



## We've Got the Poetry Power!

Learners will discuss the impact of climate change on the planet and society, as well as collective action as a response to the issue. They will read and discuss a poem in which the speakers take collective action, and will subsequently write a poem advocating for an issue they believe in. Please be aware that the poem included in this resource contains strong language.

### Teaching time

1 hour

### Learning outcomes

To gain a deeper understanding of collective action as a response to climate change, and be able to name some forms of collective action and their merits.

To be able to discuss the effects of the use of concrete and abstract nouns in a poem.

To write a poem about collective action including some poetic devices.

### Step by step

- Introduce Learners to the information given about climate change and collective action.
- Read and discuss the poem by Jayant Kashyap, using the questions on page 4.
- Model writing a poem about a form of collective action.
- Learners to write their own poem about collective action (see page 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 The Poetry Society

### Green Skills



### Suitable for

Key Stage 4

### Location

Indoors

### Season

Spring  
Summer  
Autumn  
Winter

### What you'll need

- Worksheet
- Writing materials
- A way of doing independent research e.g. laptops or iPads

### Key vocabulary

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

**Mitigate** – to lessen the effects of something

**Lobbying** – to try to influence a lawmaker about an issue

**Hypocrite** – someone who says one thing and does another

**Advocate** – to support someone or something (who often has less power)

### 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 forms of collective action, and have a debate about its effectiveness, or write to local politicians as a form of collective action

Learners can discuss how to make poems more effective poems as a form of collective action. Could the poems be chucked in the playground? Could they be displayed as posters?



### **Learn about the power of making change together**

Climate change is the defining issue of our time. We know the climate is changing because measuring stations around the world, which track air and sea temperature, show those temperatures rising. We can also see the effects of climate change in the increased frequency of natural disasters like flooding or wildfires, or the melting polar ice caps.

Climate change is mostly caused by the emission of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide and methane, which trap heat in the atmosphere. These greenhouse gases are caused by burning fossil fuels. Scientists are able to say with certainty that this is the primary driver of climate change because they know that to produce carbon dioxide, oxygen is needed, and they can see the amount of oxygen in the atmosphere reducing in correlation with the increase in carbon dioxide. They are also able to study how carbon dioxide absorbs infrared radiation, allowing them to discount the theory that the planet is warming because of an increase in the sun's intensity.

Scientists can estimate the potential impact of different temperature increases. Based on this information, governments across the world have agreed they want to keep any rise in temperature to below 2 C, and as close as possible to 1.5 C. Scientists can predict the different outcomes based on that temperature range and understand how different increases in temperature will transform the planet.

Some scientists have been calling for action to be taken to mitigate against climate change for over thirty years. As the consequences of climate change have become more apparent, there has been a growing interest among the general public, both in taking action to prevent further environmental damage and in putting in place measures to deal with the consequences of the changing climate.

Many people experience a range of feelings about the impacts of climate change, including feelings of anger, frustration or concern. This has prompted lots of people to take action, for example:

- making individual changes like using public transport
- trying to produce less waste e.g. by using reusable cups
- switching to a diet with a lower carbon footprint e.g. one that includes less meat



Sometimes, action can be ‘collective’, which means people work together to try to bring about change. Collective actions include:

- lobbying politicians to create environmentally-friendly policies
- making changes to improve biodiversity in the local neighbourhood
- campaigning for more renewable energy

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 are already taking action yourself.

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

### **Read a Poem**

We are going to read a poem by Jayant Kashyap. The poem explores different responses to climate change, from acts of violence to dialogue. Read the poem quietly to yourself, then aloud as a group. Please be aware that this poem contains strong language.



## A Positively Violent Poem in Five Parts

1.

That day we ruined the swimming pool  
everyone was a hypocrite and angry  
we pulled out the tiles with bare hands and  
nails  
our knuckles bled quietly into tattoos when  
we couldn't notice that day we planted eighty-  
four trees one for everyone present there  
because later the trees could oxygenate water  
whereas the pipes were pvc and so the chairs and  
there  
was no time for decomposition or conversations  
that day we ruined the swimming pool we didn't  
really ruin it only when we left it wasn't so blue anymore  
a bit dry a little muddy that day we left it like nature

2.

We then broke sinks and showers during the night  
and placed flowerpots everywhere we could it was  
like readying a graveyard for flowers before there were any  
like there are instances when rivers part from land  
and all one could do is wait and on a wall graffitied  
the dead have no use for flowers but this truth is offensive  
and unnecessary  
we tell them plant little flowering shrubs  
in their name every once in a while the shrubs equal water  
oxygen love

3.

Next morning we were met by a racket of people  
wanting to talk discuss having a mind to argue  
swear for generations f\*\*\*! prepared to fight  
kill someone saying son it doesn't matter who –  
or what – you are money is god so we threw five-pound  
notes in water see if god couldn't dissolve

4.

And that evening we cleaned the beach  
there were more people with us now than against  
we noticed the beach had more plastics and whatnot  
and not shells even the castles the kids built near water  
weren't pure sand anymore  
sometimes the bottlecaps serve as lighthouse roofs  
sometimes the straws as flag posts as catheters  
for turtles



5.

**On the third day we then advocated**

**the use of cups                  mugs                  tumblers                  bottles                  jugs**  
**buckets                  tanks                  even larger containers**  
**heads**  
**then animal lives                  a whale doesn't bother about capitalism**  
**racism                  but it worries about water                  what we do with it**  
**when it is not ours to have**  
**we distributed in the midst of light disdain leaflets                  basically**  
**small chits                  reading                  a head full of plastics is of no use to**  
**anyone**

**Jayant Kashyap**

This poem is the second-prize winner of the Poems to Solve the Climate Crisis challenge on The Poetry Society's Young Poets Network. The challenge was created in partnership with People Need Nature in 2023.



### Think about the poem

1. Think about the poem you have read and answer the following questions. You could discuss them in a group or make some notes.
2. The poem explores a feeling of anger in response to climate change, and outlines some different ways the speakers of the poem took action. What are the different forms of action outlined in the poem? How does the poem evolve from talking about violent activity to dialogue?
3. The poem takes place over three days. How does the tone of the poem change over the course of that time period? Look particularly at the verbs used.
4. What do you think of the poem's title? How do you understand the word 'positively' in this context?
5. How is nature portrayed as restorative in the poem?
6. What are the different ways in which the poem explores the theme of water?
7. The poem is split into five parts and the lines are spaced out irregularly. Why do you think the poet chose this form? How might it relate to the emotions the poem explores?
8. The poem is written in the first-person plural ('we ruined', 'our knuckles'). Who is the 'we' in the poem, and what effect does this have on the reader? How does this relate to collective action?
9. The poem is full of concrete nouns: these are nouns you could touch, taste, see, hear or smell. Underline all the concrete nouns. In contrast, an abstract noun is one that is an idea, like hope or peace. Can you find any abstract nouns in the poem?
10. What is the relationship between the concrete and abstract nouns in the text?
11. By the end of the poem, reading is seen as a force for change, with the speaker advocating for action through distributing words. How do you think this relates to the idea of the poem itself as a persuasive act?



## Write a poem

We are now going to write our own poems about collective action in response to climate change and biodiversity loss. Start by choosing an aspect of climate change that matters to you. For example, deforestation, warming oceans, biodiversity loss or anything else you care about.

Top tip! When you are writing a poem, it can be helpful to include as many specific details as possible. This helps the reader to feel connected to the subject you are writing about and, by homing in on small details, you can show your reader the subject from a new perspective. Try to choose a specific subject e.g. rather than writing simply about biodiversity loss as a whole, you could write about the threat to a particular species of insect.

Do some research into the issue you have chosen. Find out what is causing it, what actions are being taken to mitigate against it, and how more actions could be taken in the future. Find out if there is any opposition to taking action and where this point of view could be coming from.

Now imagine you are trying to persuade someone to take action in response to the issue. This could be a world leader, a politician or CEO, or it could be someone in your own community, like a family member or a friend. Write your poem as a conversation with that person.

Think about ways to make your poem resonate with the person you are trying to persuade. Consider:

will you use any emotive language (language that appeals to the emotions)?  
will you use figurative language e.g. similes, personification or metaphor to help your reader picture the issue what is the start and end point of your poem? What journey are you trying to take the reader on?

When you are happy with your poem, think about whether there's a way it can be used as a practical tool. For example, could you display it in school where others might read it and be persuaded? Can you include it on the school website or in a newsletter to parents? How can your poem spark a real-life conversation?

## Final Thoughts

Today we have thought about climate change and collective action. 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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