



## Writing the World We Want to See

Learners will discuss the impact of climate change on the planet and society, as well as young people's responses to the issue. They will read and discuss a poem about the impact of nature on wellbeing, and subsequently write a poem for a loved one, giving them the 'gift' of nature.

### Teaching time

1 hour

### Learning outcomes

Learners will gain a deeper understanding of the impact of climate change, and be introduced to some responses to it, e.g. collective action and social prescribing.

Learners will be able to discuss the effects of the use of the second person in poetry.

Learners will write a poem about the natural world including some poetic devices.

### Step by step

1. Introduce learners to the information given about climate change, collective action and social prescribing.
2. Read and discuss the poem by Maggie Wang, using the questions on page 3.
3. Model writing a poem about the natural world.
4. Learners to write their own poem about the natural world.
5. Plenary – what changes would you like to see world leaders make?

Find more learning resources exploring poetry and nature on the Poetry Society website.

Produced by

### Green Skills



### Suitable for

Key Stage 3

### Location

Indoors

### Season

Spring  
Summer  
Autumn  
Winter

### What you'll need

- Worksheet
- Writing materials

### Key vocabulary

**Collective action** – action taken together by a group of people with the aim of improving or changing something

**Social prescribing** – connecting people with activities, groups and services that improve their health and wellbeing.

**Ecosystem** – animals, humans and plants living together and depending on one another

### Support and extension opportunities

Learners can add more poetic devices into their work, e.g. simile, onomatopoeia, alliteration.

Learners can access the Young Poets Network website for a writing challenge with eco-poet Isabel Galleymore about the relationship between cuteness and the natural world

Learners can do further research into social prescribing, and debate its effectiveness, or write to local politicians in support of it.

Learners can create a wellbeing book from their work, which you could make available around the school as a wellbeing tool for other learners.



## **Think about what kind of planet you want to see**

Climate change is the defining issue of our time. Driven mostly by the emission of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide and methane, which trap heat in the atmosphere, climate change has a variety of consequences across the world. Overall, the planet is getting warmer, but some regions can be temporarily cooler, or may experience longer or shorter periods of wetness or dryness. Extreme weather events like floods and wildfires are increasing, and sea levels are rising.

Life on Earth exists in an ecosystem, which means that no species – including humans – exists independently of others. Each living thing relies on the survival of the rest of the ecosystem. When the climate changes and habitats become at risk, so too do the species that live within that habitat. For example, if hot weather happens earlier in the year, this will have a knock-on effect on when plants flower, when insects are able to pollinate plants and when birds migrate. There is a risk that as the climate changes, the lives of different species are no longer synchronised.

People, too, are adversely affected by climate change. In addition to dealing with the physical consequences of climate change, such as natural disasters or climate-based migration, people experience a range of feelings. When thinking about the consequences of the changing climate, people can have feelings of frustration, anger and powerlessness. It affects people of all ages, but many young people in particular experience these feelings: Force of Nature, a non-profit organisation who work with young people, report that over 70% of young people feel hopeless about the climate crisis.

This has prompted lots of young people to take collective action, where they work together to try to bring about change. This could include lobbying politicians to create environmentally-friendly policies, making changes to improve biodiversity in your local neighbourhood, or making individual changes like using public transport or reusable cups. As a class, discuss what forms of collective action you are aware of – perhaps you have heard about them on the news, or perhaps you're already taking action yourself.

At the same time, there is a growing recognition of the ways interaction with the natural world can improve wellbeing. The NHS now includes nature-based activities in its 'social prescribing' service. This means health and care practitioners can recommend people spend time in nature e.g. community gardening or food growing, to improve their mental health.

Lots of the information included here is adapted from the Natural History Museum and NHS websites. Find out more about climate change [here](#), about eco-anxiety [here](#), and about social prescribing [here](#).



## Read a poem

We are going to read a poem by Maggie Wang. The poem was written in response to a writing challenge for poets aged 25 and under. The challenge asked young poets to think about how spending time in nature can make someone feel better.

Do not be afraid of reading this poem  
Instead, go outside, where the tulips are flowering  
right on time, and watch  
the sunrise. Feel the wetness on the grass warm  
slowly with the day and the late birds miss their chance  
to drink. Let this poem disappear  
in the pileup of the minutes, its short limbs flailing  
like worms in the dryness. Do not make haste  
to rescue it. Rather, linger deep  
like the bees on the lilac blooms or the foxes  
defying the shortening night. Stand  
softly like the trees still waiting for their leaves:  
complain neither of the cold that sometimes sweeps in  
unannounced, nor of this poem's last cries  
for your attention. But do let the long light stay  
beside you as you catch the season in your hands.  
No, do not be afraid of reading this poem. Instead,  
go outside, and let the splintering clouds remind you  
that this could be the last day of your life.

Maggie Wang

This poem is commended in *The Influence of the Earth: A Poetry Challenge on The Poetry Society's Young Poets Network* in partnership with People Need Nature in 2023.



### Think about the poem

Think about the poem you have read and answer the following questions. You could discuss them in a group or make some notes.

The poem explores the benefits of spending time in nature. What is your experience of nature? Perhaps you live in the countryside or near the sea, or perhaps you live in a city but have a local park. Do you enjoy going there? How does it make you feel? The poem is written in the second person, which means it addresses 'you'. What effect does this have on the reader?

Lots of the verbs (action words) in the poem are in the form of imperatives, which means they are instructions. Underline all the instruction words. Why do you think the poet did this? Is it related to the idea of social prescribing we looked at earlier? How does the poem appeal to the reader's different senses e.g. sight, touch, sound? What do you think of the poem's title?

How is time represented in the poem? Identify any language or imagery relating to time.

What do you think is the relationship between time (the past, present and future), the natural world and humans?

What do think is the relationship between a poem and the idea of time? Think about how we read as a process and the lifespan of a poem – how long does it exist? How does it live on?

### Write your own poem

Maggie Wang's poem explores the way interaction with nature can be calming and restorative. We are now going to write our own poems. Write a poem about the natural world as a gift for a loved one. Try to make your poem as positive and generous as possible, thinking about how the poem can support the wellbeing of the person you are giving it to.

Here's how to get started.

Think about who the recipient is and what they like: do they like trees, the beach, birds?

Select 3-6 items in the natural world to write about. You will include these items in your poem as part of your gift to a loved one, so try to choose items that will appeal to that person. The items might be animals or plants, they could be types of habitat like a forest or desert. Or it could be a big idea like the sea or sky.



For each item you have chosen, write a couple of phrases describing it. Try to use figurative language like similes or metaphors. Think about colour and texture, and think about how to appeal to the senses.

Think about how each item can help make the person you are writing the poem for feel better.

Now weave those thoughts together into a poem. If you want a structure to help you, use the format below, substituting your own words for the parts in green. But you can also write a poem in any form you like!

Example structure

### Poem for Abigail

Abigail, here is a daisy for you  
It is small enough to fit  
behind your ear At its centre  
is an orange sun  
So you will always have light  
Abigail, here is a four-leaf  
clover  
I found it especially for you I  
combed the grass for it  
So you will always have luck  
Here, Abigail, is a pebble  
Its edges have been  
smoothed by water So you  
will never be blown away.

Take these as my gifts:  
Daisy, clover, pebble, poem.  
For you, Abigail, always.

### Poem for \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, here is \_\_\_\_\_ for you  
It is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
So you will always \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, here is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
So you will always \_\_\_\_\_  
Here, \_\_\_\_\_, is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
So you will \_\_\_\_\_

Take these as my gifts:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
For you, \_\_\_\_\_, always.

### Final Thoughts

Today we have thought about climate issues and how young people all over the world are taking action. We have learned about social prescribing and thought about the restorative benefits of nature.

Now think about the future. With a partner, spend a few minutes discussing what changes you would like to see world leaders make to preserve the natural world, and what changes you could contribute to in your own community.



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