

ENGLISH

ENQUIRY OF LEARNING: Why should we protect the rainforest?

HARMONY PRINCIPLE: The principle of Diversity

WEEKLY QUESTION: How can I bring the sights and sounds of the rainforest to life in a poem?

This planning sets out a unit of poetry learning, which supports students in exploring and developing their responses to poetry before going on to write their own poems inspired by the sights and sounds of the rainforest. At the start of the unit, the overarching weekly question should be shared with the children as this will signpost the main focus of the week's learning. The children also have the opportunity to respond to this question at the end of the unit.

RESOURCES:

- Poetry books
- Large flip chart for shared writing of poetry
- Dictionaries
- Rainforest vocabulary lists (support and extension)
- Resource sheets 1A, 1B

For each of the five lessons, an individual 'learning question' is given. It is important to share the relevant learning question at the start of each lesson to give the learning focus and context. Each learning question provides a great stimulus for reflecting on learning at the end of each session.

NC LINKS

- preparing poems and play scripts to read aloud and to perform, showing understanding through intonation, tone, volume and action
- discussing words and phrases that capture the reader's interest and imagination
- recognising some different forms of poetry (for example, free verse, narrative poetry)
- asking questions to improve their understanding of a text
- planning writing by discussing and recording ideas
- drafting and writing by building a varied and rich vocabulary
- evaluating and editing by assessing the effectiveness of their own and others' writing and suggesting improvements
- reading aloud their own writing, to a group or the whole class, using appropriate intonation and controlling tone and volume so that the meaning is clear.



TOP TIP

Before starting this unit of learning, give some thought as to how you can create a 'poetry-friendly' classroom to support the children's learning. You could read and display a 'poem of the day', provide easy access to poetry books and plan into the timetable time when children can choose poems to read (these needn't be restricted to rainforest poems). Give time for lots of presentations or performances of poems at the beginning or end of lessons/sessions.

Lesson 1

Learning question: *What makes an effective poem?*

STARTER ACTIVITY

In pairs or small groups, give the children a range of poetry books and ask them to find poems they like the look of and to read them with one another. Ask them to pick out particular poems they like and to say why they like them. Is it because they are funny, because the language is interesting or because of the way they rhyme? Allow 15–20 minutes for this.

Display a list of different types of poetry on the whiteboard (see below for some ideas). Talk through the features of some of the different types, with examples if this helps.

Next, ask the children to look at the poems they have chosen to see whether they match the types listed and discussed. Create a class mind map of example of poetry types they have found.

POETRY TYPES

- **Rhyming:** (couplets, every fourth line etc.)
- **Haiku:** (three lines with five syllables in first and third lines, seven syllables in the second)
- **Limerick:** (humorous verse, five lines, rhyming AABBA)
- **Cinquain:** (five lines with two syllables in the first line, four in the second, six in the third, eight in the fourth and two in the last; the lines don't need to rhyme but can)
- **Sonnet:** (14-line poem with one stanza of eight lines and a second stanza of six lines following a set rhyme scheme)
- **Tanka:** (five lines following a pattern of 5-7-5-7-7 syllables; the middle lines summarises the meaning of the whole poem)
- **Riddle:** a question or statement or phrase with a double or veiled meaning given as a puzzle to be solved
- **Acrostic:** the first letter of each line spells out a word, name or phrase when read vertically

MAIN ACTIVITY: TEACHER INPUT

Have the poem on Resource 1A ready on the whiteboard. Read the poem aloud to the children with lots of expression, then invite the children to read the poem with you. Read it together two or three times. Next, ask the children to write down on different coloured sticky notes (without discussing it with anyone else):

- Three questions they would ask about words or meanings that they don't understand (you may need to allow time as a class to answer these questions before moving on, in order to support the children's comprehension)
- What they think of 'the tree' in the poem
- How the words in the poem make them feel and why

In pairs, children explore the questions and ideas they recorded on the sticky notes. Take feedback from the children and briefly discuss their ideas as a class.

Remind the children to look carefully at the punctuation in the poem. How does this help convey meaning? How does it affect the way we read the poem?

MAIN ACTIVITY: INDEPENDENT LEARNING

Explain to the children that they will write the next five lines of a poem beginning...

While I stood dwarfed by this tree,

Allow a few minutes for them to collect ideas with a partner before beginning the writing task independently. Provide images of the rainforest and rainforest creatures to give them lots of ideas of things they could write.

If you can, play a rainforest soundscape to stimulate their thinking further.



IDEAS FOR DIFFERENTIATION

SUPPORT

Allow children to work in pairs; supply a rainforest vocabulary list; provide a simple writing frame e.g.

While I stood dwarfed by this tree,

I could hear...

High above me, I could see...

And all around me...

The tree made me feel...

The rainforest was...

EXTENSION

Supply a challenging rainforest vocabulary list or encourage children to use thesauruses.

PLENARY

Allow children to share their poems with a different partner. Share some of the children's work – have a poem of your own ready to share as well. Display a good example and ask the children to comment on what makes it effective and why.



Lesson 2

Learning question:

How does language add atmosphere and meaning to a poem?

STARTER ACTIVITY

The poem from yesterday doesn't have a title. What would a good title be? Discuss in pairs and as a class.

Children work with a partner to re-read the poems they wrote in the previous lesson. What edits can they make to improve it? Model this by editing your own poem with a couple of word changes. Remind them that poets and writers are constantly changing their work to perfect and improve it.

MAIN ACTIVITY: INDEPENDENT LEARNING

Ask the children to explore the poem and highlight or make lists of the nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs they find in it. Have these all been used in the best way?

What changes to the vocabulary would change the mood in the poem? For example, how could you make the rainforest feel **calmer**? How could you change the vocabulary to make the rainforest feel **busier** or **louder**?

For example, consider what the effect is of changing this line:

'Where the trees stood tall and free'

to

'Where bright birds cawed noisily'

Allow the children the time and opportunity to experiment with language and explore the effects of changing the words in the lists they created.

MAIN ACTIVITY: TEACHER INPUT

Look at the line:

The tree raised its head and hands

How does this line help to bring the sights and sounds of the rainforest to life? What does it mean? Can a tree really raise its head and hands? Get the children to be the tree and to imagine their head and hands are the trunk and branches. Discuss 'personification' and why this can be an effective technique in poetry, giving things that aren't human, human characteristics.



IDEAS FOR DIFFERENTIATION

SUPPORT

Supply rainforest vocabulary mat with language that can be used to create contrasting effects; children list verbs and adjectives only (or just adjectives); children work in pairs; children innovate language only without writing a new poem

EXTENSION

Challenge children to generate expanded noun phrases and use personification as they experiment with changing the language of the poem

PLENARY

Ask the children to share examples of their calm, busy or loud poems. Discuss the effect of each with the rest of the class.

Lesson 3

Learning question:

What helps me to explore the meaning of a poem?

STARTER ACTIVITY

Have the poem on Resource sheet 1B ready on the whiteboard to start the lesson.

*Clearing rainforests
Ancient trees felled for money
Mother Earth's face scared
Resources taken and used
Smoke reaches the distant stars*

As in the first lesson, perform the poem for the class and then invite them to perform it with you and to think about how to express each line. As with the previous poem, ask the children to jot down on sticky notes any words they don't understand and what they think the poem is about. In pairs, children share their questions and explore responses before discussing as a class.

MAIN ACTIVITY: INDEPENDENT LEARNING

Using copies of the poem enlarged to A3 with plenty of white space around the edge, get the children to work in pairs to explore the poem and annotate it with their observations, thoughts and questions about the meaning and the language used.

What do they think the poem describes? What has happened? Who is Mother Nature? Why is Mother Nature crying? Do they think the poem has a message and, if so, what do they think the message is?

Really question the children to explore the deeper meaning and understand that in a very few carefully selected words a whole story can be told.

MAIN ACTIVITY: TEACHER INPUT

Ask the children what a syllable is and explore some examples with them, then count the syllables in each line of the poem together and write down the pattern. Explain that this poem is called a tanka and has five lines with 5-7-5-7-7 syllables. Tell the children that in a tanka poem the middle line 'tells the story'. In this case, 'Mother Earth's face scared' (note the possessive apostrophe) is the line that summarises the meaning of the rest of the poem.



IDEAS FOR DIFFERENTIATION

SUPPORT

Provide an image bank to support the children's understanding of the poem; allow children to discuss the poem verbally with an adult to scribe.

EXTENSION

Challenge children to innovate lines in the poem to include personification, choosing language carefully to maintain the atmosphere of the poem.

PLENARY

Look at the poem line by line. What is the effect of the poem on the reader? What do they think the message is?

Lesson 4

Learning question:

How can I select language carefully for my own rainforest poem?

STARTER ACTIVITY

Start the session by playing some rainforest sounds to the children. As they listen, ask them to jot down words that spring to mind. Afterwards, ask the children to look at each word they have written and write an even better word next to it. Remind them how important it is to choose every word in a poem carefully to create mood and convey meaning. Use thesauruses to give them ideas for improving their words.

MAIN ACTIVITY: INDEPENDENT LEARNING

Once the children have innovated a selection of middle lines for their tanka, ask them to choose one and perfect it. Explain that they will write their own tanka around the theme of this middle line.

Using a middle line from the examples given above, use shared writing to show how the children can use the list of words they generated in the starter activity to develop and refine their own tanka.

Children work independently to create their own poems.

MAIN ACTIVITY: TEACHER INPUT

Explain to the children that they are going to write their own tanka poem today, but that theirs will bring to life the sights and sounds of the rainforest. Remind the children that the middle line of a tanka unlocks the whole story and is just five syllables long.

Give them some examples of a tanka middle line to guide their thinking, for example:

Animals are loud
A collage of green
Ancient trees stand tall
Birds chirp in the trees
The rainforest sings

Children work with a partner to write some middle lines they could use in their own tanka.



IDEAS FOR DIFFERENTIATION

SUPPORT

Children work in pairs or as part of a small, adult-led group; provide a middle line for the children to work with; provide rainforest vocabulary lists

EXTENSION

Challenge the children to use personification in their poems (or any other stylistic devices they are already familiar with, such as similes).

PLENARY

In small mixed-ability groups, children present their poems to each other and provide feedback to one another about the effectiveness of their poems (this will need to be modelled and you may want to provide a checklist of features to look out for to support this discussion). Allow the children some time right at the end of the session to make any edits or amends to their poems following this discussion.

Lesson 5

Learning question: *What will help me perform a poem effectively?*

STARTER ACTIVITY

Display lines of poetry one at a time on the whiteboard. You could select these from the poetry books in the classroom, from the poems the children have written, or you could make up your own. For example:

*The chattering brook skips and dances
over water-worn pebbles*

*Thunder booms and rockets around
the craggy canyon*

*Fields of golden corn swish and hiss in the
warm, late-summer breeze*

*In the sleepy midnight silence,
moonbeams tiptoe through the darkness*

For each line, ask the children to discuss how you might read it aloud, using your voice to help convey mood, sound and meaning. Practise reading each line effectively as a class.

MAIN ACTIVITY: INDEPENDENT LEARNING

Children work in groups of four or five to prepare a performance of one of their poems (you may want to select these for each group, or help the children to choose one as a group). Children work in their groups to prepare a performance of the poem.

The children are likely to get more out of this activity if you stop them at intervals to make suggestions and share good practice.

MAIN ACTIVITY: TEACHER INPUT

Using the example poem introduced in the third lesson in this unit of learning, discuss with the children how we might use our voices to read it aloud for effect and impact. Which lines might we read in unison and which would work better read individually or in small groups? Allow some time for the children to discuss this in pairs before feeding back to the class.

Move on to discuss how one or two simple percussion instruments might be used to help recreate the sounds of the rainforest and how gestures could be used to recreate its sights. This will need to be modelled.



IDEAS FOR DIFFERENTIATION

SUPPORT

Children work in mixed ability groups; focus any available adult support on children who find reading challenging so they have additional support rehearsing the lines they are saying.

EXTENSION

Challenge children to think about how they might vary the pace of each line and use their voices to emphasise key words and phrases.

PLENARY

Allow time for an extended plenary so the children have ample time to enjoy and comment on each group's performance. To help bring the performances to life, you could quietly play rainforest sounds in the background as they recite their poems. If possible, see if there is another year group they could perform their poems to. You could record their performances too.

To bring the learning together, ask the children to reflect and comment on the weekly question that introduced this unit of learning: How can I bring the sights and sounds of the rainforest to life in a poem? How effectively do they feel they have done this? What could have made their performances even better?

Resource 1A

Lesson 1

Rainforest poem

As I entered the rainforest one hot day,
Where the trees stood tall and free,
I looked up in amazement,
Since they couldn't look down on me!
A tree raised its head and hands,
A thanksgiving gesture to the Gods,
While I stood dwarfed by this tree,
The passing time I forgot!
The trees like silent sentinels, -
Stood steadfast, both tall and free;
Long before we roamed this earth,
The rainforest had this tree!

- by Raj Nandy

Resource 1B

Lesson 3

Rainforest tanka

Deforestation

Ancient trees felled for money

Mother Nature cries

Leafy giants are toppled

And habitats are destroyed

