



Renewable Poetry

Learners will be introduced to some ways humans are responding to biodiversity loss and climate change. They will read a poem in which animals react to some good news, and discuss it. They will then write their own poem in the form of a reverse golden shovel, using the sentence 'the renewable energy revolution is happening faster than you think'.

Teaching time

1 hour

Learning outcomes

- Understand what biodiversity loss is and the measures some are taking to solve it
- Explore the use of past and present tenses in a poem
- Understand what the golden shovel form is and use a version of it in their own poem

Step by step

- Introduce your class to the information about biodiversity loss and its solutions.
- Read the poem by Julia Zhou.
- Discuss the poem as a class through talk partner questions (see page 3).
- Each learner to write a poem in the reverse golden shovel form (see pages 3-4).
- Share the poems with the class.
- Plenary – what changes would you like leaders to make to protect the natural world?
- Find more learning resources exploring poetry and nature on the Poetry Society website.

Produced by

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Green Skills



Suitable for

Key Stage 2

Location

Indoors

Season

Spring
Summer
Autumn
Winter

What you'll need

This worksheet

Writing materials

A way of doing independent research e.g. laptops or iPads

Key vocabulary

Biodiversity – the rich variety of life on Earth

Renewable energy – energy that comes from a source that will not run out e.g. solar or wind

Hark – to call out

Jubilation – happiness

Acreeage – a large area of land

Support and extension opportunities

Some more poetic devices can be used such as simile and metaphor (identify how the poet uses these in the poem too).

Learners could also use this learning and the ideas garnered from the plenary to further address climate change, perhaps by writing to a local politician.

Learn about renewable energy

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, including extreme weather events like floods and wildfires, and increasing sea levels.

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, the ecosystem becomes at risk. 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.

Sometimes, the news we hear about climate change can be very sad, and we must not forget that it is a serious problem. However, it is a problem that lots of people across the world care about. If everyone works together, we can take action to make improvements to our relationship with the natural world.

Some of those improvements are already happening. One area where we can make positive changes is renewable technology. This means technology like solar power and wind turbines, which allow us to generate energy without burning fossil fuels, reducing the amount of greenhouse gases we are putting into the atmosphere. The more we can use renewable energy and not rely on fossil fuels, the healthier the planet will be.

As a class, discuss how you come across renewable energy in your lives. Think about:

- Does anyone you know drive an electric car?
- Does anyone have solar panels on their roof?
- Have you ever seen any wind turbines?

If we want change to be meaningful, we need to do more and keep pushing for action. What do you think world leaders can do to make it easier for people to access renewable energy? How would you persuade people of the benefits of renewable energy?

Lots of the information included here is adapted from the Natural History Museum website.



Read a poem

We're going to read a poem by Julia Zhou. The poem explores different animals and plants' reaction to positive news. Read the poem quietly to yourself first. Ask your teacher to explain any words you don't know. Then read the poem aloud in a group.

And everywhere, the relief

The dog saw it first – bold headline in the propped-up paper,
and so he wagged tagged over to the goldfish,
and the goldfish swish told the little ant crawling on the bowl rim,
and the little ant passed it down the crumb line,
and the line like a telephone wire carried it outside to the earthworm,
and the earthworm, in its dying breaths
huffed in the mouth of the sparrow,
and the sparrow harked to the sky, to tell.
The first trees learned from the fledglings who
etch secrets into parchment bark,
and the tingling jubilation spread from branch to trunk to root,
and the root underground network ferried the message to neighbouring trees.
and now the whole acreage knew!
The forest swath erupts in celebration,
joy shot from a canon.
And everywhere the relief.
Long-held breath released,
and everywhere, the relief.
If just for one day, the relief.

Julia Zhou

This poem was commended in the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award in 2018. The Young Poets Award is an annual competition for writers aged 11-17, run by The Poetry Society.



Think about the poem

- Think about the poem you have read and answer these questions. You could discuss them in a group or make some notes.
- The poem starts off with the dog reading a newspaper headline, which makes all the animals and plants happy. What do you think the headline could have been? Think about news that might be positive for the natural world.
- Do you think the headline would also be positive for humans?
- The poet mentions that trees spread messages to other trees in an ‘underground network’. Does this remind you of any ways in which humans communicate?
- What kind of animal is likened to a telephone wire, and why?
- There is a chain of information listed in the poem, reminding us that each living thing depends on other living things to thrive and survive. How many different living things are included in the poem?
- The poem is mostly written in the past tense. Is any of it written in the present tense? How does this contrast with the rest of the poem?
- Why do you think there is a break between the first part of the poem and the final four lines?
- Why do you think the poem repeats the words ‘and everywhere the relief’?
- What do you think the last line of the poem is telling us?

Write your own poem

We’re now going to write our own poems celebrating the relief that renewable energy brings to climate change, which we learned about earlier. We’ll write in response to a newspaper headline. The headline is ‘The renewable energy revolution is happening faster than you think’. This was a headline in *The New Scientist* in August 2023.

The type of poem we’re going to write is a ‘reverse golden shovel’. In a golden shovel, you use the words of a phrase or sentence as the last word in every line. For a reverse golden shovel, each word of the phrase is the first word of each line in your poem. You then fill in the lines of the poem so that it makes sense, and the sentence you started with is still visible if you read the first word of each line.

Start by doing some research into renewable energy. This could be one particular type of energy e.g. solar, tidal or wind power, or it could be several. Note down some interesting facts.



Write the headline down the right-hand side of your page, like this:

The
Renewable
Energy
Revolution
Is
Happening
Faster
Than
You
Think

Think about the message you want to get across in the poem. Are you celebrating how renewable energy can change things for the planet? Are you championing one type of energy? Are you encouraging people and governments to switch over to renewable energy?

Now you can start to fill in the rest of the poem's lines. Think carefully about how to write them so that your poem still makes sense and fits with the given words. In this example poem, the writer imagines a day when all energy is switched over to renewables.

The cars slowed their puff. The sky sighed. Finally
Renewable energy had arrived. Wind energy, solar
Energy, clean as a whistle and as powerful as the tide.
Revolution is here! sang the sparrows and swifts.

And so on.

Try to include some vivid language like adjectives (describing words), and try to paint a picture for the reader.

When you have finished, share your poem with the rest of the class. How has everyone responded to the headline differently?

Final Thoughts

Today we have thought about climate change and renewable energy. 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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