



NATURE, ART AND THE POWER OF POETIC IMAGINATION

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FROM PAGE TO PERFORMANCE: NURTURING YOUNG AUTHORS BY EXPLORING NATURE LITERACY THROUGH ART AND POETRY

My Year 7 students embarked on a creative journey rooted in the natural world and inspired by visual art. Their nature-themed poetry project began with two powerful sources of inspiration: the lush, living environment of the Outdoor Classroom and the 'Patana Canvases' exhibition held at the Arts Centre - a staff art showcase. Many exhibited works explored themes of conservation, biodiversity and the beauty of the natural world.

Students responded by crafting their own poetry collections, merging rich sensory details, poetic techniques and environmental awareness. Whether sketching imagery from a shaded pond, personifying forest creatures, or composing ekphrastic poems inspired by artwork from their teachers, students developed not only their writing skills but also their nature and visual literacy. The culmination was a published anthology by each student and a live, intimate poetry performance that celebrated their transformation into both authors and poets of place and planet.

THE CREATIVE PROCESS: FROM OBSERVATION TO EXPRESSION

Immersion in Art and Nature

Students acted as 'nature detectives' in the Outdoor Classroom, closely observing plants, wildlife and natural textures. At the Patana Canvases exhibition, they drew inspiration from staff artworks reflecting nature's beauty and urgent themes of environmental conservation. By engaging directly with their teachers' or staff artworks, students found fresh perspectives that enriched both the content and emotional depth of their poems.

Exploring Global Poetic Traditions

To deepen their literary understanding, students explored nature-focused poetic forms from diverse cultures—including Japanese haiku and senryu, Chinese shi poetry, classical odes, and modern free verse. They also studied influential works like *'The Lost Words'* by Robert Macfarlane, discovering how poetry and art can bridge cultures and express universal connections with nature.

Crafting Nature-Inspired Poems

Back in the classroom, they translated their observations into poems using a broad and diverse range of poetic forms. Students experimented with Japanese poetry such



as haiku, haiku riddles and haiga, which combines image and text. They crafted rhyming poems that celebrated wildlife through rhythm and rhyme and created ekphrastic poems directly inspired by visual art pieces from the exhibition. Students also worked with kenning poems—metaphorical riddles in the style of ‘What Animal Am I?’ rooted in Old English tradition. Additionally, they wrote personification poems that gave voice to elements of nature such as trees, rivers and animals, as well as free verse, shape poetry, and odes expressing personal and collective reverence for the natural world. Throughout, they experimented with figurative language and poetic devices such as personification, alliteration, onomatopoeia and vivid imagery to convey nature’s wonder and fragility.

Becoming Confident Performers

Students studied how poets bring their words to life on stage by learning techniques adopted by celebrated spoken word artists such as Joseph Coelho, George the Poet—whose poems powerfully engage with social and environmental themes—and Prince EA, known for his impactful environmental advocacy through spoken word. They also examined performances by Purnima Ghogar, who combines activism and poetry to inspire audienc-

es. Through this exploration, students learned key performance techniques: using rhythm and rhyme to create musicality; modulating voice pitch, tone, and volume to convey emotion; employing facial expressions, gestures, and purposeful eye contact to engage listeners; and effectively using pauses and pacing to build tension and highlight meaning. They practised annotating their poems, marking where to pause for effect, vary tone or volume, emphasise key words, and add gestures or expressions—building the skills to deliver dynamic and confident performances.

Celebrating Student Voice

The project culminated in a classroom poetry performance where each student presented two poems, including an acrostic kenning poem, with carefully rehearsed introductions explaining their inspirations and poetic choices. Peer feedback was integral, helping refine performances and build confidence. This public sharing, alongside the printed anthology, gave students pride as authors and passionate storytellers of the natural world.

[Here’s an example of a students’ poem inspired by an artwork from Patana Canvases](#)