This collection of poems and the other collections in this series will come in very handy as you dive into your yearly themes. The poetry in *Neighborhoods & Communities* has been thoughtfully written and compiled with preschool to second-grade children clearly in mind. Variety, usability, and fun topped the list of considerations in selecting or creating each and every poem.

There are so many ways the poems can be used, so why not get the most you can from each one? Whether you present a poem a week or a poem a day, you can dip into this collection with confidence. Use the poems in coordination with your phonics program. You can read aloud the poems, transfer them to a pocket chart, and then let children act them out. In addition, the collection provides jumping-off points for writing and fits into the math and social studies curricula.

**Being Authors and Illustrators**

Predictable language in poetry can make children feel confident about their own reading and writing. Help them anticipate the rhyming words or repeated phrases in the poems. Then encourage them to go one step farther by making up new verses, or new poems on similar themes or in similar formats. For instance, after reading “Who Am I?” (page 11), urge children to create riddles of their own about city workers. In response to the reassuring repetition in “It Fell in the City” (page 29), they can write new verses about colorful objects that turn white in a snowfall.

When a poem looks like what it’s saying, as “Bumping up the Curb” (page 17) does, it is called a visual or concrete poem. Children can make their own visual poetry about riding bikes through puddles or leaves, falling off bikes, or doing tricks that clowns do on bicycles.

A poem such as “If I Could Build a Town” (page 19) can be duplicated on a page with appropriate blanks for children to complete, as shown below. Let children complete this activity individually or as a class. Rhyming is unnecessary.

If I could build a town, well then,
I know just what I’d make:

a __________,

a __________,

and a store with __________.

Some poems ask questions. “Best Deal in Town” (page 21), a poem about the library, asks, “How much better could it be?” Children can respond by writing about what they particularly like about the library.
Why not take a poem and make it into a little foldable book, with one line per page? Children can illustrate each page, making the poem more personal and, subsequently, more meaningful. A class collaborative book can be similarly effective. “The Sidewalk” (page 16) might spawn a book about what children like to do on the sidewalk, while “Sounds Before School” (page 23) might serve as a springboard for a book of school sounds.
If I Could Build a Town

If I could build a town, well then,
I know just what I’d make:
an ice cream store, a toy shop,
and a store with bread and cake.

I guess I’d make a park
and build a nifty fire station.
Say, would you like to help me?
It just takes imagination!

Betsy Franco
On the Way to School

We started to school, just my sister and I.
We walked and we talked, watched the birds in the sky.

We walked across Green Street and added two more—
Teresa and Pedro and then there were four.

We turned the next corner with two blocks to go,
Some more kids joined in and we watched the group grow.

Before we were through, there were eight kids in all,
just walking to school on a morning in fall.

Betsy Franco

Sounds Before School

Ka-boom, ka-boom,
a bouncing ball
slamming up against the wall,
Low notes from a clarinet,
Orange ball swishing
through the net,
Ty and Bobby calling Hope,
The sound of someone skipping rope.
First bell rrings.
Doors open wide.
We scuffle our feet and shuffle inside.

Betsy Franco