

Urban Spaces

A National Poetry Day
resource from First Story

Key Stage 3-5

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FIRST STORY



Urban Spaces

from SJ Bradley for
First Story

Night Music

I saw sounds at night
altering the shapes of trees

tickling shadows
dancing on an owl's tongue,

I saw sounds skipping
from door to door,

rattling the letterbox,
slipping into dreams,

I saw a gentle drumbeat
chase a prancing fox,

amongst a tiny applause
of closing flowers.

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from *Daydreams and Jellybeans* by
Alex Wharton, illustrated by Katy
Riddell (Firefly Press, 2021)



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Warm Up - Questions about the text

Spend 5-10 minutes thinking about, or discussing the following questions:

1. Wharton's poem focuses on a particular time of day. Why do you think he chose this time of day to focus on?
2. What do you think is the mood of this poem and why?
3. Wharton uses a lot of continuous (-ing) verbs. Why do you think that might be?
4. Which of the metaphors in this poem do you like the most and why?
5. The simple phrase 'I saw' is repeated throughout the poem. Do you like this repetition? Why or why not?
6. Sibilance is a feature of this poem. Why might that be considered effective?



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Focus on the Details

Think of a wild animal you see often in your local environment. It doesn't have to be fancy or exotic, in fact we're focusing on the lesser celebrated, everyday animals such as squirrels, pigeons, crows, spiders or hedgehogs.

STEP 1

Take 5 minutes to describe what that animal looks like. What colour is it? How is its body shaped? Where can it be seen? What time of day do you usually see it? Where do you usually see it? How does it move? What does it do when you see it?

STEP 2

Take another 5 minutes to describe the animal using senses other than seeing. If I couldn't see that animal, what might I hear, smell, or touch? Be creative - you don't have to be literal!



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Vivid Vignette Poem

You now have fifteen minutes to create a poem about a narrator who is closely observing an animal going about its life. You can use the repeated words 'I saw' if you would like to. Your poem should draw heavily on senses other than sight, to force yourself into more adventurous descriptions.

Try to describe your animal using bright and rich imagery by considering:

What does your animal smell like? You can be figurative here and bring in other images. Hedgehogs can smell of fallen chestnuts, pigeons of sad memories.

What does your animal feel like? Again, don't feel you have to be literal. Crows feathers can feel like wax.

What does your animal sound like? Perhaps spiders sound like your sister's shrieks echoing around the bathtub? Maybe seagulls shrieks are like battle cries?



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Let's Share

Take 15 minutes to share your work and listen to others. If you're reading, remember: this is only your first draft. Nobody is expecting perfection so read loud and proud!

If you're listening, remember: listen gratefully and sincerely. Offer positive, specific feedback if you can – it's helpful and validating.



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First Story is England's leading creative writing charity for young people, equipping students with the confidence and skills to tell their own stories.

Find out more at firststory.org.uk

FIRST STORY

Don't be bored rock

A National Poetry Day
resource from The Poetry
Archive

Key Stage 3-5

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Don't Be Bored Rock

from The Poetry Archive

Don't Be Bored Rock

don't be bored rock
once you were orange fire
thundering down some
mountain slope or
hurtling silver sleek
through deep sky

maybe you were thrown up
sputtering red by
an ancient fuming volcano or
born with the planet in a
starless galactic bang

to be carved sharp by ice
rounded by raging wind

but whichever it was
being still now is good
after all

you have so much to remember

Cherry Moon

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Don't Be Bored Rock

from The Poetry Archive

Zaro Weil's poem 'Don't Be Bored Rock' takes a new and delightful look at a rock and makes it very special

TRY THIS:

How does the poem help us understand more about the rock?

What does the poem tell us about the history of our landscapes?

How does the history of the rock help us understand our natural world?

What do you think a 'galactic bang' is?

See if you can write your own poem about something you can see in the natural world

Visit <https://childrens.poetryarchive.org/teach/resources/mission-write-a-poem-using-the-archive/> for lots of ideas about how to get started on writing poetry.



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POEMS FOR THE PLANET

We Don't Have to Give Up Hope

A National Poetry Day
resource from Greenpeace

Key Stage 3-4

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We Don't Have to Give Up Hope

from Greenpeace

We Don't Have to Give Up Hope

It isn't a done deal.
We don't have to give up hope.
We can change our own behaviour,
we can throw ourselves a rope.

The future doesn't have to be a
wasteland filled with sorrow.
Act today to change the way the world
will be tomorrow.

We've all to gain and much, much
more than everything to lose.
So look carefully in the mirror,
and tell yourself,
choose.

Copyright © by **Nicola Davies**,
from *This is How the Change Begins*, (Graffeg, 2021)



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GREENPEACE

We Don't Have to Give Up Hope

from Greenpeace

Read and talk about the poem:

Read the poem out loud.

Read [Greenpeace's information sheet on the climate emergency](#). Focus particularly on the paragraph:

'Greenpeace calls this a climate emergency because it's a problem we need to solve now. We need to cut our global greenhouse gas emissions by 45% by 2030 to move us in the right direction. This may seem like a lot but don't worry, we have the answers. It's about working together to make change happen.'

What do you think is it about? How does it make you feel? What makes you feel this way?

How does this poem relate to this text? How do both the poem and the text from the information sheet offer hope and engage the reader in working towards change? Which language in the poem and on the Greenpeace resource is most effective in engaging your interest and provoking an emotional response in you as a reader?



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We Don't Have to Give Up Hope

from Greenpeace

Reflect and discuss:

Consider the opening lines of the poem:

It isn't a done deal.
We don't have to give up hope

What is the impact of opening the poem in this way? How has the poet used language effectively to create this impact? Why do you think she chooses to start with these two ideas?

Now look at the closing lines of the poem:

We've all to gain and much, much
more than everything to lose.
So look carefully in the mirror,
and tell yourself,
choose.

What thoughts and feelings are you left with as you read these lines? What other words and phrases throughout the poem create effective imagery and/or encourage the reader to think about the impact of, or act on, the climate emergency? What ensures that the reader is left feeling hopeful, rather than hopeless?



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We Don't Have to Give Up Hope

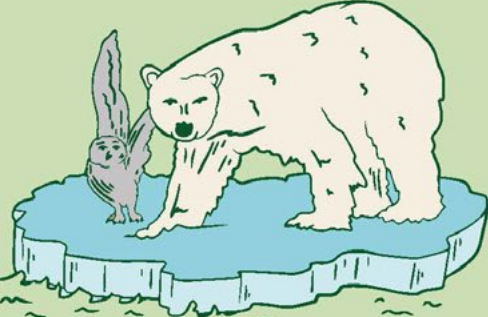
from Greenpeace

Reflect and discuss:

Consider what you already know about the climate crisis.

What do you think are the kinds of behaviours we need to change, as referenced by Nicola Davies in the poem? What actions could we take to change the way the world will be tomorrow?

Climate emergency



Natural resources are materials which are found in the environment like plants, light, air, water and fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas). These resources are used by humans to power our homes, transport, feed and clothe us.

But many natural resources are being overused. This is depleting oceans and forests all over the world and causing climate change. That's why Greenpeace is working hard to make sure we act now to save our planet.

But what exactly is the climate and why is it changing?

What do we mean by climate change?

The easiest way to understand climate is by thinking about weather. Weather describes the conditions at one time, in one particular place. For example, the weather may be cloudy or sunny, cold or hot. Climate, on the other hand, is more than just one or two hot or cold days. It is the average weather over longer periods of time and across larger geographic areas. Climate is understood by observing the weather over 30 years or more and identifying the patterns. The climate is what is expected to happen in the atmosphere.

Our global climate changes naturally, but humans are now changing it with drastic consequences.

Weather = the day-to-day conditions of the atmosphere

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri


Climate = a pattern of weather over 30+ years

1960	1970	1980	1990	2000

Why does climate change matter?

Extreme weather

Climate change makes the weather more extreme. Storms are fiercer and heat waves are more regular, leading to more frequent wildfires. In 2019 and 2020, forest fires swept across Australia. News reports suggested that an area nearly the size of England was burned and at least half a billion animals were killed, including thousands of koalas who struggled to move fast enough to escape. At least 33 people were killed and more than 1,500 homes were lost. Severe and long term drought and record-breaking heat waves were to blame.



Re-read the [Greenpeace Climate Emergency resource](#) to find out more about the Climate Emergency and things you can do to help. As you read, note down or highlight any points of interest or key words and phrases that really make you think about the impact of climate change, or motivate you to act.



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Write your own poem:

Come back together to think about how you might write your own poem to engage others to act on the climate emergency.

Take a piece of paper and a pen. Remind yourself of the issues you read about in the Greenpeace resource and what you think or how you feel about these things. When you have some ideas written down, see if you can use these to write your own poem. If you struggle to get going, think of describing the issue more broadly, as Nicola Davies did in her poem.

How will you engage your audience from the very start of your poem? How will you create imagery to provoke the reader's interest? What thought would you want to leave your reader with, so that they are motivated to take action?

Consider how you'll arrange your poem on the page, where you'll break lines, whether you'll have multiple verses and whether it will rhyme or be in free verse. What's most important is that it engages the reader in the issue of the climate emergency, maintains a sense of hope for them and leaves them motivated to act. Read your poem when it's finished and check that it does these things effectively.



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Submit and share your poem:

Share your poem with your family or a friend.

What does it make them think about? How does it make them feel? Does it inspire them to find out more or to take action, however small?

Submit your poem to the Poem for the Planet competition online by 1st December 2022 at: greenpeace.org.uk/poems-planet

Explore the environment further:

- Explore Greenpeace Youth Resources for 7-18 year olds: greenpeace.org.uk/all-resources/education-resources/
- Invite a Greenpeace Speaker for a free talk or workshop: greenpeace.org.uk/greenpeace-speakers



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We Are Lewisham Creative Challenge KS3

A National Poetry Day resource by the teachers and children of Dalmain Primary School, from creative workshops with Francesca Beard and support from National Poetry Day.

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Night Music

I saw sounds at night
altering the shapes of trees

tickling shadows
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I saw sounds skipping
from door to door,

rattling the letterbox,
slipping into dreams,

I saw a gentle drumbeat
chase a prancing fox,

amongst a tiny applause
of closing flowers.

Copyright © by **Alex Wharton**
from *Daydreams and Jellybeans* by Alex Wharton,
illustrated by Katy Riddell (Firefly Press, 2021)

Poems can make sense in unusual ways.

Read 'Night Music' by Alex Wharton and talk about it together.

- Do any of the descriptions of the sounds surprise you?
- What do you think is meant by sounds altering the shapes of trees?
- What do you think about the image of sounds dancing on an owl's tongue?
- How can sounds slip into dreams? (remember there is no wrong answer here).

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Look at some images of nature and brainstorm what sounds there might be and what effect they might have.

Now think about some less obvious verbs to describe the movement of the sounds e.g thunder 'punching'.

You could write a poem now using the refrain: I saw sounds.

Or you can take it in a different direction:

- Think about the change you want to see for the environment.
- What do we mean by change?
- Who has the power to change things, and how would you speak to them?
- What sort of language would you use?

Together list some ideas of who or what you want to change things for. For example, you might want to change things for the trees being cut down/for a species on the verge of extinction/for your grandchildren.

Now write a poem, using this structure:
I speak the language of... to the...

example: *I speak the language of the forests to the politicians
who are felling them*

We Are Lewisham Creative Challenge KS4-5

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Decimation

They're cutting down the trees.

And all I can hear
above the machines
is a voice
screaming
Hurt not the trees!

Hard to believe the girl up there,
held high by branches,
is real.
Her hair flies in bunches and
she's waving a flag
that she's made of her clothes.
Half-naked she stands
astride the world,
in her bra and ripped jeans,
in the rain,
certain she'll stop the bulldozers,
the saws,
that grate and grind,

salivating, mechanical wolves,
teeth bared
and tearing at air.

I dream of doing
something incredible.
I dream of daring to do the impossible
sometime,
soon,
before it's too late.

from *Activist* by Louisa Reid (Guppy Books, 2022)
© **Louisa Reid**

Poetry can be a powerful tool for protest.

Read 'Decimation' by Louisa Reid out loud
and talk about it together.

- What is the mood of this poem and why?
- Who has the power in this poem?
- Does the writer make you want to do something about the trees?

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February

The number of amphibians are in decline, they have suffered from an increase in disease and a lack of habitat as we build and bulldoze.

Soft pond jewels are forming
in sunlit forest eyes
and garden pools.

Expectation and hope
balled-up in clear jelly.
Frog baby crèche.

When the frogs were plenty
and the spawn everywhere
we'd jar-scoop them.
Handlebar dangle them
to the old fish tanks stored
on our balconies.

We'd watch the full stop grow
on an unwritten sentence,
would our hopes hop?

It is now too dangerous
to take frogs home.
We've diminished their numbers,
filled in their forest eyes.
Denied our childhood hopes.

from *A Year of Nature Poems* by Joseph Coelho,
illustrated by Kelly Louise Judd (Wide Eyed Editions,
2020)

© **Joseph Coelho**

Now read 'February', by Joseph Coelho.

- How is the mood different about the impact of bulldozing nature?
- What emotions does he conjure up in this poem?
- Does it make you want to act?

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Brainstorm some ideas in groups about anything you want to protest to do with the environment – it could be about clean air, global warming, or something very particular in your local area.

Write down some things that connect you personally with the issue you have chosen e.g. your brother has asthma and struggles with the pollution

Think how you will use your poem to protest. It could be spoken word, or a short poem for a placard. You could write a poem letter to someone in a position of power.

You could use a strident voice, like in 'Decimation', starting with a bold statement like 'they are choking up our streets' or the nostalgic tones of 'February' – remember how people used to revel in the sun but many felt fear this summer during the heatwave. Or try using repetition, writing a list poem where each line begins in the same way, like the beginning of ['I Never Asked for Another City' by Dean Atta](#).

Further reading: this [collection of poems of protest from the Poetry Foundation](#) may inspire you with how different writers have tackled a range of issues.



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