

Creative Response to Landscape (Poetry) – KS1, KS2 & KS3

Overview

Description	This activity was created in collaboration with Jane Flood, and builds on the work she did for the Avalon Marshes in the Wetland Stories and Drama project. It encourages learners to engage with all their senses, their surroundings and their feelings, and use the experience as a spring-board in to creative writing about nature, wetlands, the Avalon Marshes, or another outdoor space.
Equipment	An outdoor space! Tales from the Marshes (CD or free online download/streaming – see links below); an empty bottle; egg boxes; slideshow of photos.
Time	1.5 hour +
Curriculum	PSHE – the importance of respecting and protecting the environment KS1 English – use appropriate letter size and spaces; use spoken language to develop understanding. KS2 English - use varied rich vocabulary; plan writing based on familiar forms; read own writing aloud; recognize a variety of forms of poetry; learn poetry by heart; use a thesaurus. KS3 English – writing for a wide range of purposes, including poetry.
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give pupils a sense of the Avalon Marshes through photos, sound and poetry. • Give pupils space and time to engage their senses in an outdoor setting. • Write poetry about the Avalon Marshes in response to the given stimuli.
Learning outcomes	At the end of this session all pupils should have a reflection on the wetland landscape of the Avalon Marshes in the form of a poem.
Linked resources	<p>Introduction to the Avalon Marshes</p> <p>Pick & Mix – Wonderful Wetland Wildlife; Getting to Know Peat; Avalon Marshes Timeline; Life in the Iron-Age Marshes; Mapping the Marshes; Awesome Adaptations; Noses – A Wildlife Game; Water in the Wetlands; Colouring the Marshes; Avalon Marshes Quia.</p> <p>Audio – Tales from the Marshes; Somerset Wetlands CD; Avalon Marshes, A Peatland Story.</p> <p>Specialist equipment – Avalon Marshes Water Model; Avalon Marshes Floor Map; Avalon Marshes Peat Dig; Avalon Marshes Ruckles.</p>

These activities make use of the ‘Tales from the Marshes’ CD that was made as part of the Wetland Stories project. The CD can be bought from the Avalon Marshes Centre, or **streamed/downloaded for free** by following these links:

<https://play.spotify.com/album/3uDmm1TOudLVVqiClfrWuU>

<https://www.cdbaby.com/cd/avalonmarshes>



Teachers' notes -

1. Setting the scene

Show a slide show of images of the Marshes, and play the Sounds of Somerset Wetlands recordings (on the Avalon Marshes website) at the same time.

Continue with the images, and play your pupils the following 2 poems from the Tales from the Wetlands CD:

- Directions poem 2 (track 2, 0:18s)
- Directions poem 3 (track 2, 0:49s)

Ask your pupils what they thought of the poems. Which was their favourite? What are they about? Which bits were the best? Which words were most descriptive? What impression did it give them of the Avalon Marshes?

Play these two poems, and repeat the questions to your pupils:

- Kenning poem 3 (track 7, 0:48s)
- Kenning poem 4 (track 7, 1:04s)

2. Sensory work (outdoors!)

Take your pupils to an outside space – use the schools grounds, a local park, or the village green. Whichever works for your class. The following activities were used by Jane in the Wetland Stories project to help students engage with their senses and surroundings, and to absorb as much as possible of the environment around them.

Peripheral vision

Children make a window to look through by making right-angles with their thumbs and forefingers on both hands, and putting the tips of their thumbs on the end of their noses, their hands out the sides. Moving their hands slowly out to the side, they look straight ahead noticing at what point their thumbs go out of view. This is the edge of their peripheral vision. Encourage the pupils to notice what they can see in this range of view. Repeat this looking in 4 directions (north, south, east and west).

Deer ears

Ask children to be silent and cup their ears with their hands, listening to what is around them. Do this for 30 seconds facing in the 4 directions.

Feeling the earth and the air

Ask children to lie in a space on the ground (you may want to bring some bin liners along for them to lie on if the ground is damp). They should relax their bodies, close their eyes, breathe deeply, and feel the ground below them supporting their bodies. Pupils relax in this position for 1 or 2 minutes, always keeping silent, always thinking about the earth underneath them and the air around them.

Breathing and smelling

Ask your pupils to walk around the space for one minute, breathing deeply through their noses. They should link about the smells around them.

Earth Walk

The idea of the Earth Walk is to walk so carefully and quietly that you disturb nothing, not even the wind! You could use this walk for children to arrive at their sitting space for the next activity.

Stillness

Each pupil should find their own space to sit for 5 minutes. This activity requires silence, and also absolute stillness. They should observe what is around them, what they can hear, smell and see. You can help guide their observations by asking them to focus on what different colours they can see, what different wildlife they can see, what different materials they can see etc.

An extension to this for the pupils to work in pairs and describe the scene for their partner, while their partner has their eyes closed or is blindfolded.

Touch and texture

In pairs give the pupils an egg box and two descriptive words (e.g. smooth, hard, soft, spikey, squidgy, rough, fluffy, feathery, rigid, bumpy, silky, etc). You could write the words on the lids of their egg boxes. They should find 3 objects that fit each of the two descriptive words, to fill the 6 sections of their egg box.

As extension to this activity is for pupils to look at another pair's objects and guess the words they began with.

You could take these objects back to class to provide inspiration for their writing.

Role play

Do some simple drama activities linked to themes in the marshes, such as:

Ask pupils to be hunter-gatherers, relying on catching wild animals to eat. They would use spears or arrows, and make a fire to cook the meat on.

Ask pupils to be Celtic warriors, charging into battle.

Ask them to imagine they are peat-cutters, digging up clumps of soggy soil and stacking it in high towers to dry in the sun.

Ask them to choose an animal or bird to be. What does that animal eat? Where does it find its food? How does it catch it (if a predator)?

Avalon Marshes Landscape



3. Writing about the Avalon Marshes

Return to class and ask children about what they observed outside. How did it feel to lie on the ground? What did they see, hear and smell? What there anything they liked about the activities? What there anything unusual or surprising that they noticed? What colours and textures they find outdoor? What was it like to be a hunter-gatherer/peat cutter/animal/bird?

Remind children about the Avalon Marshes, using the images, sound, or the wildlife video also available on the website.

Show pupils the slide show, played to reflective music. Stop after every few slides and ask the class for words or thoughts linked to what they are seeing – write these on the whiteboard. To help get ideas flowing you might start with a warm up, suggesting the first word and then asking the class to ‘keep the kettle boiling’.

As a class pick out the nouns and adjectives from the words listed on the board. You could ask pupils to think of words that rhyme with the listed words, and pick out synonyms and antonyms for the words.

Use the poetry templates (see below) for your pupils to write about the Avalon Marshes. In addition to the Directions and Kenning poem templates, pupils could also write Acrostic poems (e.g. AVALON MARSHES, SCHOOL NAME, WETLANDS etc) or Haiku poems. A Haiku consists of 3 lines. The first and last lines have 5 syllables, and the middle line has 7. They don't normally rhyme.

The Kennings are based on old traditional poetry in which metaphors are used to create imaginative descriptions of things. Encourage pupils to choose the subject of their poem and imagine that they are that thing. The Directions poems were used in the Wetland Stories and Drama project, and were inspired by Chris Holland.

Give pupils an opportunity to read their poems to their peers. If you have time allow pupils to write-up neat copies of their poems and decorate them.

Extension:

Write stories about the Avalon Marshes, and read them to other pupils in the school.

Make wishes for the Earth.



Avalon Marshes Landscape



To the North...

To the East...

To the South...

To the West...

Above...

Below...

Inside...

Altogether...

I am...

I have...

I know...

I sing...