**POETRY FOR NEANDERTHALS**

**Original Edition**

**WHAT IS THIS?**

It’s good to be a Poet.
It’s good to be a Neanderthal.
What isn’t good is being both of those things at the same time.

As a Poet, you’ll love to recite thoughtful prose like:

- The mighty Woolly Mammoth makes a mockery of my tiny hairless body.

But as a Neanderthal, you’re only capable of saying:

- The most stong big thing with teeth and mess hair makes fun of my too small body and skin.

The trouble for you is that as a Neanderthal, you don’t know any words that are more than one syllable.

The trouble for your team is that they’re listening to a Neanderthal recite poetry.

**GAMEPLAY**

If you are the Poet, the opposing team starts the timer while you take the first Poetry Card. Begin trying to get your team to say either the 1-point word (easy) or the 3-point phrase (hard) using only words with one syllable.

**GOAL**

Score the most points by correctly interpreting words and phrases.

**SETUP**

1. Form two teams (Team Glad and Team Mad) and give each team their Point State (see image below). It’s okay if one team has an extra player.
2. Sit around the table in alternating team positions.
3. Set up the table like this:

   - A Handful of Poetry Cards
   - NO! Stick
   - Point States
   - Send Timer
   - Grok’s Words of Love & Sad Cards

4. Team Glad goes first and picks a player to be the first Neanderthal Poet.
5. The Poet chooses which side of the Poetry Cards all players will read from (gray or orange) for the whole game.
6. A player from Team Mad who can see the card in the Poet’s hand gets the NO! Stick.

**Starting with the 1-point word:** If you start with the 1-point word and get it correctly said, “YES!” and then you can either collect your points or try for the 3-point phrase. However, if along the way you accidentally break any rules, you lose the earned point and must put the card on the other team’s 1-point spot.

**Starting with the 3-point phrase:** If you start with the 3-point phrase and your team says the 1-point word shout, “YES!” and follow the rules above as if you had started with the 1-point word.

**Skipping:** If you want to skip a card before earning any points, you can say, “Skip!” and give the card to the other team to put on the 1-point spot on their Point State.

**NOTE:** You can never earn more than 3 points from a card.

**YOU CAN**

- You can only speak using words with one syllable.
- You can say any word on your card AFTER a Guesser has said that word.

**YOU CAN’T**

- You can’t say any word, part of any word, or any form of a word that is on the Poetry Card (unless someone on your team has already said it out loud).
- You can’t use gestures or hand signs.
- You can’t use “sounds like” or “rhymes with.”
- You can’t use initials or abbreviations.
- You can’t use other languages.

We’re sure there’s more that we just don’t think of, but just remember...

“If it feels like cheating, it’s cheating!”

**ENDING YOUR TURN**

Each Poet’s turn continues until the timer runs out. If you’ve earned any points for the Poetry Cards in your hand, put the card in the appropriate space on your Point State. It is now the other team’s turn.
WINNING

When all players have had one turn as Poet (or both teams have had the same number of turns as Poet), add up the points on each team’s Point Slate. The team with the most points wins the game.

CHALLENGES

If the Poet feels they were penalized incorrectly, they shout “WAIT!” and turn the timer on its side. Decide as a group if the challenge is valid. Then decide as a group what to do with the Poetry Card in question. We’re not going to give you a lot of rules here... but as you aggressively debate about personal pronunciation, accents, and that one rule about syllables you learned in school, please try to remember that this is just a game, and really probably not that important.

If you’re one of those people who MUST HAVE the official answer, head over to howmany syllables.com for the answers.

After a challenge is resolved, turn the timer upright and continue.

Groks’ Words of Love and Sad Cards

The winning team should go through their Poetry Cards and pick their 3 favorites. Take a “Groks’ Words of Love and Sad” Card at random and decide which of your three chosen cards to insert into the three blanks (you can use either the 1-point words or the 3-point phases). Then read your poem out loud to the group. The losing team gets to hold the NOI Stick during your recital and will decide whether or not to use it based on the quality of your poem.

Repeating a poem has no impact on points or scoring. It exists purely as poetry should: to convey sophisticated emotions to your fellow Neanderthals.

Avoid saying single words and then waiting for your team to guess! Instead, try speaking in full sentences like the example above.

PRACTICE

Now you know all the rules, but before playing, try one practice round!

You say: That thing you do... I used to make cloth with.
So your teammates shout: Is that... your dog?
Your teammates shout: Vacuum!
You now have the 1-point word, so you call it out and say: Yes! Vacuum!

But you still want to go for the 3-point phrase, so you say: What is it that you do to work.
Your teammates shout: Cleaner, vacuum cleaner!
Then put the card in the 3-point area of your Point Slate and draw another card to continue.

PLAYING WITH 2 OR 3 PLAYERS

2 Players

Both players are on the same team and switch off being the Poet. Play with a single Point Slate. Any cards you skip count as -1 point. After each player has been the Poet three times, add up the points.

- 10 points or less: The Team Bad
- 11-30 points: Team Is So-So At Make Words
- 31-49 points: Team Have-Much Big Brain
- 50+ points or more: A Stunning Evolutionary Exemplar

3 Players

Players rotate the three roles: Poet, Player-with-Stick, and Guesser. The Poet and Guesser have one of the Point Slates, while the Player-with-Stick has the other.

The Poet and the Guesser earn points as normal and add cards to their Point Slate. The Player-with-Stick earns points as normal (i.e., each time the Poet skips or gets caught saying an illegal word).

At the end of a turn, both teams add up the points they’ve earned on a piece of paper where each player’s individual scores are kept. (The Poet and Guesser earn the same number of points each round.)

Next, discard all the used Poetry Cards from both slates into the box, rotate each player’s role, and start the next round.

After each player has been the Poet three times, the player with the most points wins.

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Hey! Don’t read these rules! Reading is the worst way to learn how to play a game. Instead, go online and watch our instructional video.