

Post-Visit Lesson #2: Nature's Poetry

For standards in your state see: <http://www.educationworld.com/standards/state/toc/index.shtml#math>

Grade Level: 2-4

Time Required: 1 class period

National Curriculum Standards:

- NL-ENG.K-12.5 COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES
- NA-VA.K-4.6 MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN VISUAL ARTS AND OTHER DISCIPLINES
- NL-ENG.K-12.6 APPLYING KNOWLEDGE

Objectives:

- Students will explore poetry based on Thomas Locker's *Water Dance*
- Students will construct one of three different poetry forms and an accompanying visual art piece.

Materials:

- *Water Dance*, by Thomas Locker (1997)
- Pencil, paper
- For more inspiration, go to: <http://www.poetryinnature.com/>

Student Instruction:

1. Ask students about what they remember most about their visit to *Wild Land: Thomas Cole and the Birth of American Landscape Painting*. Ask them how they think Thomas Cole felt about nature.
2. Ask students if they recall other ways that Thomas Cole expressed his feelings about nature besides in paintings. Possible responses: sketching, letters, journaling, poetry, writing.
3. Inform your students that Cole was also a poet, and just as in his paintings, nature was often his subject. Read the first verse of Cole's poem *Evening*:

See the sun all gold and red
Leaves and blue and open sky
Sinking to his glorious bed
Far beyond the mountains high.

4. Ask students if they can figure out what Cole is describing in this verse (the sunset). Ask students how Cole describes the sunset. Make sure that they recognize his use of colors in the poem; it is as if he were painting a picture with words.
5. Inform your students that *200 years after Thomas Cole, another Thomas is painting with words and colors. His name is Thomas Locker and he is also a*

landscape painter, someone who also treasures the natural world and was inspired by Thomas Cole. He has written several children's books about the beauty of the natural world. Today you will hear one of his poetry books for children entitled "Water Dance."

6. After reading *Water Dance* to students, ask them the following questions:
 - What did you notice about the poems in this book?
 - Talk about something that all the poems had in common.
 - Did the poems rhyme? Do poems have to rhyme?
 - Did the poems match well with the paintings?
 - What did you like best about this book? Least?
7. Instruct students to write their own nature poems. They can either choose one of Cole's paintings to write about or they can choose the natural treasure that they chose in the previous exercise.
8. After choosing their nature subject, students should decide on one of three forms of poetry to use.
 - Their first option: **"I am" poem.** Adopt the style of poetry that Thomas Locker used. They are to "become" a natural feature. The poem should consist of 5-7 lines, should begin with the word "I" and end with the phrase "I am _____."
 - Option Two: **Haiku.** A haiku poem rarely rhymes. It consists of three lines; the first and last line typically have five syllables and the middle line usually has seven syllables. Here is a haiku to help students remember:

I am first with five
Then seven in the middle
Five again to end.
 - Option Three: **Cinquain poem.** (See examples at: http://hrsbstaff.ednet.ns.ca/davidc/6c_files/Poem%20pics/cinquaindescrip.htm)

Cinquain poems are all five lines, but can be one of three formats:

 - one word, two words, three words, four words, one word
 - a noun, two adjectives, three -ing words, a phrase, another word for the noun
 - two syllables, four syllables, six syllables, eight syllables, two syllables.
9. Create an illustration to go with the poem. Display students work in a gallery style.
10. **Alternative:** Get your students into Nature! Assign homework to spend some time in nature, on a hike, at a park, cloud watching, or just listening to birds in their backyard. They will then use this experience to as the basis for their poetry.