PLACES OF POETRY

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TOOLKIT 4: FOR CHILDREN (PRIMARY)



Places of Poetry is a community arts project, centred on a newly designed digital map of England and Wales. Over Summer 2019, writers of all ages and backgrounds from across the country will be invited to write new poems of place, heritage and identity, and pin them to the map. (Under 13s will require a parent, teacher or guardian to do this.) Places of Poetry will help us reflect on our national and cultural identities, and celebrate the diversity, heritage and personalities of place.

This toolkit – produced by The Poetry Society – is for teachers, parents, guardians, home-educators and youth-group leaders who would like to help children up to the age of 11 to write poems to pin to the map. Younger children will need an adult's help with the writing ideas; confident older readers can work through them by themselves.

The world's a big place, far too big for any of us to know all the things or places in it. But we can discover more of our world and ourselves by writing and sharing poems about the places we know and the places we have been to.

We'd like you to write a poem about a place you know, and - with a teacher's or an adult's help - to pin it to our online map for everyone to read.

We're going to help you write a poem about a place, its past and what it means to you, and we've got a few ideas to help you get started.

IDEA 1 USE YOUR IMAGINATION!

Let's begin with our imagination. If you could go anywhere, where would you go? What do you think you might find when you get there?

Spike Milligan was a British-Irish writer who grew up in India and then lived in the UK as an adult. Though he had been to many places on his travels one of his most famous poems is about a place he invented in his head.

Link to 'On the Ning Nang Nong' by Spike Milliagn www.poemhunter.com/poem/on-the-ning-nang-nong/

Spike Milligan chose a funny name for his made-up place. Place names can give us a sense of a place even if we have never been there. Have a look on a map (any map will do) and see how many place names you can find. Do the towns and villages all have names? What about the lakes, the rivers, the forests and the mountains? Do the roads have names? What about the farms, the buildings, and the houses? Can you tell by the names what each of these places might be like? Are there any that sound strange? Funny? Draw your own map and invent new names for the places on it. Names that contain **rhyme** like *Shivery River, Blue Wave Cave or Chocolate Cake Lake* Names that contain **alliteration** – *Misty Mountain, Red Rocky Road, Ticky-tock Tower*

Or **personified** names like *Grumpy Valley*, *Shake-you-up Road*, *The Giggly Forest*

Write a poem about your made-up place using some of your invented names:

Way up high on the *Ticky-tock tower* there's a great big clock made of silver and gold

Way down there, all the cars drive slowly taking no chances on *Shake-you-up Road*

In the freezing waters of the *Shivery River* the fish are jumping and they're icy cold.

IDEA 2 CLOSE TO HOME

Let's write a poem about a place we know.

When I was 7 years old my teacher read aloud to our class 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' by the American poet, Robert Frost. I could clearly picture the woods: deep, dark and cold, and I liked the feeling that the poem gave me of being quiet and alone. A great poem can inspire you to write one of your own with a similar shape and style.

Link to 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' by Robert Frost www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/42891/stoppingby-woods-on-a-snowy-evening

Robert Frost's poem inspired this one of mine:

My Corner by Cheryl Moskowitz

I have a corner where I go A place that no one really knows It's where I sit to have my thoughts And plan my life out, I suppose

It's quite a quiet little spot As quiet goes, it's all I've got When people ask me where I've been Don't know if I should tell or not There are lots of other kids I've seen (who need that sort of space, I mean) But in this place I'm all alone So I'm not telling anything

Though I don't have a bed or phone My corner's like a little home That I'll remember when I've grown That I'll remember when I've grown

Think of a place you spend lots of time in. It could be a place you are very familiar with (like a park) or a place you go to quite often (like a bus stop or a road of shops) or maybe a place you've come to only recently (like a new school). Make notes about this place, the colours, the smells, the tastes, the sounds. Write down what you do when you are there and how it makes you feel.

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Begin your poem with the line: I'll tell you of a place I know...



IDEA 3 LET'S GET HISTORICAL

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Here's how we can write a poem about a special historical site.

Look at this poem by Scottish poet Alexander Anderson in which he uses his imagination to bring life and colour to the grey stone walls of an old castle he is visiting. I fill the hall with visions says the poet, and imagines he is there together with all the knights and ladies in long dresses whose home it used to be.

Link to 'A Castle Old and Grey' by Alexander Anderson www.poemhunter.com/poem/a-castle-old-and-grey/

Think of a place in England or Wales you may have only visited once, or somewhere you've not yet visited but want to. It could be an underground cave or a mine, a fossil museum or a steam railway, a Roman fort, a butterfly farm, medieval church or an ancient castle, or your favourite football ground.

Is it somewhere near where you live, or have you gone on a trip to visit it?

Think of someone special you might want to invite to go with you to this place – a friend, a parent, a teacher maybe? Your favourite pet, doll or teddy? You could even imagine bringing a baby brother or sister who hasn't been born yet, or a loved one who is no longer with you or lives too far away to visit it doesn't matter if this person can't really be there, you can bring them with you in your poem. Decide on the place you want to visit with your special person, then spend some time gathering information about that place.

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Where can you find out information about this place? You could look online, in a book, or talk to people.

Write down facts. Where is it? What does it look like? What is it called? How did it get its name? What is its history? What was it once used for? What interests you most about it?

Before this place welcomed visitors, people might have lived there, worked there, or it might have been the home of creatures long since extinct, like dinosaurs. Think about what life was like in this place before it ever had visitors like you. Try to imagine yourself and your special person being part of that history.

What will you see and do when you are there? Draw some pictures of yourself and the person you are with, visiting this place. Write captions underneath the pictures to explain what is happening in each picture. Remember to include words to show what the pictures cannot, like smells, tastes, sounds and how it feels to be there.

Use your pictures and captions to inspire a poem that tells the story of this place and the time you spent in it.

Would you like the world to read your poems? Pin them to the online map!

KEEPING SAFE ONLINE

All the poems pinned to the online Places of Poetry map will be generally accessible to visitors from all over the world. The site will be live until October 2019, and then archived. When pinning children's poems to the map, please make sure that the poems contain no identifying details about their identities and locations. Some children might want to write poems about their own houses – please make sure that they are not pinned directly to the specific point on the map. All poems can be submitted anonymously or with a pseudonym if desired. In the case of under 18s who list poems, please ensure they use a pseudonym or their first name only.

ACTIVITY 3 NAMING THE PLACE

Materials needed:

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- A way of generating text suggestions
- Paper
- Pens
- Something to lean on

Names, especially place names, can be a wonderfully playful way to generate poetry. And again, this can work with individuals or groups of all ages and abilities.

The following anonymous poems are a selection of Norfolk rhymes that play affectionately with the sound of place names, local dialect and traditions to reveal a sense of identity, geographical and architectural heritage.

Norfolk Place-name Rhymes

Caistor was a city When Norwich was none, And Norwich was built of Caistor stone. Rising was a sea-port When Lynn was but a marsh, Now Lynn it is a sea-port And Rising fares the worse. Rising was, Lynn is, and Downham shall be, The greatest seaport of the three.

Gimingham, Trimingham, Knapton, Trunch, Northrepps, Southrepps, lie all in a bunch. When Keswick Church becomes a barn Bromholm Abbey will be a farm.

Cromer crabs, Runton dabs, Beeston babies, Sheringham ladies, Weybourne witches, Salthouse ditches The Blakeney people Stand on the steeple And crack hazel-nuts With a five-farthing beetle. Bickling flats, Aylsham fliers, Marsham peewits, and Hevingham liars. Denton in the dale and Arborough in the dirt, And if you go to Homersfield, your purse will get a squirt.

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Ask your visitors to create a glossary of place names from the local area and/or the names of objects and artefacts that form part of the display in your organisation – maybe with a physical suggestion box, or via a social media campaign. You could suggest choosing names according to particular criteria.

- a. Rhyme names that echo each other in terms of quality or sound
- b. Alliteration names that begin with the same letter or sound
- Allusion names that reference a historical, mythic, or literary person, place or event

If your staff or visitors are local to the area where your organisation is situated, you could ask them about idioms and sayings from the area to include in the glossary. Poems written in dialect with particular reference to the language and lore of the area can be a very powerful way of conveying place and heritage. For examples of this by contemporary UK poets, see work by Liz Berry, Ian MacMillan, Simon Armitage and Caleb Femi.

Who will take on the task of incorporating as many of these as possible in a poem or verse that, however silly, still conveys something of interest about the place? How will you pass on your poems to your visitors? Don't forget to pin your poem to the Places of Poetry map!

THEPOETRY SOCIETY

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The Poetry Society was founded in 1909 to promote 'a more general recognition and appreciation of poetry'. Since then, it has grown into one of Britain's most dynamic arts organisations, representing British poetry both nationally and internationally. Today it has more than 4,500 members worldwide and publishes the leading poetry magazine, The Poetry Review. With innovative education and commissioning programmes and a packed calendar of performances, readings and competitions, The Poetry Society champions poetry for all ages.



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