
fruit - bringer

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## PERFORM IT

Read through the poem 'Sun Kenning' quietly and slowly in your head. Now read it again, but out loud this time, and still really slowly. If you can, it's always best to learn a poem off by heart. This can be tricky, but the more you practice the easier it becomes. Once you know a poem, your performance will be even better! You could perform this by yourself. Or you could do the poem in pairs or groups, reciting different verses and lines each. You could take individual lines until the last rhyming verse in which half the class loudly whispers 'Brilliant – that's what you are' and then pause – before everyone comes together for the 'we call you sun/but you're a S T A R !'.

Try some actions too, but not too many - or you will be thinking about what your hands are doing rather than how the words are sounding! Even if one person is saying a specific line, everyone else can be doing an action related to it.

Try performing the kennings you've written yourselves too!

A top tip for performing any poem to an audience is '**DOUBLE THE VOLUME, HALF THE SPEED!**' - and what this tells us is to be **L O U D** but also to go as **S L O W** as you can. Enjoy!



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