

# Poetry in the Garden

By Openlands Staff, adapted from Project Learning Tree Activity #5, Page 31

**Summary:** Students write poetry in their schoolyard and share their poems with their class in small groups and through a poetry slam.

**Objective:** Students practice writing three poems, outdoors.

**Grades:** 3-8

**Time needed:** One class period; 45-60 minutes

**Standards met:**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1-2, R.4-5, R.7, W.3-6, W.10, SL.1, SL.5-6

**Background:**

Poetry is a great way for students to express their ideas. Giving students a specific poetic form helps provide a structure for these ideas. Below are examples of poetic structures to use with your students:

**Haiku:** A Japanese form of poetry with three lines: the first line has five syllables, the second line has seven syllables, and the third line has five again. Third line also has a surprise or tension element.

**Cinquain:** Consists of five lines, each with a specific purpose and fixed number of syllables. (1) The title in two syllables, (2) description of title in four syllables, (3) a description of action in six syllables, (4) a description of a feeling in eight syllables, and (5) another word for the title in two syllables.

**Acrostic:** A poem where the first letter in each line, when read vertically, spells out the name of something or conveys a message.

**Shape Poetry:** Words are written in a way that forms a picture of what is happening in the poem.

**Windspark:** A poem with five lines in the following pattern: (1) "I dreamed," (2) "I was..." (something or someone), (3) where, (4) an action, and (5), how.

*Example:*

I dreamed  
I was a tree  
On a hillside  
Playing in the wind  
Joyfully.

**Free verse:** Follows no set formula or style

**Preparation and Materials Needed:**

Walk through the garden space to ensure that it is presentable to your students for this lesson. Think about where you will be asking your students to go (i.e. are there particular paths for them to stay on? Are there defined borders?).



Prepare a poetry worksheet with three prompts:

1. Write a poem about something you observe in the garden
2. Write a poem about anything that crosses your mind while in the garden
3. [leave the third prompt blank]

**Helpful Background Resource:** Project Learning Tree: [www.plt.org/prek-8-activity-5--poet-tree](http://www.plt.org/prek-8-activity-5--poet-tree)

**Procedure:**

- 5.) **In-class preparation and moving outside (15-20 minutes):** Explain to students that they will be in the school garden for class today. Students should brainstorm rules and/or best behavior for the garden (i.e. listening, following directions, boundaries, meeting place, etc.). Explain that they are going outside mainly to write poetry, but they will also play a game to get them familiar with the garden (and to release some of their built-up energy from being inside all day). Ask students what kind of poetry they have written before? Consider sharing examples of poems from the Project Learning Tree website. When going outside, the instructor should take enough pencils, worksheets, and clipboards (optional) for the class.
- 6.) **Game (10 minutes):** Gather students in an area of the school yard where there is plenty of space for the class to move around.
- 7.) **Poetry Writing (15 minutes):** Pass out pencils, worksheets, and clipboards to students. If there are no clipboards, they can find hard surfaces to write on instead - benches, sidewalk, even each other's backs! Students have 15 minutes to write their poems. Everyone needs to try at least one! Pick a time and meeting place for everyone to come back together when they are done.
- 8.) **Poetry Slam (15-20 minutes):** Have the students get into groups of 3-4 people to share their poems with each other. They have 7-10 minutes to do this. After the time is up, have everyone come together closely, where they can hear each other. Take 8-10 minutes for students to nominate each other to read their poems aloud, in a Poetry Slam. Perhaps your school garden has a space that could act as a stage for the poem reader to stand on. The class can show their appreciation of poems by snapping their fingers after a poem is read.
- 9.) **Go back inside (5 minutes):** Thank students for their participation, collect worksheets, and provide directions on what to do when they return inside.

**Assessment:**

- 10.) Collect poems for a participation grade.

**Extensions**

- 11.) Consider involving students in a younger grade. For example, if you teach 4<sup>th</sup> grade, connect with a 1<sup>st</sup> grade class, and go outside together. It's a bit much to play the game with that many children at once, but 1<sup>st</sup> graders and 4<sup>th</sup> graders could be paired up to write poems together and share them with everyone.

**The next page will provide students with a space to write their own poems –  
print only as many copies as needed**

# Poetry in the Garden

**Directions:** Use this space to create your own poems. Take your time to write your thoughts, and feel free to add a sketch to your poem. Also, make sure your poem has a title.

Poem 1: Write a poem related to something you see in the garden.

Poem 2: Write a poem about anything that crosses your mind while sitting or standing in the garden.

Poem 3: