

educator's guide

# COUNTDOWN TO SUMMER:

A POEM FOR EVERY DAY OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

## curriculum connections

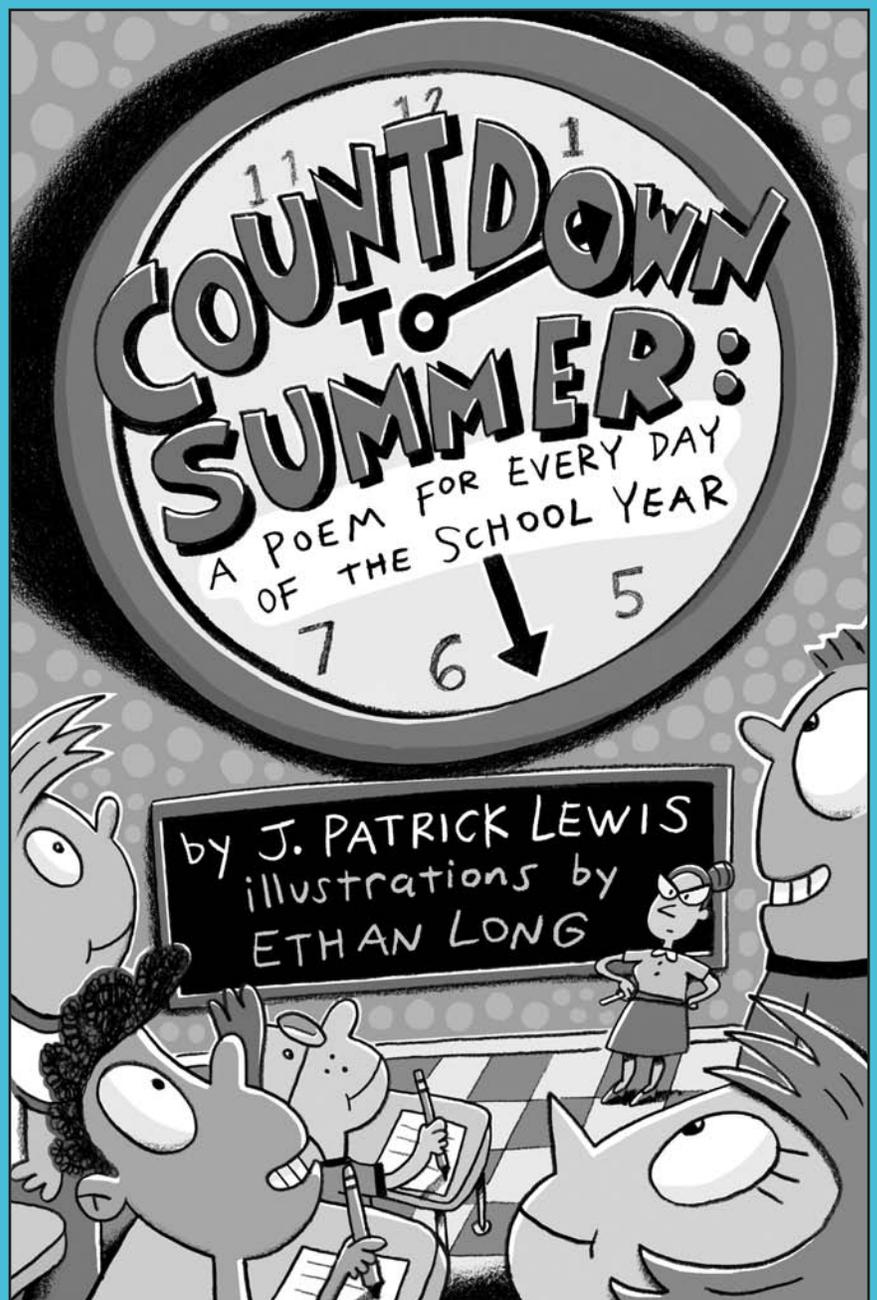
- ❖ Poetry
- ❖ School
- ❖ Riddles

Ages 8 - 12

*A fun-filled poem  
for every day of  
the school year!*

by J. Patrick Lewis

illustrated by  
Ethan Long



# COUNTDOWN TO SUMMER:

## A POEM FOR EVERY DAY OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

### Purpose of this Guide

*Countdown to Summer* is full of opportunities to teach students the many ways language can be used: as diversion, to paint funny images, to make readers laugh, to engage in wordplay, to create nonsensical rhymes, and to have fun with words, sounds, and meanings. On a more academic note, the many facets of poetry—rhyme scheme, figurative language, and forms of poetry—can also be taught using *Countdown to Summer*. Regardless of how you use this book in your classroom, the activities in this guide will give you ideas to jump start your teaching, and using it will ensure that students have a love and understanding of poetry. Have fun with *Countdown to Summer*.

### Scavenger Hunt/ Figurative Language

After a brief explanation of figurative language and the reason a writer uses it, ask students to find examples of figurative language in one of the poems in *Countdown to Summer*. Students may work individually or with a partner to search for other instances of the types of figurative language listed below.

**Alliteration:** Annie's apples are appetizing.

**Hyperbole:** We couldn't clean this up in a million years.

**Metaphor:** My humble home is a castle to me.

**Onomatopoeia:** Bees are buzzing  
in the air—bzzzzzzzzzz!

**Simile:** He eats like a pig when  
he is that hungry.

When students locate figurative language, they should write the line of poetry, the title of the poem, and the page number on which the poem can be found. Have students work to find as many examples as possible of each. As a follow-up activity, have students write an original example of one or more of the different types of figurative language to share with the class.

### Poetry Format

To familiarize students with the basic format of poetry, give each pair of students one of the following terms and ask them to define the term, find an example of the term from *Countdown to Summer*, and write an original sample of the term to post in the classroom.

Rhyme scheme	Concrete Poetry
Stanza	Haiku
Couplet	Narrative Poem
Free Verse	Limerick
Allusions	Nonsense Verse
Acrostic	Riddles

### Nursery Rhyme Folly

Several of the poems in *Countdown to Summer* are familiar nursery rhymes with new words. Ask students to form groups of three and to select a favorite nursery rhyme. Then, using the rhythm and rhyme scheme of the original, write new words. Each group should write and illustrate their final copy to be displayed in the classroom.

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#### Poetry Writing Activities

- Poem 171, *Me Irish Grandmother Flynn*, is a funny poem about the death of a beloved grandmother. Write a funny poem about one of your grandparents.
- Auggie McNaughton is a dreamer, and his dreams become a reality according to Poem 140, *The Dreamer*. Write a poem and share your dream, including plans to achieve it.
- Poems 130, 126, 29, and 20 are examples of concrete poems. Choose a topic and write a concrete poem to display in the classroom.
- The poems in *Countdown to Summer* include the fall and winter holidays, weather, and seasons. Ask students to select and write a poem about the summer weather, activities, and holidays.
- Poem 57, *Country Haik-lues*, is a collection of haikus about countries around the world. With a partner, ask students to write a haiku about a favorite place to display in the classroom.

#### Class Poetry Collection

After reading *Countdown to Summer* and using the above activities as a starting point, ask each student to write and illustrate an original poem of summer. The poems should be about the special days, the holidays, and the activities the students participate in during their summer vacation. When the poems are complete, have students use a calendar to count down the days to school and number the poems accordingly. Bind the books with a front and back cover and title and dedication pages. Display the book in the library.

#### Discussion Questions

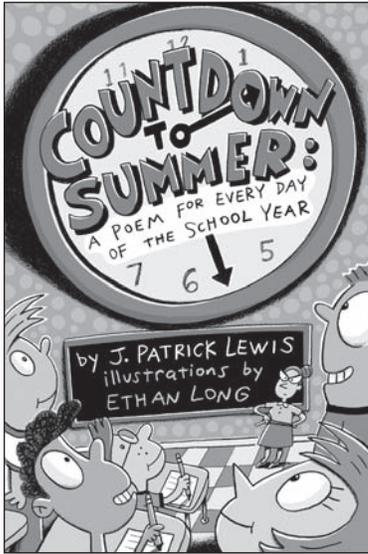
- After reading poem 173, *Book Etiquette*, determine what book you would read “‘til the ink is off the pages.” Why would you choose that particular book?
- George Washington gallops straight into the hearts of his countrymen in Poem 166, *George Washington’s Horses*. What political leader today will prove to be in the hearts of Americans? Why?
- Poem 143, *Proposed Amendment to the Constitution*, uses the phrase “shall be left behind.” This allusion is what brings humor to the poem. To what does this poem refer? Why is this humorous?
- Often times, first love can lead to disaster as Poem 71, *Miss Treat*, illustrates. Based on the title, the lines of poetry, and the illustration, what could have happened to make the author fall out of love?
- In Poem 64, *Civil War Couplets*, the last couplet is chilling: “An actor by the name of John Wilkes Booth Assassinated Hope and murdered Truth.”

Other than Abraham Lincoln, who else has been assassinated that could be considered Hope and Truth? Why were they assassinated?

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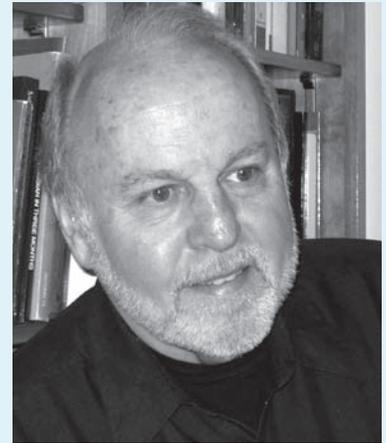
### about the book



978-0-316-02089-3

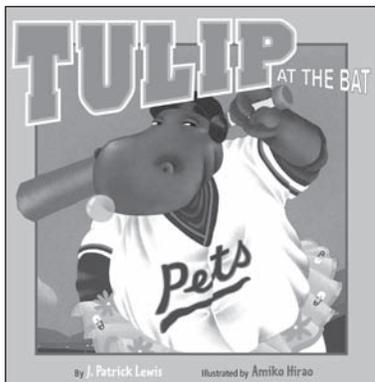
Whether readers love poetry, riddles, and rhymes, or just like to laugh, this richly varied collection of original poems is sure to keep them coming back for more! J. Patrick Lewis's fun and accessible poetry features delightful wordplay and a variety of subjects and forms featured in a compendium that counts down from the first day of school to the last. Paired with Ethan Long's lively art, these poems will have readers wishing there were more days in the school year!

### about the author



J. Patrick Lewis is a prolific writer of children's poetry whose books include *Tulip at the Bat*, *The Bookworm's Feast*, *Blackbeard: the Pirate King*, and *The Last Resort*. He lives in Westerville, Ohio.

### also available:



*Tulip at the Bat*

978-0-316-61280-7 • AR 3.9



*Wing Nuts: Screwy Haiku*

978-0-316-60731-5 • AR 2.7

### about the Illustrator

Ethan Long is the author and illustrator of *Tickle the Duck*, *Stop Kissing Me!*, and *Duck's Not Afraid of the Dark*, and he has illustrated a number of other children's books. He lives in Tallahassee, Florida.