

CARING FOR OUR EARTH'S WATERS

Reading and Writing poems that inspire us and our readers to preserve our water resources.

THEMES/ FOCUS

Water Places: Ponds, Vernal Ponds, Rivers, Streams, Lakes, Waterfalls, Springs, Bays, Seas, etc.

Watery Weather: fog, mist, drizzle, storms, hurricanes, tsunamis, etc.

Water Movement: what landscape does it pass, sculpt, erode, obscure? what does water shelter, what creatures does it carry, shelter, feed? what does it bring us? what does it take away?

Water cycles, circular, flowing, dammed, flooding, water moving through pipes and pumps.

Contrasts: Monsoon/ Drought;

Marshes (Essex, Ipswich, Everglade Swamps) vs. Deserts/Dunes

Steam/ ice; Arctic/Tropics; other?

ASSIGNMENT 1: WRITE ABOUT A POEM OF YOUR CHOICE FROM THE COLLECTION IN THIS HANDOUT.

For homework, choose the poem you like best or connect to most strongly. (Not the Great Sea).

Write a personal letter to the poet that includes references back to the language and music of the poem:

Begin with a greeting, followed by an introductory line that mentions the name of the poem.

Why does the subject matter of the chosen poem attract you?

What images and similes or metaphors do you like and connect to?

What other word choices or rhythms create sound patterns, music in the poem?

Close with a personal comment at the end. Sign your name and grade

Handwritten letters should be at least a page long. Typed letters will look a bit shorter.

Session 1: POEMS FOR DISCUSSION

The Great Sea

The great sea has set me in motion
set me adrift,
moving me like a weed in a river.
The sky and the strong wind
have moved the spirit inside me
till I am carried away
trembling with joy.

Uvavnuk, Eskimo 19th- early 20th century, Translated by Stephen Mitchell

Have you sat in the dark of a summer night, listening to night sounds near a body of water? Notice how word choice, rhythms, and sounds integrate with meaning.

Revival by Jeannette Barnes

Porch sitting on buggy, muggy evenings,
I can't ever stay uncheered
By the full-on, untented open-air revival

Of frogs, that strophe,
Antistrophe chorus, the hip-hop
Of the slough, mosquito-zapping rhythms,

Amphibian bebop, ping and ring,
A tabernacle chiming.
Mosey into the bulwark

Of bulrushes as the sun sinks under sedge
At the brimful pond's rim where
Cooters plop. The jazz, the jive

Of all alive hurrahs. Hear the news?

strophe ('strou fi), n., the part of an ancient Greek choral ode sung by the chorus when moving from right to left. "Cooters": a North American river turtle with a dull brown shell and typically having yellow stripes on the head."

In the poem below, Emily Dickinson imagines the sea is coming to visit. (Born in 1830, she stayed at home in Amherst, MA for much of her life.) She compares the sea to a kind of house, and later personifies the sea. To understand this poem, it's best to read it aloud as a story. Or make a quick drawing to illustrate the poem.

#656 by Emily Dickinson

I started Early -- Took my Dog
And visited the Sea
The Mermaids in the Basement
Came out to look at me -

And Frigates - in the Upper Floor
Extended Hempen Hands -
Presuming Me to be a Mouse -
Aground - upon the Sands -

But no Man moved Me - till the Tide
Went past my simple Shoe -
And past my Apron - and my Belt
and past my Boddice - too -

And made as He would eat me up -
As wholly as a Dew
Opon a Dandelion's Sleeve -
And then - I started - too -

And He - He followed - close behind -
I felt His Silver Heel
Opon my Ankle - Then My Shoes
Would over flow with Pearl -

Until We met the Solid Town -
No One He seemed to know -
And bowing with a Mighty look -
At me - The sea withdrew -

Canoe Days

by Gary Paulsen

Sometimes when it is still, so still
you can hear the swish of a butterfly's wing --
sometimes when it is that still, I take the canoe
out on the edge of the lake.

One stroke of the paddle and we are
gone, the canoe and I, moving
silently.

Across water so quiet it becomes
part of the sky, the canoe slides in green
magic without a ripple, disappears
like a ghost floating in the airwater
over the playground where fish play.

The water is a window into the skylake.

Sunfish under lily pads living in cool
green rooms, watching for water bugs to
make a lunch. Watching for frogs
to make a dinner.

But still now, everything frozen while
the cold slash of a hunting northern pike
moves like an arrow through the pads,
looking fiercely searching always for
something to eat; and then he's gone
into the green depths.

Ahead is a mallard hen, her ducklings
spread out like a spotted fan around her
looking for skittering oar bugs to eat.
The canoe does not frighten her -- she
does not see the man, only the canoe,
as a shiny log floating in the sun.

VIEWING THE WATERFALL AT MOUNT LU

Sunlight streaming on Incense Stone kindles violet
smoke;
far off I watch the waterfall plunge to the long river,
flying waters descending straight three thousand feet,
till I think the Milky Way has tumbled from the
ninth height of Heaven.

Li Po, A.D. 705-762



If you ever visited the coast, these images may sound familiar. Perhaps you remember or imagine all the senses experienced at the coast.

Watercolor Maine

by C. Drew Lamm

The buoy bell sings Bar Harbor
sings the coast of Maine
to the fog.

Lobsters clap in traps.
The great quartz rocks
twist waves into fireworks.

Red lobster boats bob above barnacled anchors.
Blueberries spring the shore.
Mail boat chugs to the Cranberry Islands,
Captain's black coffee rocks on the floor.

Morning light wakens the edges of bells
whets the rock and the sea.

Just another Monday Maine day waking.
The painter lifts her brush and starts her painting.

What does Emily Dickinson personify in the short poem below?

#387 by Emily Dickinson

The Moon is distant from the Sea –
And yet, with Amber Hands –
She leads Him – docile as a Boy –
Along appointed Sands –

He never misses a Degree –
Obedient to Her eye –
He comes just so far – toward the Town –
Just so far – goes away –

Oh, Signor, Thine, the Amber Hand –
And mine – the distant Sea –
Obedient to the least command
Thine eye impose on me –

#387 From The Poems of Emily Dickinson, Ralph W. Franklin, ed., Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Copyright © 1951, 1955, 1979, 1983, 1998 Source: The Poems of Emily Dickinson Edited by R. W. Franklin (Harvard U Press, 1999)

Think about the damaging storms, hurricanes, tsunamis, that we have seen recently in Japan, the Philippines and here on America's coastlines.

Once by the Pacific

by Robert Frost

The shattered water made a misty din.
Great waves looked over others coming in,
And thought of doing something to the shore
That water never did to land before.
The clouds were low and hairy in the skies,
Like locks blown forward in the gleam of eyes.
You could not tell and yet it looked as if
The shore was lucky in being backed by cliff,
The cliff in being backed by continent;
It looked as if a night of dark intent
Was coming, and not only a night, an age.
Someone had better be prepared for rage.
There would be more than ocean-water broken
Before God's last Put out the Light was spoken.

This portrait of a river uses personification: her travel, her challenges, the questions about her survival.

Some Rivers

by Frank Asch

Some rivers rush to the sea.
They push and tumble and fall.
But the Everglades is a river
with no hurry in her at all.
Soaking the cypress
that grows so tall;
nursing a frog,
so quiet and small;
she flows but a mile
in the course of a day,
with plenty of time
to think on the way.

But how can she cope
with the acres of corn
and sorrowful cities that drain her?
With hunters and tourists and levees
that chain and stain and pain her?
Does the half of her that's left
think only of the past?
Or does she think of her future
and how long it will last?
Some rivers rush to the sea.
They push and tumble and fall.
But the Everglades is a river
with no hurry in her at all.

Below, the poet instructs us to be fluid as water, affected by tides.

Learn to be Water

by Morton Marcus,

learn
to be
water

direction
is any
way
you can
travel
your shape
whatever
you
naturally
become

let the
moon
strum
your
belly
the planets
beckon
and
tug

learn
to be
water

The Sea

By: Josue Navarro

1. The sea is angry
Swallowing chunks of land
As if it was a hungry lion
Looking for its meal
2. Then it yells
"Which of you will face me!"
Then it tries to grab us
With it's mighty hand
3. It sways over the hills
Trying to reach the top
It keeps climbing and climbing
But to not avail.
4. Finally it stops
The sea is happy
As fragile as possible
It whispers "come, come"
5. The sea may change
From a cranky man
To a gentle dove
But the sea is no harm

Embroidery

by Jason Stemple

On this green loom,
In this wet place,
The ocean makes
Fine water lace.

Each patterned wave
Lays down a thread
Upon the ground
Of ocean bed.

Enduring
It shall never be
This water lace
Embroidery.

April Rain Song

Let the rain kiss you.
Let the rain beat upon your head with silver liquid drops.
Let the rain sing you a lullaby.
The rain makes still pools on the sidewalk.
The rain makes running pools in the gutter.
The rain plays a little sleep-song on our roof at night -
And I love the rain.

Langston Hughes (1902-1967).

Hear the Sound

hear the sound?
yes I do, the spring
sound.

hear that sound?
yes a pond is
melting and going on a trip.

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Grace Yang, 5th ELL

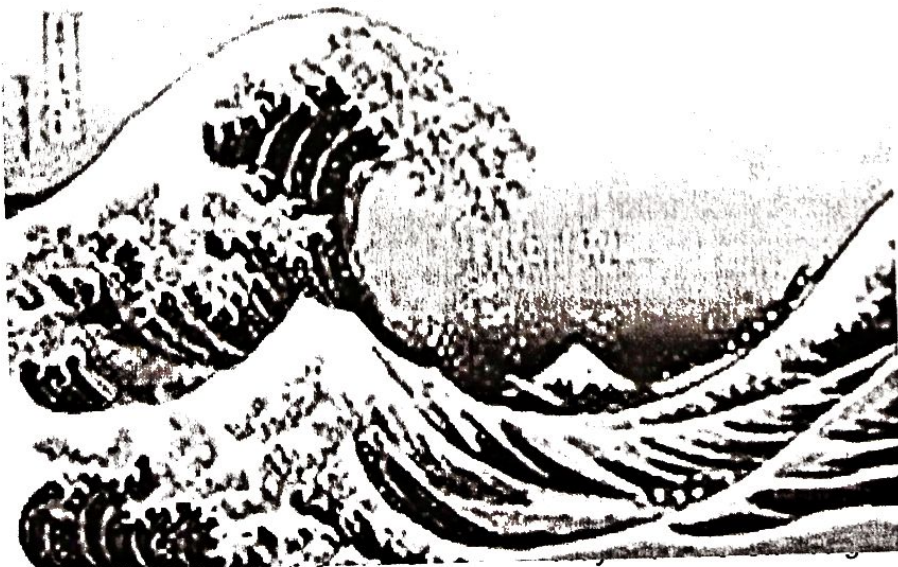
Waves

They curl around like a high round "C"
Making sounds like nothing else can,
Speaking their own language
The beat in the heart of the earth.

They are the home of living things,
The summer fun for everyone.
They are wet, salty, cooling and
white capped,
Colored in blues and greens.

They are the waves!
Yet, they are mine.

Kathy C, 5th



AT KEZAR LAKE

Consider even the water of the lake,
so still you can see the webs water spiders make.
Sometimes it seals over like a black cape,
sometimes light is strewn across in silver flakes.

At times, milk seems to rise and spread beneath
the surface like oval opals just bequeathed,
or it is crimson lava pouring from the earth,
or gold streamers, ingots in a blazing hearth.

Slate, pewter, hammered as in a fine vase.
Can this be merely water? Watch its face,
all the peaks and birches use it as a mirror,
yet I see through it to its bones. Clearly,
it's less predictable, wilder than night cries,
remaking itself each time we turn our eyes.

by Judith Steinbergh

