



Reading Tips

The “Between __ and __” sections should be read rhythmically and rapid-fire like a fast-paced game of Catch.

The “Goodbye” line should be read with exaggerated comic sorrow, and the “Hi” proclaimed with over-the-top excitement.

The two stanzas that contain the line “Fall must be here someplace” reveal the culminating meaning of the poem.

Be sure Reader 3 loudly enunciates “It’s Indian Summer!” as this is the key phrase that explains the meaning.

The second to last stanza “Please help un-stick me” should be a tour-de-force of pleading. Tell your students to read it as if they were begging to stay up late!

How to Teach “The Dastardly In-Betweens”

“The Dastardly In-Betweens” is about that nebulous time between the two distinct seasons: summer and winter. The narrator feels stuck between the two. And the reason? The weather. It feels like summer, yet acts like fall. The culprit? Indian Summer.

As you begin, explain that this poem offers word clues like small relics in a treasure hunt, pointing the way to the ultimate prize: The reason for the narrator’s frustration at being stuck between two seasons.

Questions to ask students:

1. What clues does the title offer us? What does the title tell us about the poem’s tone? Tone is the writer’s attitude toward the subject. A poem’s tone may be playful, sad, angry, serious, etc.
2. Explore the seasonal themes in the poem by making a Summer/Winter chart on chart paper or your interactive whiteboard. Ask students to call out words and images associated with the seasons and list them on the chart.
3. Ask students if they understand why the speaker feels so stuck. You might ask your class to offer examples from their own lives when they too, have felt at odds because of “dastardly in-betweens.” Perhaps on Sunday nights as the weekend comes to a close? Or the last days of a vacation?

Extension Idea

Have your students work in groups. Either assign them or have them choose a month of the year. Then, invite your students to brainstorm things they love about their month—holidays, clothing, weather, food, sports, activities, family traditions and celebrations, etc. Each group can cut out pictures from magazines or print them from the Internet to make a collage of words and pictures that represent their month. When they are finished, hang your visual calendar in the classroom and use it as inspiration for monthly journaling or poetry assignments.

The Dastardly In-Betweens!

By Jacqueline Sweeney

Between
 Labor Day and Hannukah
 maple green and red
 lemonade and pumpkin pie
 summer swims and sleds

Between
 centerfield and superdome
 crabgrass and snow
 "Play Ball!" and "Fight! Fight! Fight!"

Where am I to go?

Something happens to my freedom.
 Something happens to my head.
 When late night drive-in-movies
 are replaced by: "Time For Bed!"

Something happens to my thinking
 when my fishing poles and sleep
 are replaced by "Do Your Homework!"
 and alarm clocks' dings and beeps.

Goodbye mowers— Hi, snowblowers.
 Goodbye cookouts on the dock.
 Goodbye rowboat, hello notebook
 "fall behind"—and "Set That Clock!"

But what of the in-betweens—
 the dastardly in-betweens?

Some people *WINTER* in Florida—
 Some people *SUMMER* in France—
 But where do you find them
 when summer's behind them?
 Where do they go when they *FALL*?

Do they fall into winter? Or fall into leaves?
 Out of *gezundheit*? Or into a sneeze?
 Do they fall out of tanktops and into long
 sleeves?
 What *DO* they do in between?

Between
 skateboards and skiing and
 putters and pucks
 Yankees and Steelers and
 Tigers and Ducks

Between
 pretzels and eggnog and
 hammocks and beds
 summer and winter
 whirl 'round in my head!

Fall *MUST* be here someplace!
 Dad just bought new rakes.
 Mom's carving a pumpkin.
 There's turkey to bake.

It's Indian Summer!
 My breath blows *NO FOG*.
 Fall *MUST* be here someplace
 and I'm a **FALL HOG!**

So please help *un-stick* me.
 Oh help me, oh *p-l-e-a-s-e*,
 for I'm stuck in the middle of
IN-BETWEENS!

The Utterly Ghastly
 and *SO*—Unfantastically
 Dastardly In-Betweens!

The Dastardly In-Betweens!

By Jacqueline Sweeney

PLAYERS:

Readers 1–8

- Reader 1:** “The Dastardly In-Betweens!”
by Jacqueline Sweeney
- Reader 2:** Between Labor Day and Hannukah
- Reader 3:** maple green and red
- Reader 4:** lemonade and pumpkin pie
- Reader 1:** summer swims and sleds
- Reader 2:** Between centerfield and superdome
- Reader 3:** crabgrass and snow
- Reader 4:** “Play Ball!” and “Fight! Fight! Fight!”
- Reader 1:** Where am I go to?
- Reader 5:** Something happens to my freedom.
Something happens to my head.
- Reader 6:** When late night drive-in-movies
are replaced by: “Time For Bed!”

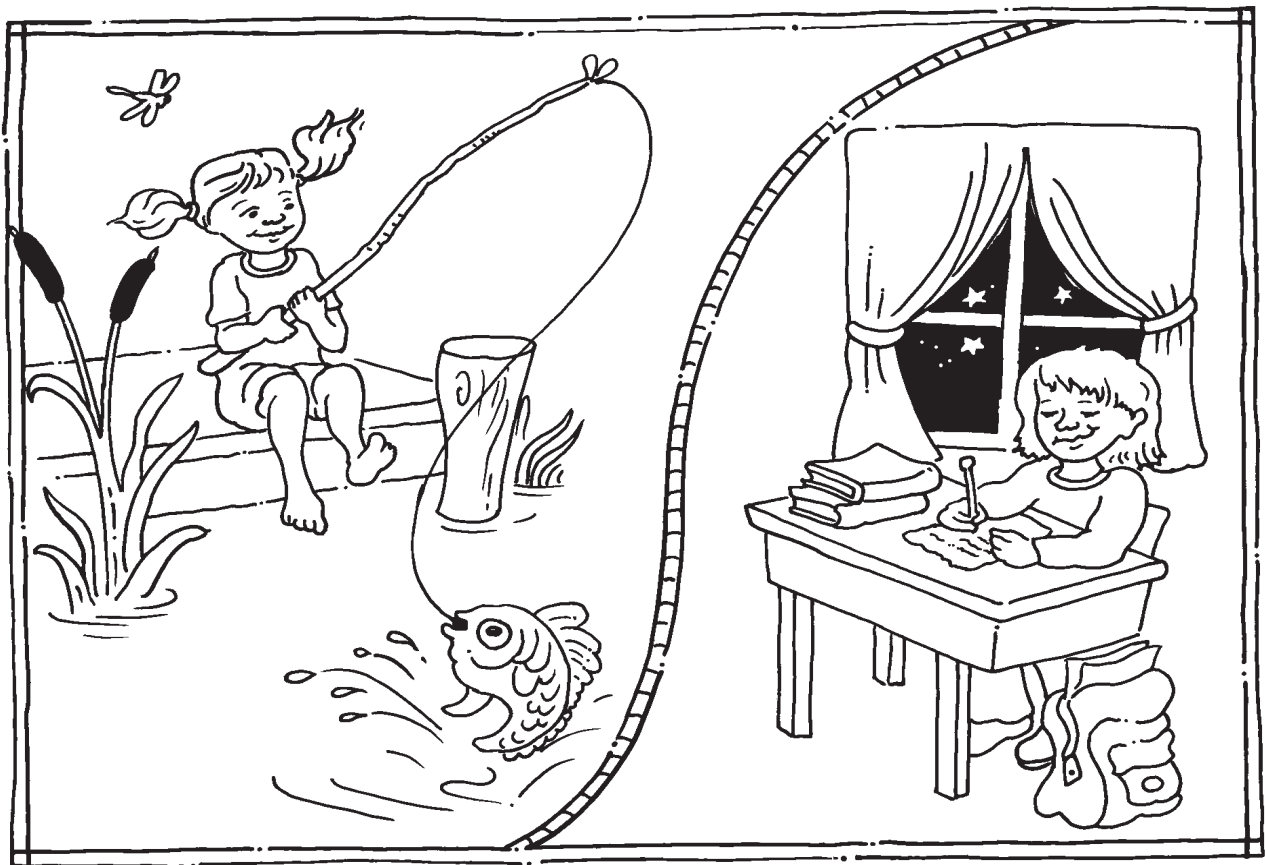
MORE 

- Reader 7:** Something happens to my thinking
when my fishing poles and sleep
- Reader 8:** are replaced by “Do Your Homework!”
and alarm clocks’ dings and beeps.
- Reader 1:** Goodbye mowers...
- Reader 2:** Hi, snowblowers!
- Readers 1, 2:** Goodbye cookouts on the dock
- Reader 3:** Goodbye rowboat...
- Reader 4:** hello notebook
- Readers 3, 4:** “fall behind”—and “Set That Clock!”
- Readers 1, 2, 3, 4:
(together)** But what of the in-betweens—
the dastardly in-betweens?
- Reader 5:** Some people WINTER in Florida—
- Reader 6:** Some people SUMMER in France—
- Reader 7:** But where do you find them
when summer’s behind them?
- Reader 8:** Where do they go when they *FALL*?
- Reader 5:** Do they fall into winter?
Or fall into leaves?
- Reader 6:** Out of gezondheid?
Or into a sneeze?



MORE

- Reader 7:** Do they fall out of tanktops and into long sleeves?
- Reader 8:** What *DO* they do in between?
- Reader 5:** Between skateboards and skiing
- Reader 6:** and putters and pucks
- Reader 7:** Yankees and Steelers
- Reader 8:** and Tigers and Ducks
- Reader 5:** Between pretzels and eggnog
- Reader 6:** and hammocks and beds



MORE 

Readers 5–8: summer and winter
whirl 'round in my head!

Reader 1: Fall MUST be here someplace!
Dad just bought new rakes.

Reader 2: Mom's carving a pumpkin.
There's turkey to bake.

Reader 3: It's *INDIAN SUMMER!*
My breath blows **NO FOG.**

Reader 4: Fall MUST be here someplace
and I'm a **FALL HOG!**

Reader 5: So please help *un-stick* me.

Reader 6: Oh help me, oh *p-l-e-a-s-e,*

Readers 5, 6: for I'm stuck in the
middle of **IN-BETWEENS!**

Reader 7: The Utterly Ghastly

Reader 8: And **SO—Unfantastically**

Reader 7, 8: Dastardly In-Betweens!

(Readers 1–6 repeat the last three lines together, followed by the entire class chanting these lines until all readers leave staging area.)

