

MUSEUM
on Main Street

Water/Ways: The Poetry of Science

*Poetry lessons to
accompany the
Water/Ways exhibit*

 Smithsonian

EXHIBIT THEME: OUR WORLD IS WATER

LESSON THEME FROM EXHIBIT: WATER IS WEIRD

GRADE LEVEL: 1-12 (Lesson is divided into Grade appropriate settings)

TITLE: WATER IS WEIRD – MAKING SENSE (POETRY) OUT OF WATER

STEP ONE:

GRADE 1-6:

Read Langston Hughes’s “April Rain Song” and Eve Merriam’s “Weather” with students.

GRADE 7-12

Read Ralph Waldo Emerson’s “Water”

(links to poems are included at the end of the lesson plan)

TIP: have students in older grades read the poems out loud, while in younger grades use repetition and action to get the students involved in the poem and attuned to their senses as they read and hear the words.

Discussion Questions (Grade 1- 12):

1. How is water portrayed in these poems? What are the words and images used to describe water?
TIP: Link this to a science unit.
2. Is water personified (given human-qualities)? What kind of images are created from that when you read the poem?
3. What senses are called upon in the poems? What sensations does this evoke?

TIP: To enhance this experience before moving on to Step Two, you can also compare and contrast the images of water generated from poetry with images of water from art work, from photographs, from computer graphics, and from music and ask the same questions of the students regarding their senses.

OBJECTIVES

- Explore the sensations water evokes within us
- Articulate, using simile, images for each sense associated with water
- Create an alternative definition for water
- Share new definitions of water

STEP TWO:*Grade 1 -12*

(for younger grades this may be done as a whole class and out loud, while older grades can do it individually)

Complete the following sensory sentences, with an image (the idea here is for students stretch the notion of what water is as far as possible in their imagination but to still have it remain believable. The less obvious the image, while still being relevant the better.) Students can think of each sentence as a photograph they are describing. (Younger grades can generate longer lists for each line together and then you can play with combining some of their images together into one line).

Water sounds like ...

Water smells like ...

Water looks like ...

Water tastes like ...

Water feels like ... (this can be either tactile or an emotion, both responses should be encouraged)

Ask students to choose their favorite image and share it with the class.

OUTREACH TIP: Students can create their own sensory exhibit panels on water to accompany the Water/Ways exhibit in your city, perhaps in a special display. These could also be linked to science concepts.

STEP THREE:

Using the list of sense images that the students have just created, ask them to write a new definition of water; one that would not be found in a dictionary. This definition can rely on their own personal experiences and sensations surrounding water.

OUTREACH TIP: Create a twitter account where students write in their definitions and then share them with a conservation organization or other schools in the community or across the state or the nation and use that to begin a dialogue on how we define water.

STEP FOUR:

Create a sense poem on water.

Using their definition as the first line of the poem, students should write a free verse poem on water. Each stanza can reflect aspects of the sense exercise they did in step two or the complexities of their definition.

EXTENSION: These poems can also be created from using other words besides water (i.e. "flooding" or "drought") to highlight a local water issue.

POEMS REFERENCED IN THE LESSON

(* refers to a text cited in Common Core Standards):

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Water." Retrieved at:
<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/184637> from *Poets of the English Language*. Viking Press, 1950.

*Hughes, Langston. "April Rain Song." *The 20th Century Children's Poetry Treasury*. Selected by Jack Prelutsky. Illustrated by Meilo So. New York: Knopf, 1999. (1932). Retrieved at:
<http://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/langston-hughes/april-rain-song/>

*Merriam, Eve. "Weather." *Sing a Song of Popcorn: Every Child's Book of Poems*. Selected by Beatrice Schenk de Regniers et al. Illustrated by Marcia Brown et al. New York: Scholastic, 1988. (1969). Retrieved at: <http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/weather>

WATER IS WEIRD – MAKING SENSE (POETRY) OUT OF WATER
EXAMPLE POEM

Water...

Water feels like nothing
 and everything
trickling, soothing
fizzy and fuzzy
soft, it feels soft
on throats parched raw

Water tastes like nothing
 and everything
bitter and sweet
mineral and dirt
wet, it tastes wet
and church juice green and red

Water smells like nothing
 and everything
spring rain fresh
runoff decay
lemons, it smells like lemons
at summer patio parties

Water looks like nothing
 and everything
blue, green, grey
angry and calm
ribbons, it looks like ribbons
racing and tracing a landscape

Water sounds like nothing
 and everything
spit spitting, splat splatting,
bubbling, tumbling,
quiet, it sounds like quiet
then everything crashing

Water is no-one-thing
 and everything
reflected in
rippling pools of life

Lori Stewart

EXHIBIT THEME: OUR WORLD IS WATER

LESSON THEME FROM EXHIBIT: WATER IS WEIRD

GRADE LEVEL: 7-12 (with adjusted shortened lesson for Grade 1-6)

TITLE: STATES OF WATER AS POETRY – PLAYING WITH POEM STRUCTURE

STEP ONE:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: When American architect Frank Lloyd Wright was designing Fallingwater, he told the home owners that “he wanted them to live with the waterfalls, to make them part of their everyday life, and not just to look at them now and then.”

<http://www.fallingwater.org/37/what-is-fallingwater>

Take the architectural tour of Fallingwater (<http://www.fallingwater.org/explore?to=1>) with your students, or look at images of the building. Asking the question: what design elements of the house mimic the idea of falling water? Where can you locate parts of the natural surroundings in the building?

Using the idea that art and design allow structures to be built to mimic the natural world as bridge, move on to step two.

STEP TWO (GRADE 7-12):

Review the three states of water, and connect to what happens to water molecules scientifically as it moves through the three states.

As a class, read Chapter One of Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*. Ask the students to visualize water, in its three states, as they read through (once out loud and once silently). Get them to write in the margins what images of water come to their minds from the placement of words on the page and how Morrison uses punctuation.

Discussion Questions:

1. Where does this writing mimic water?
2. What types of water did you think of as you read it?
3. Can you parallel what happens with thee punctuation to the change a reader’s voice with the changes in the actions of molecules as water moves through its three states?
4. What would you do to make this writing better match one of the three states of water?

OBJECTIVES

- Draw a connection between the different states of water and writing
- Experiment with creative uses of punctuation and placement of words to visually mimic the way water changes states
- Attempt to apply a scientific principle to poetic form
- Understand that water and the science of water can be an inspiration for artists and writers
- Expose students to different artistic media surrounding water
- Asks: can the scientific world be a template for artistic work

STEP THREE (GRADE 1-12):

Part A) Read Lisa Jarnot's "They Loved Paperclips" and ask what images of water come to mind when they have read it. (Grade 1-6 will need the discussion of water and its states as mentioned in step two, before doing this part).

Part B) Make the poem like water

Students rewrite the poem with punctuation and placement of words on the page to make it mimic their visualizations of water and its states.

TIP: Younger grades could have the poem on large poster board and cut up and glue it onto another poster paper as it is rewritten.

STEP FOUR (EXTENSION) (GRADE 7-12):

Have the students choose a body of water and write their own poem to explore the movement of water in their chosen location.

Prompts to Get Their Poem Started:

- What is the water doing in this place?
- If the water could speak, what story would it tell?
- What is the history of the place? Can one historical fact be the first line of the poem?
- Is there something odd about this place?
- Why did you choose this place? What meaning does it hold for you? What story does it tell?

TIP: Students could graphically integrate the two (the poem and the image) onto a class PowerPoint or a Prezzi that can be created and shown on a loop during an allotted time/day at the Water/Ways exhibit.

STEP FIVE:

Edit the poem to mimic one of the phases of water, or the movement of water, in your chosen location.

WORKS REFERENCED IN THE LESSON

(* refers to a text cited in Common Core Standards):

Jarnot, Lisa. "They Loved Paperclips." *Poem in Your Pocket for Young Poets*, Ed. Harry N. Abrams. The Academy of American Poets, 2011.

*Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye*. New York: Penguin Press, 1970. Retrieved at: <http://publish.uwo.ca/~hamendt/WD%20final%20Project/literaure/Bluest%20Eye.pdf>

Wright, Frank Lloyd. Fallingwater. <http://www.fallingwater.org/>

STATES OF WATER AS POETRY – PLAYING WITH POEM STRUCTURE
EXAMPLE POEM

Waterproofed

My feet got wet and cold kicking through patches of snow.
 I should have waterproofed my boots. I keep forgetting.
 We drove up the mountain because I've been ill and we didn't
 want to spend all day on a hike. We wanted to visit mom
 and still have time to watch Homeland now it's finally out.

I sat on my coat for ages staring at Lake Laberge while
 my brother searched with his binoculars for a route he wants
 to climb next summer. The lake was pale and soft and distant.
 It looked bigger from farther away, it looked like cloud.
 The sky floated into it. I couldn't see the join.

I miss the sea, living a hundred miles inland. I miss breathing
 big water. I could see the Yukon River all the way from Marsh Lake
 to Lake Laberge, broad between bristled trees, big cutting curves.
 It flows right through the town, high and fast. It's going to take out
 the waterfront one day. I watch it on my lunch break.

Robert Service made Lake Laberge famous, writing about the gold
 rush, the cremation of stupid Sam McGee. The Ta'an Kwäch'än
 stories are better. They named themselves after the lake: Tàa'an Män.
 The chief tried to save their land when the gold seekers came.
 He told Ottawa to tell the king. It took a century for them to hear.

Last winter, my aunt from Sechelt came and I drove her to the lake.
 I lent her my mom's parka and a toque. We walked out on the ice.
 We could have gone right across, if we had all day and flares
 and food. You can't walk along the shore because of all the houses.
 My brother says those people don't own the shoreline. He says

we should go wherever we want. I took my aunt out on the ice
 as far as a turquoise crack. I stomped on it to make her scream.
 I wanted her to hear the ice boom. We lay down, pretending
 we were floating on the Salish Sea. A raven checked us out.
 We walked back on the hard white ice under the soft blue sky.

Joanna Lilley

EXHIBIT THEME: SOURCE

LESSON THEME FROM EXHIBIT: WATER CARVES OUT A LANDSCAPE

GRADE LEVEL: 7-12

LESSON: CARVING OUT A POEM: WORKING WITH TEXT TO CREATE A BLACKOUT POEM AND A FOUND POEM

STEP ONE:

Reviewing how water moves through a landscape and carves a path into it (review could be supplemented with images), as a class read John Barton's "Sunrise, Grand Canyon".

Ask the students to visualize water's movement as they read through (once out loud and once silently). Get them to write in the margins what images of water come to their minds from the line breaks to the images that Barton has used.

Discussion Questions:

1. Where does this writing mimic water?
2. What types of landscapes did you think of as you read it?
3. Can you parallel what happens with line breaks to the change in a reader's voice with the movement of water through a landscape?
4. What would you do to make this poem more reflective of the Grand Canyon?

STEP TWO:

Part A) Read and/or watch the excerpts from "A River Runs Through It" and "Beasts of the Southern Wild" and ask what images of water come to mind when they have read it.

Part B) The block of text is a landscape and your pen is the water

- i) Carve into one of these text in the way that water would creating a blackout poem. To make a blackout poem, students will black out words that they don't want from the text in their poem and the remaining words should read as a poem. The trick with the blackout poem is that the words are still read in their fixed order, as presented in the original block of text.
- ii) Into the other text, the one not used in part i, pull lines and words out of the text and rearrange them into a found poem. The difference between the found poem and the black out poem is that in the found poem the words/lines do not remain fixed in the text's body, they can be rearranged.

OBJECTIVES

- Draw a connection between the different states of water and writing
- Experiment with creative uses of punctuation and placement of words to visually mimic the way water changes states
- Attempt to apply a scientific principle to poetic form
- Understand that water and the science of water can be an inspiration for artists and writers
- Expose students to different artistic media surrounding water
- Asks: can the scientific world be a template for artistic work

A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT SCRIPT EXCERPT (Retrieved from: http://www.script-orama.com/movie_scripts/r/river-runs-through-it-script.html):

(Beginning of movie): Long ago, when I was a young man, my father said to me, "Norman, you like to write stories." And I said, "Yes, I do." Then he said, "Someday, when you're ready you might tell our family story. Only then will you understand what happened and why." In our family, there was no clear line between religion and fly-fishing. We lived at the junction of great trout rivers in Missoula, Montana where Indians still appeared out of the wilderness to walk the honky-tonks and brothels of Front Street.

My father was a Presbyterian minister and a fly-fisherman. Though it is true that one day a week was given over wholly to religion even then he told us about Christ' disciples being fishermen. And we were left to assume, as my younger brother Paul and I did that all first-class fishermen on the Sea of Galilee were fly-fishermen and that John, the favorite, was a dry fly-fisherman. The poor without Christ are of all men the most miserable. But the poor with Christ are princes and kings of the earth.

In the afternoon, we would walk with him while he unwound between services. He almost always chose a path along the Big Blackfoot which we considered our family river. It was there he felt his soul restored and his imagination stirred.

Long ago rain fell on mud and became rock. Half a billion years ago. But even before that, beneath the rocks are the words of God. Listen.

....

(End of movie): Of course, now I'm too old to be much of a fisherman. And now I usually fish the big waters alone although some friends think I shouldn't. But when I am alone in the half-light of the canyon all existence seems to fade to a being with my soul and memories. And the sound of the Big Blackfoot River and a four-count rhythm and the hope that a fish will rise.

Eventually, all things merge into one and a river runs through it.

The river was cut by the world's great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time. On some of the rocks are timeless raindrops. Under the rocks are the words and some of the words are theirs. I am haunted by waters.

BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD EXCERPT (Retrieved from <http://screenplayexplorer.com/wp-content/scripts/BOTSW.pdf>):

(Beginning of movie): Daddy says, up above the levee, on the dry side, they're afraid of the water like a bunch of babies. They built the wall that cuts us off. They think we all gonna drown down here. But we ain't goin' nowhere. The Bathtub's got more holidays than the whole rest of the world. Daddy always saying, that up in the dry world, they got none of what we got. They only got holidays once a year. ... They got fish stuck in plastic wrappers, they got their babies stuck in carriages, and chickens on sticks and all that kind of stuff.

One day, the storm's gonna blow, the ground's gonna sink, and the water's gonna rise up so high, there ain't gonna be no Bathtub, just a whole bunch of water. But me and my Daddy, we stay right here. We who the earth is for.

...Y'all better think about that. Cause any day now, the fabric of the universe is coming unraveled. The ice caps gonna melt, the water's gonna rise, and everything south of the levee's going under. Ain't gonna be no Bathtub, just a whole bunch of water. Y'all better learn to survive.

WORKS REFERENCED IN THE LESSON:

A River Runs Through It: http://www.script-o-rama.com/movie_scripts/r/river-runs-through-it-script.html

Beasts of the Southern Wild. Script text retrieved from: <http://screenplayexplorer.com/wp-content/scripts/BOTSW.pdf>

EXHIBIT THEME: SOURCE

LESSON THEME FROM EXHIBIT: HOME IS WHERE THE WATER IS

GRADE LEVEL: 7-12

OBJECTIVES

LESSON: Home is where the water is or isn't, understanding water in different contexts – Creating a letter poem

STEP ONE:

Read two poems – “To the Desert” by Benjamin Alire Sáenz and “Letter Written in Black Water and Pearl” by Jake Adam York. Both poems use with the idea of a letter being a poem.

Pay particular attention to how the authors’ have used the idea of water (or lack of water) as a way to write about a larger theme (such as love).

Discussion Questions:

1. What images stood out for you in these poems? Are any of these images related to water or lack of water?
2. What made these poems like letters? What made them not letters?
3. What do you think using a letter format as a poem allows the writer to accomplish?

STEP TWO:

Different communities have different experiences of water. For example, living on an island can be quite different than living in a desert or an area ridden by drought. Take the time to explore as a class some of the contrasting factors and experiences of water that might occur in these places.

(TIP: Use images and newspaper articles and scientific facts on water usage to enhance your discussion.)

STEP THREE:

Create a letter poem to a body of water/or a missing body of water (if looking at drought) or a water experience (such as living on an island) that is not your own.

Possible Prompts:

- A Letter From the Ocean to the Desert
- What Does the Drought Say to the River
- If the (insert name of body water) ran through here ... (i.e. If the Mississippi ran through here or If Great Salt Lake sat here)

- Draw a connection between the communities and their different cultures surrounding water
- Experiment with creative uses of letter writing to writing
- Expose students to different views surrounding water and its influence on lifestyle depending on in which community a person lives

- What the River Said to the Creek
- A letter from the Farmer to the Drought
- The Island Speaks to the Ocean

The objective of this exercise is for students to incorporate unfamiliar water stories into their own poems and words. The poems should come out as a letter that may or may not be factually true, but effectively represents the emotions that the students experienced when viewing the location that was different than their own.

POEMS REFERENCED IN THE LESSON:

Sáenz, Benjamin Alire, "To the Desert" from *Dark and Perfect*. El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press, 1995. Retrieved from: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/175901>

York, Jake Adam, "Letter Written in Black Water and Pearl" from *Abide*. Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 2014.

Home is where the water is or isn't, understanding water in different contexts – Creating a letter poem

EXAMPLE POEM

**Call Me Ocean
by Cathy Petch**

have you ever
felt beluga thrash in belly
sat stasis as violence erupted
felt life begat life in billions
been the dawn
and the din

can you tell me where
the moon is
just by the way
your skin is crawling
can you sense a symphony
of seaweed
wrap around
the next fighter

I know you octopus
how you create a nest
fasting so that nothing touches
eggs that will someday hatch mouths
never to shape the name
of their mother

I feel you walrus
hatch you coral
hear you whale songs
float you stingray
school you shoal

I am ocean
call me enemy
spill oil on my canvas
watch how art
mimics life
see yourselves portrait
your wings stuck
eyes mercury
drowning on dry land

Home is where the water is or isn't, understanding water in different contexts – Creating a letter poem

EXAMPLE POEM

I Stood in the Ocean and Cried

Liam Coady

Stop being so endless!
Stop stashing that forever

So far away from me,

Off on the horizon.

Halt your vastness.
Cease your surrounding,

For I can have no part in it.

When your arms crest and wash over me
I hear you calling me.
It gets me thinking that sinking could satisfy.
To swim in your endless.
To succumb to your vastness.

To surround myself.

To become part of your infinity.

But I can have no part in that.

I am momentary, statuesque, standing tall
Dot on the map, a pluck.
A thing that had some form of beginning,

And who also must have an end.
But I can witness the endless
Sigh and cry for the beauty of the horizon
Knowing I can have this part in that.

EXHIBIT THEME: SOURCE

LESSON THEME FROM EXHIBIT: WATER INSPIRES OUR HUMANITY

GRADE LEVEL: 7-12

LESSON: Writing a Reverence for Water – Creating Origin Poems for Water

PRE – LESSON STEP: Water is a fundamental part of our lives, which has been reflected in its use as symbol and as something to which reverence is given. Prior to beginning this lesson, spend some time with your class looking at examples of ceremonies or instances where water has taken on the qualities of reverence (i.e. the blessing of naval fleet or the response to the power of a hurricane or a baptism). Discuss these images with your students and the role water has in them. The Water/Ways exhibit is a great starting point for exploring how water inspires our humanity.

STEP ONE:

Read the first stanzas of T.S. Eliot’s *The Dry Salvages* section of his poem “Four Quartets” (<http://www.davidgorman.com/4Quartets/3-salvages.htm>). As you read this, have the students pay particular attention to images of creation in the text, underlining lines that were powerful and stood out to them. (Selected text included at the end of the lesson)

Discussion Questions

1. What story is this part of the poem telling?
2. How is a river like a god?
3. Is there a creation story here? If so, what it is saying?

Writing Prompt from the Text

T.S. Eliot writes, “The sea has many voices, / Many gods and many voices.” What would the voices of the gods of the sea say if they could speak?

Have the students do a 5 minute free write in response to this question.

OBJECTIVES

- Explore water from a humanities perspective
- Look at water with a certain level of reverence
- Write about water in a new way that replicates its power
- Create an origin poem about a body of water or a water-related event

STEP TWO:

Read the following two poems as origin story poems, one of Hurricane Katrina and one of thunder:

“Katrina” – Patricia Smith

“Twelfth Song of Thunder [Navajo Tradition]”

In each poem, explore how the authors understand creation or a beginning for each of these poems and how that is expressed poetically. Discuss this after reading the poems aloud.

STEP THREE:

Choose a body of water, an element of water, or a water-related event, and write its creation story. Imagine it in the very beginning, write how it started, how it grew, how it became what it is today. Give it qualities and characteristics. Use your senses to create a descriptive poem. You are writing the poem of how this particular poem came to be.

TIP: English Language Learners or low literacy students might find using repetition, such as in “Twelfth Song of Thunder”, helpful in writing the poem.

TIP: The writing prompt from the TS Eliot poem can be used to help students get started if they are stuck.

TS Eliot Selected Text –

Selected Text:

I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river
Is a strong brown god—sullen, untamed and intractable,
Patient to some degree, at first recognised as a frontier;
Useful, untrustworthy, as a conveyor of commerce;
Then only a problem confronting the builder of bridges.
The problem once solved, the brown god is almost forgotten
By the dwellers in cities—ever, however, implacable.
Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder
Of what men choose to forget. Unhonoured, unpropitiated
By worshippers of the machine, but waiting, watching and waiting.
His rhythm was present in the nursery bedroom,
In the rank ailanthus of the April dooryard,
In the smell of grapes on the autumn table,
And the evening circle in the winter gaslight.

The river is within us, the sea is all about us;
The sea is the land's edge also, the granite
Into which it reaches, the beaches where it tosses
Its hints of earlier and other creation:
The starfish, the horseshoe crab, the whale's backbone;
The pools where it offers to our curiosity
The more delicate algae and the sea anemone.

It tosses up our losses, the torn seine,
The shattered lobsterpot, the broken oar
And the gear of foreign dead men. The sea has many voices,
Many gods and many voices.

POEMS REFERENCED IN THE LESSON:

Eliot, T.S. "Dry Salvages" from *Four Quartets*. USA: Mariner Books, 1968. Retrieved from:
<http://www.davidgorman.com/4Quartets/3-salvages.htm>

Smith, Patricia. "Katrina" from *Blood Dazzler*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Coffee House Press,
2008. Retrieved from: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/244372>

Twelfth Song of Thunder [Navajo Tradition]. Retrieved from:
<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/246774>

Writing a Reverence for Water – Creating Origin Poems for Water
EXAMPLE POEM**Little Grass Valley Reservoir**
Cynthia French

Each year we went to the mountains
to get away from the city, the grown ups would say.
Each trip started the same, the way the dog's head
would perk up when the trees grew thick.
The slow drive through the campground to
examine each open site for the perfect balance;
flat space for tents, rock, trees for shade and hanging hammocks.
The first trip on our bikes to deposit payment at the entrance.
Card games by lantern light, roasted marshmallows, the water.

The lake seemed to wait for us each year,
to call out for our touch, the toes tipping in. The seaweed
brushing across our limbs as we challenged our young
bodies to swim further and further out, believing
we'd always be returned to the shore.
The lake was sanctuary, delivered here by the stream
that bubbled down the mountainside.

Each year, mom would pack a lunch
and send us kids off to explore the stream on our own.
We'd hike up from the start, from the place the stream
filled the lake, catching the occasional crawdaddy
crawling across the rock bottom.

Past the fallen trees turned balance beams
learning to trust our arms and our legs
sometimes not understanding the slip of our soles,
and crashing down on the hidden trout and water spiders.

We were explorers, trying to understand
the meaning of things. Or water. Of where it all
came from. But we never quite made it. Stopping,
that last year, at the highest point we could go,
to where a pipe opened in the flat rock mountainside
pouring out the origins of the stream. Leaving us
to just trust the water to continue to call us back.

EXHIBIT THEME: FLOW

LESSON THEME FROM EXHIBIT: WATER CONNECTS/WATER DIVIDES

GRADE LEVEL: 7-12

LESSON: Looking out on Immigration – Letting the Journey Speak (Writing Persona Poems)

PRE-LESSON STEP: *Water/Ways* discusses how water has been a way of both connecting and dividing people. Water has been and continues to be crucial to immigration to the United States. Prior to doing this lesson, discuss with students instances where water has connected people (i.e. immigration, trade routes) and also where it has divided people (i.e. political and cultural boundaries). This is a good opportunity to explore stories of immigration, both historical (i.e. Underground Railway) and contemporary.

STEP ONE:

Begin with showing students some images of the Statue of Liberty. You can also briefly give the history of the statue, its purpose in welcoming immigrants to the United States.

Possible Discussion Questions:

1. What does the Statue of Liberty mean to you?
2. When you see the Statue of Liberty what do you think of?
3. What words does it inspire? (Write these words on the board)

Explore the words on the board and ask how many of them we can link to water (i.e. “freedom” might link to the unrestrained movement of water, or “segregation” might be linked to an island)

Writing Prompt (have students write on the following prompt for 5 minutes):

The Statue of Liberty is associated with immigration. When you look at images of the statue, what story does it tell to you?

TIP: Share these stories/free writes with the class, either as a whole or as a small group sharing.

OBJECTIVES

- Explore concepts surrounding immigration to the United States
- Discuss the Statue of Liberty as a symbol of immigration
- Look at how water has influenced immigration
- Write on the image of the Statue of Liberty and its relationship to immigration
- Research an immigration story
- Create a persona poem on the theme of immigration

STEP TWO:

Read “The New Colossus” by Emma Lazarus and then watch Karen Finneyfrock’s “The Newer Colossus” (link is included at the end of the lesson), two poems about the Statue of Liberty.

Discussion Questions

1. What images of the Statue of Liberty come from Lazarus’s poem? What come from Finneyfrock’s poem? How do these images differ from your own images and impressions of the Statue of Liberty?
2. How do you think Finneyfrock used Lazarus’s poem to create her own?
3. What is Lazarus saying about immigration? What is Finneyfrock saying? How do these stories make you feel?
4. What role does water play in each of these poems?

STEP THREE:

Option One: Ask your students to write a poem from the point of view of the Statue of Liberty. The poem should be in the voice of the statue and reflect on water-based immigration to the United States. They can use their free write, as well as the word list you generated as a class, to help them get started.

Option Two: Have your students research an immigration (by water) story (it could be general, related to a specific historic person, or a personal family story). Once they have researched the information, ask them to choose an inanimate element of the story (i.e. the boat, the water, a trunk of belongings, the Statue of Liberty) and to create a poem in the voice of that element about the immigration journey.

STEP FOUR:

Share these poems with the class.

OUTREACH TIP: Students reading their immigration story poems might be given the opportunity to perform them on a literary night at the *Water/Ways* exhibit or at the local library.

POEMS REFERENCED IN THE LESSON:

(* refers to a text cited in Common Core Standards):

Finneyfrock, Karen, “The Newer Colossus” from *Ceremony for the Choking Ghost: Poems by Karen Finneyfrock*. Texas: Write Bloody Publishing, 2010. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aebVRLwYzfY>

*Lazarus, Emma, “The New Colossus” from *Emma Lazarus: Selected Poems and Other Writings*, 2002. Retrieved from: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/175887>

Looking out on Immigration – Letting the Journey Speak
EXAMPLE POEM

Moonshine
Mary Pinkoski

there once was a time
 when I was more than just moonshine
 pouring down the throat of another politician

a time when they called me Mother
 and I flourished
 laden heavy with fruits of my labor
 my body stretched out beautifully for them
 and they touched me tenderly
 held me in reverence
 knew that taking meant as much as giving

And I loved them
 let their drum beats match the beat of my own core
 held their songs in my waters
 watched their voices sway my forests
 I nourished them, cradled them in my soul,
 I loved them

And they called me Mother

Then you came

Planting your feet and your flags
 In the name of religion and Empire
 Running your double-edged tongues along my shores
 I embraced you because you called me Daughter

and though I did not speak your language
 I opened my mouth to let you glide into my heart
 I stretched my arms out in wooden welcome mats
 Felt your shoes rub splinters into me
 I carried your dreams with my eyelashes
 until the weight of your hopes caused me to blind

And you, you waded through my oceans teeming with fish
 traveled my veins to taste my lifeblood
 tattooed an agricultural patchwork onto my back
 chopped into the forest of my lungs
 drilled into the bedrock of my bones
 chiseled down my spine

and just when I thought you were running out of steam
you wrapped me up in railway ties

I was not meant to be corsetted in half
still I offered myself to you

You, the once timid dreamers,
the bold adventure seekers,
the stargazers and the mapmakers

You became butcher, banker,
nation-maker

And under your tutelage,
the weakest –
your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free
were sent to shovel into my soul

I do not blame them,
their palms pleading through dirt held me in my most vulnerable places
felt me shutter with worry

I sent you warning after warning
like barely breathing canaries escaping from dark caves
until I had no choice but to return these men to you lifeless
coughing up their still hearts like bottles

I gave you sea to shining sea
and you called me land of the brave
and home of free

yet in your greed, you have long gouged out my eyes
torn my limbs from me and ripped me apart for your pleasure

In your pillaging,
my mouth has filled with ashes
so I can only ask you in a voice filled with death
Will you continue to call me daughter
until I lay barren like the rest of your offspring

EXHIBIT THEME: QUENCH

LESSON THEME FROM EXHIBIT: HARNESSING THE POWER OF WATER

GRADE LEVEL: 7-12

OBJECTIVES

LESSON: Working With Water: Writing Persona Narrative Poems

STEP ONE:

Begin with reading two poems: “At the Fishhouses” by Elizabeth Bishop and “The Fisherman” by Anis Mojgani. (Links to poems found at the end of the lesson).

Discussion Questions

1. What lines stood out to you in these poems?
2. What impression do you get about the work of a fisherperson in these poems? What lines contribute to this?
3. How does the voice of the fisherman come through in these poems? What is the voice saying?

STEP TWO:

Research a water-based occupation. Through images, film, or other narratives, come to understand what the work entails, what a day would be like, and how the occupation relates to water scarcity or improves water conditions.

STEP THREE:

Create a persona poem. Using what you have learned about water occupations, write a poem in the voice of a person who works in the job you chose. Rely on your senses to create a portrayal of this person.

POEMS REFERENCED IN THE LESSON:

Bishop, Elizabeth, “At the Fishhouses” from Elizabeth Bishop, *The Complete Poems, 1927-1979*. Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1983. Retrieved from: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/182896>

Mojgani, Anis, “The Fisherman”. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2IHELnGT8s>

- Understand how water is an industry
- Explore water-related employment
- Create a persona poem that places students in the position of the worker

EXHIBIT THEME: FINDING COMFORT AND PURPOSE IN WATER

LESSON THEME FROM EXHIBIT: EVOKING PERSONAL STORIES

GRADE LEVEL: 7-12 (with adaptations for Grade 1-6 at the end)

OBJECTIVES

LESSON: Telling Your Water Story

STEP ONE:

Read George Ella Lyon's "Where I'm From" and "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" by Langston Hughes with students or watch the video. (Links included at the end of the lesson).

Discussion Questions:

1. Both of these poems were created from lists, how does that make the form of the poem interesting? What does having a list enhance? Can you tell it is created from a list?
2. What items are highlighted in this list?
3. What do we learn about the authors from these poems?
4. What do we learn about where the authors are from or their personal histories?
5. What senses do these poems evoke?
6. How do we connect with these poems?
7. How does hearing one person's individual story of where they are from link us into a community?

STEP TWO:

Begin with a class discussion on where water exists within the student's lived environment, addressing both their community and their personal lives. Ask students how they view water, what memories of water they have, and what stories involving water they have told or heard.

Water can often be a conduit to telling a story. Look at the following two examples with the class:

Example One: Watch clips from Matthew Leavitt Brown's "River Sonnet" – a narrative poem written using images of the Mississippi to connect to the author's personal life <http://www.riversonnet.org/> Text: <http://www.riversonnet.org/poetry/>

Possible Clips:

1. 6:50 – 9:48
2. 16:33 – 16:55

- Identify and list the effects and connections to water in student's lives
- Determine events when water has influenced student's lives and communities
- Create a personal water story in free verse poem from a list

3. 31:25 – 32:00

4. 32:55 – 34:30

Example Two: Porsha Olayiwola’s poem “Water” connects the inability to swim to a history of slavery.

Discussion Questions

1. How did you feel after hearing these water stories?
2. Are there histories that you can connect to your own water stories?

Example Three: Poet Patricia Smith wrote a persona poem, “34” voicing the stories of 34 residents of a senior’s home during Hurricane Katrina. In the poem she is telling their imagined stories.

Discussion Questions

1. What do we learn from the voices in the poem?
2. Reflection Question: Is there a water story of someone else you might like to tell?

STEP THREE:

Students begin with the creation of a water-related list, which will then be used to create their own water story poem.

Ask the students to make three personal lists that reflect the following categories (5 minutes per list). Some of the categories will be easier to identify with than others:

1. Who is your water story?

List prompts:

- Has anyone taught you a specific water skill?
- Do you visit places of water with anyone in particular?
- Are there any characters, fictional, that are related to what that you identify with water?
- Do you hold someone else’s water story in your own mythology?

2. What is your water story?

List prompts:

- Do you have any stories surrounding water?
- Do you use water as part of celebration?
- Does water hold any sacred aspect to you?
- Is there anything you do in community related to water (i.e. recreational or work)?
- Is there a story of the history of water in your community?

3. Where is your water story?

List prompts:

- Where have you experienced water?
- Are there places that you want to go?
- Does your family have a history or a story involving a specific body of water (i.e. a lake that they visit, a place they fish, or immigrating across an ocean, or a heritage in another country that has different water bodies)

STEP FOUR:

Using the lists that the students have generated, they will now write their own water story in a free verse poem. They can use the format of any of the poems that they explored. The idea is to choose multiple items from the list and expand on them through the use of imagery and metaphor until they have told their water story – this will avoid the poem looking like a grocery list, rather than a complete water story.

TIP: Using the phrase “I am from...” or “I have known (insert body of water):” to introduce items in the list and treating each stanza as if they were describing a photograph, can help students get started.

STEP FIVE:

Share your water stories in the classroom

FURTHER OUTREACH: Bring water story poems to the bodies of water that they reflect and look into exploring having them posted with in the community at different water locations.

ADAPTATIONS FOR GRADE ONE – SIX

Rather than creating a water story poem from a student generated list, choose places of water within your community (i.e. a swimming pool, a pond, a lake, a river, an ocean, a water fountain, a faucet, a bath tub) and ask the students to tell the story of a memory of using that specific place of water. It could be as simple as a 4 line rhyming poem about a trip to the water fountain or the noise a faucet makes, to a more detailed memory of a time at the swimming pool). Marchette Chute’s “Drinking Fountain” is an example of a text that can be used.

TIP: Younger grades might work to create their poems out loud from a word list given to them by the teacher.

POEMS REFERENCED IN THE LESSON:

Brown, Matthew Leavitt, “River Sonnet.” Text retrieved from: <http://www.riversonnet.org/>

Chute, Marchette, “Drinking Fountain.” Text retrieved from: <http://msnancy.org/2010/08/31/poem-of-the-day-drinking-fountain-by-marchette-chute/>

Lyon, George Ella, "Where I'm From." Text retrieved from:
<http://www.georgeellalyon.com/where.html> and video retrieved from:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdnHI_yW1dQ

Olyaiwola, Porsha, "Water." Video retrieved from:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmS9JEvYKhE>

Smith, Patricia, "34" from *Blood Dazzler*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Coffee House Press, 2008.
Video retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OZqlrKjdkk>

Telling Your Water Story**EXAMPLE POEM****Edmonton, you are singing****Mary Pinkoski**

Edmonton,
 your gates to the north open wide
 like arms stretching into your gaping river chest
 Where you can see the current of our hearts
 running right through the body of this city

Our hearts beat they ferociously
 They beat with the voices of history
 and the call of the future

They carry the memory
 of great ones that have moved through us
 carving a space so big we've got roadways for veins
 Wayne Gretzky Anthony Henday Emily Murphy Alex Taylor

Our hearts,
 they carry the memory that from the beginning
 we were the Cree's Beaver Hills House

Edmonton,
 you have always been a home

setting yourself down beside
 the quickly running North Saskatchewan River
 you have been a journey and a destination

And yet, if you have ever paused on top of Walterdale Hill
 to watch the setting sun fold itself into
 this city's rushing river chest

watch light bounce off a riverbed that houses
 the orchestral clicking of dinosaur bones and
 the settling spines of bison

A waterway that harbors
 the rhythmic histories of river boats and railway alongside
 the often dissonant cries Gold rushes and lumber barons

A river that cradles the sunset reflections
 of buildings and temples
 of steeples and synagogues

a river holding the passions of prayers
and the hopes of progress
melding the past with the present

Edmonton, lay yourself down with the sun
set yourself out along the river,
like an early birchbark canoe,
put your ear to the bank,
dip your hand into the water
let move through you

and tell me,

can you hear the jazz blues folk in lumber
dancing down the river like an old time waltz escaping into the night air,

in the 5pm yellow glint off the water can you see
the historic hope of immigrants written in the golden top of the Chinatown gate

in the dispersing purple sunset do you see
the dedicated threads of a mother's sari swishing around her family in Millwoods,

do the eddies of this river twist you into a skater twirling in Hawrelak Park,

have you let the wind blowing drift into your ears
like an early settler's bagpipe aria
have you heard it enclosing its bilingual melody
around Bonnie Doon singing the songs
of Marie-Anne Gaboury
chanting the prayers of St. Jean

does the river's bubbling take you to a soccer game in little Italy,
it's bustling effort bring you to a farmers market
that holds the same vegetables a Ukrainian baba planted
in her first garden in the new world

are you mesmerized in its swaying sides,
north to south,
river bank to river bank
like the repetitions of hands beating ancient rhythm into drums

Edmonton,
I know we are place that is busy with the hopes of growth
We are still young
and sit with nervous anticipation
of what more we can become,

like a child marking his height with ticks on a wall

asking r "am I taller yet"
am i taller yet? am i taller yet?

We will get there,
I know it.

Edmonton,
in this moment
we are making something of ourselves
and we have already made so much

So for now, Edmonton,
let your stretched out river bed arms
to be the welcome they have always been

let your river bank hands continue cradle
the dreams that have built lives on your shores

let your rushing river heart beat the stories
of this land and its people through you

let them rise out of you
like the mist rises off your river's mouth

and watch them now,

as they fill your sky with constellations that dip and sway
every time a hillside choir under a canopy of candles
brings the heavens down with four strong winds

You will know then that
This city is a symphony under the stars

Listen Edmonton,
can you hear your stories
our stories
can you hear your voices
our voices
drifting off your river

Listen,
This city, my city,
Our city

Edmonton,
you are singing

And it is so beautiful

EXHIBIT THEME: FINDING COMFORT AND PURPOSE IN WATER
LESSON THEME FROM EXHIBIT: CULTURE AND HERITAGE AT THE WATER'S EDGE

GRADE LEVEL: 1-12 (with adaptations for differing grades built in)

Lesson Title: AN ODE TO WATER: UNDERSTANDING SACREDNESS

STEP ONE (GRADES 1-12):

Read the following quote from the book, *Blue Mind: The Surprising Science That Shows How being Near, In, On, or Under Water Can Make You Happier, Healthier, More Connected, and Better at What You Do*:

“But in almost all cases, when humans think of water – or hear water, or see water, or get in water, even taste and smell water – they feel *something*” (p. 17).

As a class, begin to discuss the sensory experience of water: what does it make us feel; is the feeling different depending on the context that we are experiencing the water in; does it heighten different senses? Why do we have different experiences of what we feel when we experience water? Writing these responses/images on the board will be helpful later in the lesson.

For Grades 1-6, this discussion might involve exploring water in various states (i.e. touching an ice cube, putting your hand in a basin of water, watching a kettle boil) and asking after each instance what kinds of things it makes them think of and writing those images on the board. They might also recall places of water that they like (e.g. the swimming pool) or places they do not like (e.g. a swamp).

STEP TWO (Grade 7-12):

As a class read Sherman Alexie’s “The Powwow at the End of the World.”

Discussion Questions

1. What is the author speaking about in this poem? What is he forgiving?
2. What is the cultural story of water that is being told?
3. What is the political story of water that is being told?

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: Take time with your class to research some cultural traditions surrounding Native American life and water.

OBJECTIVES

- Explore sacred traditions surrounding water
- Explore cultural views surrounding water
- Explore the implications of the use of water
- Understand what is an ode is
- Write an ode

STEP TWO (Grade 1 – 6):

Read *Go Home, River* by James Magdanz with your class.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does the family in the story understand water in the same way that you do? How do they understand it differently?
2. What is different about the pictures of water in the book to the pictures of water you have seen from today?

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: Take time with your class to research some cultural traditions surrounding Native American life and water.

STEP THREE:

The sacred traditions surrounding water and reverence given to water is prevalent in many cultures. These beliefs have been challenged through contemporary uses and misuses of water. Consider water from a reverent framework and highlight the sacredness of water.

Write an ode to water. You can reference water in any situation. An ode is typically a lyrical, praise poem written to a particular place or thing. In this case, it will be water.

Grade 1-6 can do this as a whole class activity, with small groups creating stanzas that can then be placed together into a larger poem.

Share these odes within the class and, OPTIONALLY, if they reference local bodies of water perhaps they can be shared with local water conservation agencies.

TEXTS REFERENCED IN THE LESSON:

Alexie, Sherman, "The Powwow at the End of the World" from *The Summer of Black Widows*. Story Line Press, 1996. Retrieved from: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/177413>

Magdanz, James. *Go Home, River*. Alaska Northwest Books, 2002.

Nichols, Wallace J. *Blue Mind: The Surprising Science That Shows How Being Near, In, On, or Under Water Can Make You Happier, Healthier, More Connected, and Better at What You Do*. New York: Back Bay Books, 2015.

AN ODE TO WATER: UNDERSTANDING SACREDNESS
EXAMPLE POEM

Water Poem
Beth Murch

I turned myself into water for you
 made my bones into driftwood
 made my fingers into lakes
 called them "Cayuga", "Seneca", and "Oneida".
 I melted the proud glaciers of my heart
 engaged in acts of ablation
 until the crystals of my ice and snow
 turned into mud puddles for children to splash in.

I turned myself into water for you
 willed my lungs to stop craving oxygen
 turned my dancing into waves
 transformed my full-throated singing
 into the soft slapping of river against the side of a canoe.
 I condensed my laughter, my sighs, my kisses, and my story
 into droplets that dripped from leaking faucets
 in the late-night darkness of cheap motel rooms.

I turned myself into water for you
 so that your punches can pass right through me.
 Every blow simply displaces the contents of my salmon-filled stream eyes
 to create a little flooding on the plains of my cheeks.
 You can no longer say that I cry too much
 since I have become only teardrops.

At 4 AM, when you think you hear me cry out in pain,
 know that it is really only the haunting call of a solitary loon
 paddling in the deepest part of some Northern lake
 that was once my soul
 the place where my love for you once grew like pines and cedars.
 Now, there are only bottomless depths of cold nothingness
 and that little bird keening out in loneliness
 for a mate that will never come back.

EXHIBIT THEME: WATER IS ETERNAL

LESSON THEME FROM EXHIBIT: WATER IS ETERNAL?

GRADE LEVEL: 7-12

OBJECTIVES

Lesson Title: Poem-ing the Research

STEP ONE:

Read the following poems and use the following discussion questions to understand the poems. (Links to locate the poems are included at the end of the lesson.)

Gary Soto – [The Drought](#)

Evalyn Parry – [bottle this!](#)

Simon J. Ortiz – [Burning River](#)

Discussion Questions

1. How does each of these poems address a water issue? What lines demonstrate these issues and stood out to you?
2. Does poetry work to address a scientific or research issue?
3. What is fact and what is fiction in poetry? How can we determine? Should we determine? Does poetry stand outside of facts?

STEP TWO:

Read the *New York Times* poetry pairing of Kathryn Starbuck’s “Trout” with the article “In Yellowstone, Killing one Kind of Trout to Save Another.” This pairing can be found at:

<http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/04/19/poetry-pairing-trout/>

Discussion Questions

1. How does the poem relate to the article?
2. What lines in the poem reflect the issues being discussed in the article?
3. What is the advantage of looking at issue from a news article and then looking at it from a poetry perspective?

OPTIONAL EXTENSION: Ask students to mimic what the *New York Times* has done and choose a water-related poem or song (there is a reading list at the end of this Water/Ways lesson package) and find a news article related to the issue being discussed.

- Explore research surrounding water and threats to water
- Understand a link between newspaper articles and poetry
- Create a poem from a news article

STEP THREE:

Provide students with a selection of newspaper articles written on water issues – these can be local, state, national, or international issues and articles. Have them choose one that interests them and read the article. As they read, they can underline lines or quotes that stand out to them or move them.

Lead students in a five minute freewrite: (Water issue they choose) interests me because When I read about (water issue), I feel If I could speak for water, I would say

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: Students can instead choose an issue surrounding a threat to water themselves and search out a newspaper article.

STEP FOUR:

Using the newspaper article, the sections the students underlined, and the freewrite, students can write a poem based on the water issue they have chosen. To help them start, they can use a line from the article or a line they have already written in the freewrite and then build the poem off of those lines. The poem can reference the article and share lines to help move the poem forward.

Share the poems and the articles as a class.

OPTIONAL OUTREACH ACTIVITY: Contact the newspaper and the author of the article to see if they are interested in publishing the pairing in their online version of the paper.

ALTERNATIVE STEP THREE AND FOUR: One alternative to this is to provide students with the same article and get them to create a poem from that article exploring how their different voices and interests produced different poems from the same article.

TEXTS REFERENCED IN THE LESSON:

New York Times Poetry Pairing “Trout” by Holly Epstein Ojalva. Retrieved from: <http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/04/19/poetry-pairing-trout/>

Ortiz, Simon J. “Burning River.” Retrieved from: <http://www.poemine.com/Ortiz-Simon-Joseph/Burning-River.html>

Parry, Evalyn, “bottle this!”. Retrieved from: <http://evalynparry.com/2006/11/bottle-this-4/> © evalyn parry (SOCAN) 2007, all rights reserved. (Video can be watched at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KP4xZI-lkjC>)

Soto, Gary, “The Drought” from *The Tale of Sunlight*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978. Retrieved from: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poem/22907>

Poem-ing the Research**EXAMPLE POEM****Holy Water****Aaron Simm**

A holy mountain of crushed
cars dangle precariously over
the edge of the scrap metal
barge on the Gorge Waterway
The fated gravity pulls the discarded
metal, as anxious steelhead watch
for their impending burden
to impact on the water's surface.

As the barge tips over, each
metallic skeleton crashes into
the gelid pool in slow motion.
The spray of water reaches
so high that each wave becomes
it's own mountain, each it's own
Titanic sinking toward the
frigid basin of the waterway.

Every piece of garbage, every
car, every plastic bottle, every
shipwreck of empty coffee cups
sinks with a promise that we will
repent. That we will change our
ways and turn all of our garbage
heaps into sunken treasure.

For now, the ocean sighs with
the weight of cold steel pressed
against it's hollow chest. The tides
of curious fish wait for the dust
to settle on our tragedies. They
will stay here holding their breath
with our empty promises of miracles.

This water will still be holy, even
long after we will have left it behind.

EXHIBIT THEME: WATER IS ETERNAL

LESSON THEME FROM EXHIBIT: WATER IS ETERNAL?

GRADE LEVEL: 7-12 (adaptation for Grade 1-6 at the end)

OBJECTIVES

Lesson Title: Poem-ing the Facts

STEP ONE:

In her book on Hurricane Katrina, *Blood Dazzler*, Patricia Smith creates a series of poems based on data from the National Hurricane Center. She uses direct quotes from the center's reports to lead into each poem. Read the series and then use the discussion questions to explore the poems as a class. (Link to where the poem can be found is at the end of the lesson).

Discussion Questions

1. What lines stood out to you in these poems? Why?
2. How does the information from the National Hurricane Center connect to the poems?
3. What story does the information from the National Hurricane Center tell? What story do the poems tell?
4. What does the poem enhance or detract from the scientific information?

STEP TWO:

Students research a water-related fact or a series of water-related facts. These facts can also gathered from the *Water/Ways* exhibit.

STEP THREE:

Using the fact or facts as a preface, students will write a poem based on the fact. You can use following prompt questions to get them started:

Writing/Thinking Prompts

1. Why is this fact important to you?
2. How do you respond to the fact? What is your gut, emotional reaction?
3. What does this mean for the resource of water? What does it mean for your lifestyle?
4. How does this affect your community, state, nation, or the world?

- Explore research surrounding water
- Discerning scientific facts from the research
- Understand how a narrative can be created from a series of facts
- Create a poem from a news article

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES: These poems could be the start of a larger social science research paper that incorporates water research and poetry.

Adaptation for Grade 1-6: Using the facts from the Water/Ways exhibit or facts that you have generated yourself, write down sensory statements such as:

“When the river dries up”

“When the water fountain has no water in it”

“When a big flood comes”

Ask the students to create poem-stories from these statements that they can write down or speak to the class.

POEMS REFERENCED IN THE ARTICLE:

Smith, Patricia, “5 p.m., Tuesday, August 23, 2005” from *Blood Dazzler*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Coffee House Press, 2008.

Smith, Patricia, “11 A.M., Wednesday, August 24, 2005” from *Blood Dazzler*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Coffee House Press, 2008.

Smith, Patricia, “5 P.M., Thursday, August 25, 2005” from *Blood Dazzler*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Coffee House Press, 2008.

Smith, Patricia, “7 P.M., Thursday, August 5, 2005” from *Blood Dazzler*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Coffee House Press, 2008.

Smith, Patricia, “8 A.M., Sunday, August 28, 2005” from *Blood Dazzler*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Coffee House Press, 2008.

Poem-ing the Facts
Example Poem

The Water, June 07, 2005
 Erin E A Vance

I am almost eleven years old.

My grandmother perches on the neighbour's speedboat
 wrapped in her son's winter coat
 like a ship captain or a siren she leans forward, her knees parallel to the water
 three goats curl up against her back, their home sunk and their hooves soaked
 the boat anchors itself to the grass, to the hill,
 and the old woman
 and the three goats
 and the neighbour bundled in a jacket from mountain equipment co op
 stumble out
 to where my brother and I are waiting
 and my mother takes photos of the absurd scene with a disposable camera
 five acres of fields are suddenly a five acre river
 the amazon picked up and plopped down
 in our backyard
 someone's patio furniture gets caught on the little house where the ducks lived
 before a weasel killed them all in one night
 I remember the blood-soaked snow
 the insides of the duck frozen and splayed on the pond
 and my grandmother reading a book called "don't name the ducks."

The lady on the news tells us that June is the wettest month ever recorded
 (in southern Alberta, which isn't saying much)
 the basement fills with murky water
 that feeds the mosquitos, and
 on a dry afternoon
 I sit on the hood of my grandmother's red car
 and let the insects feed on my elbows
 squeezing the skin around their bites
 I watch their wet paper bodies combust with my blood, which
 is 83% water
 satisfied, I throw my legs around a tree,
 a book in my teeth,
 and climb until I can watch everything
 like a bird
 my bones strong
 but thin, like a sparrow.
 my glasses slid off of my nose and tumble to the ground

suddenly I can feel the water in my bones.

My grandmother makes hot toddies for the kids
heats her thighs over the fire while sipping on gin
her leg hangs out of her robe
it reminds me of the duck massacre; white, bloody, mangled,
but with small rivers of blue flowing everywhere.
My brother calls her leg gross
but I know that her vision is obscured
by the gashes in her glasses lens
where the lawn tractor nearly took her head off.
We just learned about bodies that lay preserved in bogs and,
well there's a lot of mud and dirt in our pond
if she hadn't thrown the tractor off of herself and crawled up the bank like a stray cat
her ugly leg
would be discovered by an archaeologist, fixed to a John Deere
in 2000 years.

She'd have died before her nightly gin and tonic.

EXHIBIT THEME: IT'S OUR WATER

LESSON THEME FROM EXHIBIT: SPURRED TO ACTION

GRADE LEVEL: 7-12 (with adaptation for Grade 1-6 at the end)

OBJECTIVES

Lesson Title: Writing the Political Poem

STEP ONE:

Listen to Steve Earle's song "Gulf of Mexico" about the BP oil spill and read/watch Sarah Brickman's "Letter from the Water at Guantanamo Bay" and explore them using the following discussion questions with your class. (Links to the song and poem are included at the end of the lesson).

Discussion Questions

1. Both of these texts deal with water in two very different ways. What resonated with you?
2. What story does the Steve Earle song tell about water? What story does the Sara Brickman poem tell about water?
3. Are poetry or song or other art forms effective ways to address political issues? Does art have a place in activism?
4. How do these texts change how you view water, if at all?

STEP TWO:

Students should identify a political issue surrounding water that has an activist campaign. They will research the issue: noting facts, activist arguments, and scientific facts. Identifying what about the issue resonates with them.

STEP THREE:

Write a water manifesto, as a form of a political poem, surrounding the issue that they have chosen to research. The manifesto can take the voice of the student (as in the Steve Earle song) or the voice of water (as in the Sara Brickman poem). It should be strong statement on the issue.

OPTIONAL EXTENSION ACTIVITY: Students can contact political decision-making bodies, government, and activist organizations to share their manifestos.

- Explore water issues from an activist standpoint
- Discern facts in arguments
- Understand how poetry can be a form of activism
- Discuss if art is an effective form of activism
- Create a political poem

Adaptation for Grade 1-6: Share with students one political water story, either in the form of song, poetry, images, YouTube video. Ask them what is happening in the story. Ask them what their thoughts and feelings are on the story. Ask them how they would change things if they were in charge. Get students to write a “new” water story in the form of a poem that fixes the problem. They can start with the line: “When I fix the (issue in the water story you’ve discussed)...”

TEXTS REFERENCED IN THIS LESSON

Brickman, Sara, “Letter from the Water to Guantanamo Bay.” Retrieved from:
<http://www.splitthisrock.org/poetry-database/poem/letter-from-the-water-at-guantanamo-bay>
Watch at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhWpCX6S78o>

Earle, Steve, “Gulf of Mexico” (song).

Writing the Political Poem**EXAMPLE POEM****Walking in Tallulah Gorge State Park****Karen Garrabrant**

The sound of waterfalls fans the trees
 mists the air cool
 from humid summer.

When branches bend toward down
 and hear a certain babble
 a conversation between leaves
 and the ground
 a hiker knows
 water is near.

Creeks, rivers, lakes, ponds and oceans
 are rebels always in motion
 they know how to carve out
 paths in the mud
 deliver sediment
 and clean up debris after snow melt.

When leveed and canal controlled, the element
 of water will disobey
 tentacle out in branches, fingers, nerves
 running knowledge into the words
 tributary
 and affluence.

Even in drought,
 water snake marks thirsty dirt
 in swerve and swirl patterns.
 River longs for touch of rain
 as ground longs for touch of moisture.

Storms
 are fever passions
 temper tantrums
 happenings and ruckus
 after too much absence.

River doesn't know
 its own name like Mississippi
 or city name
 like New Orleans
 doesn't know displaced faces

as much as delivery.
Water doesn't know alphabets
borders, languages, maps.

Water only knows fish, moss,
green, kelp, weed, grass, silt,
tree trunk, heron, alligator.

Water doesn't know
oil spill, refugee boat, plastic trash band
it only knows to react
that lungs of coral bleach out
that polar bear is thinning
that melting ice increases height.

Ocean collects the salt of mourning
holds creatures of every size
without judgment.
Sea hides, contains unreachable fathoms
keeps dark uncharted mysteries
leagues under Pacific, a name
also not known to it.

Hiking through Tallulah Gorge State Park
I watch waterfalls, knowing they don't know
who built the stairs for us to walk
doesn't know Georgia from South Carolina state lines
or recognize Tallulah.

But those waterfalls
must know splash
must know the joy of falling
the surfing float of leaf
the way it will wear down
a rock to curve
knows creation as it flows.

What water must know
is that as it rushes
it has a voice
it sings.

EXHIBIT THEME: WHAT'S NEXT? RESEARCH YOUR WATER/WAYS
LESSON THEME FROM EXHIBIT: UNDERSTANDING YOUR WATER/WAYS
 GRADE LEVEL: 1-12

Lesson Title: Voicing Your Water/Way – A Community Sonnet

STEP ONE:

Have students begin with identifying the water ways within the area that mean something to their city, community, or neighborhood. Research these bodies of water. Students should take an interdisciplinary approach, asking questions such as how the body of water came to be, geological formations, dynamics of the water, historic events associated with the water, uses of the water (i.e. for trade, for culture, for exploration), or other art that has been created about the body of water. For another perspective, they may even interview people involved with or working with water within the community and record the interview in some manner.

STEP TWO:

Students should choose one element of their research to focus on in creating a poem about the body of water that they have selected. It might be a focus on a particular person or a water activity, about a particular location of the body of water, or an emphasis on the historical physical aspects of the water. This information should be used to create a poem.

Prior to writing the poem, explore the poetic form of a sonnet with the students. Choose which sonnet form you would like the students to use and give them examples of that form to explore. The sonnet, particularly if Shakespearean is used, is traditionally focused on an older form-based poetry. There are number of contemporary spoken word poetry examples that use the sonnet with strong effect and also modernize the form.

Using the research that students have generated, they should begin to compose the sonnet to their chosen element of the body of water.

NOTE: The focus of this exercise is to create a poetic song of a community, actualizing the idea of “voicing the water”, therefore the lesson is structured around the creation of a sonnet. That being said, it could just as easily be done as a free verse lesson, or students could be encouraged to learn the rules of the sonnet but then intentionally break them within a section the poem to provide a different nuance.

OBJECTIVES

- Research local water ways
- Find historical and contemporary events and people associated with local water ways
- Present that information in a sonnet
- Create a collection of poetry (as a class) representing the community's differing water stories
- Publish the collection

STEP THREE:

Have students audio record their sonnets/poems in order to create a soundtrack of the community's water/ways.

OPTIONAL: Students could pair with musicians in the school band or other musicians to create a musical soundtrack to accompany their poem. This could also be done with computer programs, possibly pairing with an IT class.

Upload the soundtrack to a free audio internet service, such as SoundCloud, that can be shared with members of the community and perhaps across the state.

OPTIONAL: The SoundCloud files could also be played at the Water/Ways exhibit, as part of the local exhibition.

Voicing Your Water/Way – A Community Sonnet
EXAMPLE POEM

A Sonnet for *kisiskâciwani-sîpiy*
Naomi McIlwraith

These last hot days of summer with your roll
 and rush of river reaching east. Your slopes
 restrain your stream but not your jaunty soul.
 A blue canoe slips past as two elope.
 Rose hips, saskatoons, chokecherries, the sweet
 and earthy breath of decomposing leaves,
 as aspens tremble and the ash retreat.
 Your surge, a swinging rhythm curves and weaves
 a thread of song, a faithful, sunny spate
 of bridges, eddies, and junctions en route
 to cheery deltas where you meet the great
 and muddy *wînpêkw*. And in pursuit
 of happiness, your waters twist, extend
 from rock and ice through plains and on to friends.

Notes:

kisiskâciwani-sîpiy means “swiftly-flowing river” in Plains Cree. The North Saskatchewan River, as most people refer to it, issues from the Saskatchewan Glacier in the Rocky Mountains of Western Alberta, flows across Alberta, Saskatchewan, and into Manitoba where it spills into the great Lake Winnipeg.

wînpêkw means “muddy waters” in Plains Cree. Lake Winnipeg, as most people refer to it, lies in the Province of Manitoba, just north of the American border and North Dakota.