

River Sounds, Dinosaur Footprints



Grade Level: 3 to 5



Developed by Carol Berner & Lori Thayer, E.N. White School, Holyoke, MA, and used in Grade 4

Community Partner: [Dinosaur Footprints Reservation, The Trustees of Reservations](#)

Overview/Rationale for Lesson: Students prepare to write poems about a field trip to the river by practicing outdoor listening and performing choral readings of river poems from *River of Words: Young Poets and Artists on the Nature of Things*.

Learning Objectives:

- Children will listen closely to sounds outdoors and record their findings on a Sound Map.
- Children will read and respond to poems about rivers, paying attention to poetic elements of rhythm, repetition and sensory images.
- Children will plan and present dramatic readings of river poems.

Lesson Plan Procedure

Preparatory Activity:

Time: 30 minutes

Step 1. Introduce the activity of listening outside and model how to use a Sound Map (downloadable from Resources). 15 minutes.

- Teacher's narrative: "You will be going to the river to catch a poem and you will need some tools to help you fish for poems: tools for paying attention and tools for recording what you notice. The tools you will use include looking, listening and imagining."
- Model how to use the [Sound Mapping Handout](#).
 - Prepare a large Sound Map on chart paper and demonstrate how to use it by telling a story about listening to outdoor sounds.
 - Write a symbol (word or sketch) for each sound on the Sound Map as you tell the story. For example: "Yesterday I was sitting in my back yard and I heard..."
 - Indicate whether sounds are close by or far away, loud or soft, moving or stationary, etc.
 - Optional: Share an example of a poem you wrote from your Sound Map. For example, "*Lawnmower vroooms across the street / Birds twitter above my head / Leaves rustle in the breeze all around. . . / I keep quiet as the grass / Listening to my backyard.*"

Step 2. Bring children outdoors to listen to sounds and record what they hear on Sound Mapping Handouts. 15 minutes.

Each child brings a clipboard, Sound Mapping sheet and pencil.

- Have children sit with space between so they cannot touch the child next to them.
- Ask children to listen in complete silence for 2 minutes.

- Have children record what they hear on their Sound Mapping sheets.
- Ask a few students to share one thing they heard during the quiet sit.
- Ask children to listen for another silent minute and add to their Sound Map.

Main Activity:

Time: 45 minutes

Step 3. Back in the classroom, gather students in a large circle and do a choral echo reading of the poem "Nature" by Richard Moala (downloadable from Resources). 10 minutes.

- Teacher's narrative: "We're going to act out poems written by children about noticing things in nature. You may get ideas from these poems that will help you write your own poem about the river field trip."
- Explain how to do a choral echo reading: "First I will say a line and then you say it back, altogether." Use hand and body gestures with each line. At first children copy your gestures, then ask them to suggest gestures.
- Repeat the poem out loud several times. Optional to see if children can say the poem from memory without you giving them the lines.
- Ask students to respond to the poem. "What sounds do you notice in the poem? What else do you notice? What stands out? What words make a picture in your head?"

Step 4. Students work in small groups to prepare a choral presentation of a poem to share with the group. 20 minutes. See "Poems to Share" (downloadable from Resources).

- Directions for preparing poems include: read the poem aloud together several times; discuss different ways to divide up the lines; share ideas about dramatic gestures; practice in big voices so audience can hear.
- Divide students into groups and give each child a copy of their group's poem. They do NOT have to memorize the poem.
- Suggest groups start by reading the poem aloud together and help each other understand and say words out loud.
- Poems to share from *River of Words* poetry contest: "If I Could Be Water," "What Am I?" "You Bring Out the River in Me," and "Tropical Breeze/Brisa Tropical" (downloadable from Resources).

Step 5. Students share poems out loud with the class. 15 minutes.

Conclusion / Follow-Up to Activity

Time: Field Trip plus 45-60 minutes in the classroom.

Step 6. Students go on field trip to river and use tools (Sound Map and "Look, Listen, Imagine" handout, downloadable from Resources) for listening and collecting poetry words. Half day.

Step 7. Students write poems about the river, incorporating first hand observations and poetic elements from model poems. 20-30 minutes.



Optional Handouts (downloadable from Resources):

- Sample Student Poems
- "Invitation to a Poetry Field Trip" for discussion of prompts and sample poems

Step 8. Students share their poems with the class. 15-20 minutes.

Additional Notes on Lesson Plan:

This class took river field trips to the Dinosaur Footprints Reservation and the Holyoke Fishway and wrote river poems on the following day.

Materials Checklist:

- Handout: Sound Map (1 per student, downloadable from Resources)
- Clipboard and pencil for each student
- Sound Map written on chart paper (for demonstration)
- "Nature," poem by Richard Moala (downloadable from Resources)
- Poems to Share: each student gets a copy of his/her group poem (downloadable from Resources)
- Handout: Look, Listen, Imagine (downloadable from Resources)
- Pencil and paper for writing poems in classroom
- Optional handout: Sample Student Poems (downloadable from Resources)
- Optional handout: Invitation for a Poetry Field Trip (downloadable from Resources)

Extension(s):

N/A

Developer's Comments on Lesson:

"Poetry gives children a different way to pay attention to what they're doing and notice what they're learning. With so many different kinds of kids, we need to offer different ways for them to get language." --Lori Thayer

Downloads and Useful Links are available at http://row.ctriver.org/?page_id=273.

CURRICULUM STANDARDS

SCIENCE (Connections to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks):

Framework: Science and Technology/Engineering

Strand: Earth and Space Science (preK-8)

Topic: Earth's History

12: Give examples of how the surface of the earth changes due to slow processes such as erosion and weathering, and rapid processes such as landslides, volcanic eruptions, and earthquakes

Strand: Life Science (preK-8)

Topic: Adaptations of Living Things

7: Give examples of how changes in the environment (drought, cold) have caused some plants and animals to die or move to new locations (migration).

Topic: Evolution and Biodiversity

5: Recognize that fossils provide us with information about living things that inhabited the earth years ago.

11: Recognize that evidence drawn from geology, fossils, and comparative anatomy provides the basis of the theory of evolution.

12: Relate the extinction of species to a mismatch of adaptation and the environment.

English Language Arts (Connections to the Common Core State Standards, <http://www.corestandards.org>):

Reading: Literature » Grade 4

Key Ideas and Details

RL.4.1. Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

Craft and Structure

RL.4.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology (e.g., Herculean).

RL.4.5. Explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose, and refer to the structural elements of poems (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter) and drama (e.g., casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogue, stage directions) when writing or speaking about a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

MA.8.A. Locate and analyze examples of similes and metaphors in stories, poems, folktales, and plays, and explain how these literary devices enrich the text.

STANDARDS, cont.**Writing » Grade 4****Text Types and Purposes**

MA.3.A. Write stories, poems, and scripts that use similes and/or metaphors.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

W.4.8. Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.

W.4.9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Range of Writing

W.4.10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Language » Grade 4**Knowledge of Language**

L.4.3. Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening. Choose words and phrases to convey ideas precisely.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

L.4.5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

Explain the meaning of simple similes and metaphors (e.g., *as pretty as a picture*) in context.

River of Words-CT River is a place-based poetry and art program designed to promote watershed awareness, literacy, and the arts. It is offered in partnership with the Connecticut River Watershed Council and funded, in part, by Mass Humanities and Mass Center for the Book. Find us at <http://row.ctriver.org>