



Lesson Plan: Poetry in Nature

Author: Susan Pomerantz, Eastern High School, Voorhees, NJ

Appropriate for Grades: 11-12

Duration: 2.5 hours to 3 hours

Distance traveled by foot: 1.5 Miles (Total)

Standards (Includes focus standards, only):

NAAEE Standards:

Strand 4 (Personal and civic responsibility): B - Recognizing citizens' rights and responsibilities—Learners understand the basic rights and responsibilities of citizenship and their importance in promoting the resolution of environmental issues.; D - Accepting personal responsibility—Learners understand that their actions can have broad consequences and that they are responsible for those consequences.

Common Core State Standards:

LA.11-12.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.

LA.11-12.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

AP Standards: (Aligned with Common Core State Standards for English/Language Arts)

Objectives: Students will be able to interpret sound devices, meter, form, figurative language devices, tone, theme, and purpose of nature poems in a nature setting.

- Students will be able to observe, identify, and describe the inspiration for nature poems.
- Students will be able to match the sounds and rhythm of nature poems to the sounds and rhythm of nature.
- Students will be able to identify and discuss relevant poetic devices.
- Students will be able to discuss the ability of poems to reflect the behavior and conscience of a culture/society regarding its respect for and stewardship of the land.

Background:

American poet Kenneth Rexroth once described "poetry as voice, not as printing." In the time spent in the classroom preparing for this field trip, during the Duke Farms visit, and throughout activities after the visit, students will work deeply with a handful of poems by published poets in order to hear the voice in poetry, the "voices" in nature, and to develop their own poetic/creative voices. A number of poems and accompanying exercises are included this lesson plan as suggestions only; teachers and students are encouraged to bring their own choices. The poems and study guides included are not intended to provide comprehensive

poetic analysis, but are designed to complement a student's Duke Farms experience. This lesson plan includes several poems that will challenge the AP and more advanced student. In addition, six poems in the lesson plan are included particularly for their themes touching on the negative impact of humans on the natural world and/or the importance of responsible stewardship of the land. Teachers should compile student packets based on their own discretion as to how many poems the teacher wants students to cover (i.e. what are time limitations, student experience and skill level, etc.). It is preferable to cover less more deeply so students better enjoy and gain more from their experiences of both the poetry and of Duke Farms. On a final note, teachers may notice the limited information in this lesson plan about the poets' biographies. This is in keeping with the philosophy that the poems, like nature, are universal and timeless and can be best appreciated for their sound alone. Students should come to the land invited to "experience" the poem and the natural world for its own sake, and not, primarily, to "study" it. There is, of course, a time for that "study" after the "experience." Research activities related to author biography, styles of poetry, historical/cultural context, and scholarly analysis of the poems are included as post-visit suggestions.

Key Vocabulary: See the appendix for study guides following each poem for vocabulary terms.

Materials:

- Clipboard with pen/pencil
- Duke Farms Map (available at front desk in Orientation Center)
- Copies of the map route (1 per student group)
- Packet with poems & study guides (Available in Appendix to this Lesson Plan)
- 5 or more sheets of blank loose leaf or composition paper for optional note-taking and drafting of original poetry
- "Sit-upon" recommended for sitting on the ground. ([Click here](#) for instructions on how to make a sit-upon. This can be a wonderful pre-field trip activity; sit-upons can be decorated with favorite lines from poems, images from nature, etc. Even older students enjoy this activity.)
- A backpack holding a bag lunch and water; layers of clothing depending upon the weather. Backpacks are recommended so students' hands are free for clipboards. (Remind students that this is a carry-in/carry-out park.)

Pre-visit activities:

Review with your students the mission and layout of Duke Farms. Review with students the objectives of the field trip; each student should have a copy of these objectives in his/her packet. Have students pre-read the poems you will include in your packet and review with your students any vocabulary they will need in order to understand the poems. Pre-assign groups of three to five students to maximize participation and engagement for each student.

FIELD TRIP PROCEDURE

Introduction (5 minutes):

Assemble all students in the Farm Barn Orientation Center. Here you can obtain Duke Farms maps. Please use this time to have students use the restroom as facilities are limited once you head out into the field. Explain to students that they are at Duke Farms, a property dedicated to protecting and creating habitats for native plants and animals. Please remind your students that Duke Farms was created for the animals, and that you are visitors to the animals' homes.

Today the students will tour three locations on the grounds: Otter Lake, Research Woods, and Hay Barn Meadow. Discuss with students the primary objectives of the lesson and ask them to keep those objectives in mind. Explain that at each location, students will collaborate in their small groups to read poems and respond to study guides on assigned poems. These study guides will be used to prepare a final informal group presentation, either at the conclusion of the field trip, or back in the classroom. Explain to students that they may also be offered an opportunity for writing original poems during or at the conclusion of the tour.

Activity (2.5 to 3 hours, including hiking time, depending on grouping):

1. Students will proceed first to Otter Lake following the route mapped on the included map. Encourage students to remember as many observations as they can about what they notice on their walk to the lake. Explain that there are no expectations: that they are asked to simply remember what they notice whether it relates to the man-made or the natural world. Students may want to make quick notes of their observations/reactions. This walk covers roughly a mile and will take approximately 20-25 minutes.
2. Upon arriving at the lake, students will seat themselves in their pre-assigned small groups. Teachers may first ask for some quick feedback on what students noticed.
3. Students will then take 3 to 5 minutes to silently observe the environment of the lake.
4. Students will then read the assigned poem(s) from their packets both silently and aloud. If time permits, have each student read several poems aloud. If time is limited, or if groups prefer, students may choose one poem to read aloud, though each student should read at least one poem aloud. (10-15 minutes)
5. With the remainder of the time, students will complete study guides. Option: Instead of having each student complete each guide, students can divide the labor and self-assign guides within the group; groups can select a "favorite" poem and collaborate to complete one guide. (10 minutes)
6. Students move on to the Research Woods site and repeat steps 3-5, above. This walk covers roughly one-quarter of a mile and will take 5-10 minutes. Assemble students near the bull statue for easy viewing access to the woods.
7. Remind students that they will be responsible to share with the group a self-selected (or teacher-assigned) poem at the end of the field trip along with their detailed reaction.
8. Students move on to Hay Barn Meadow and repeat steps 3-5, above. This walk covers roughly one-quarter of a mile and will take 5 minutes. Assemble students in small groups along the path.
9. Students will then follow the mapped route back to the Farm Barn Orientation Center for the conclusion activity. This walk covers roughly one-quarter to one-half a mile and will take 10 minutes.

10. **VARIATION:** A. Students may also walk to Fox Meadow near Turtle Lake and Oak Woods (close proximity to three different environments – lake, woods, meadow) to minimize hiking time/maximize poetry time. B. Students may also walk along Habitat Lane to the Migration Woods/Vista Lake/Great Meadow areas. Teachers should group the site visits and the poems to best meet their students' needs. These walks cover roughly one and a quarter miles and will take 25-30 minutes.

Conclusion--this activity can occur at Duke Farms if time permits, or in the classroom the following day:

1. Teachers will select groups for presentation of poems and analysis. This can include a reading of the poem and a summary of the group's observations/reactions.
2. Students may complete the following response/feedback writing assignment:
 - a. You have now completed your visit to Duke Farms and shared some nature poetry while you were here. Read back over our objectives for this field trip and read back over your favorite poems. Choose any one or two of the poems and explain the degree to which you accomplished our objectives. Be as specific as you can be. (You are not expected to write a polished essay here!)
 - b. With any time remaining, look back over your study guides and begin to write your own original poem based on your notes on your thoughts and observations while we were at the various sites. William Wordsworth wrote in his *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility." Your goal is to think back on the emotions/observations you had in these settings and use this as inspiration for your own poem.

Possible Assessments (should be tailored to student age and experience/skill level):

1. Students may write an explication paper on any of the poems and identify and discuss the various poetic elements in the poems.
2. Students may do further research about the biography of the poet and present their findings to the class.
3. Students may write a comparison/contrast paper based on two poems of the teacher's choice or their own choice.
4. Students may be assessed formally on their original poem writing.
5. Students may be assigned to visit a natural setting in their own communities and bring along a poem they've chosen. They might make up and respond to their own study guide.

6. Students may write an essay or design a debate/discussion about the ability of poems to reflect the behavior and conscience of a culture/society regarding its respect for and stewardship of the land.

Resources:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UizTrPVh81A>
<http://www.bopsecrets.org/gateway/passages/basho-frog.htm>
<http://thegreenleaf.co.uk/hp/basho/00bashohaiku.htm>
<http://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/joyce-kilmer/alarm-clocks/>
<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poem/1947>
http://www.famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/mary_oliver/poems/15805
<http://www.poetseers.org/contemporary-poets/mary-oliver/mary-oliver-poems/sleeping-in-the-forest/>
<http://www.poetseers.org/contemporary-poets/mary-oliver/mary-oliver-poems/the-swan/index.html>
<http://allpoetry.com/Life-Long,-Poor-Browning#sthash.yB6mFLHh.dpbs>
<http://www.annspencermuseum.com/poetry.php>
<http://loc.gov/poetry/180/167.html>
<http://freedomvoices.org/heller1.htm#soogha>
<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/nature-135/>
<http://www.thoreau-online.org/the-summer-rain.html>
http://books.google.com/books?id=iOR5p2F73DQC&pg=PA141&ots=gywB4zxwLJ&dq=William+Carlos+Williams+%22The+Maneuver%22&sig=y08g_m33mEUATzoeUHqkHnNAp0#v=onepage&q=William%20Carlos%20Williams%20%22The%20Maneuver%22&f=false
<http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Williams-WC.php>
<http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/red-wheelbarrow>
<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/174833>
<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/a-wren-s-nest/>
<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/172053>
<http://poemhunter.com/poem/the-wild-swans-at-coole/>
<http://www.momsminivan.com/extras/situpon.html>

****DISCLAIMER****

Duke Farms serves as a habitat for native plants and animals. Care should be taken when exploring the grounds. Hazards such as open waterways, roadways with bicycles, vehicles and pedestrians, poison ivy and stinging and biting insects are present on the property. Adults are responsible for the minors in their care. Precaution should be taken to avoid prolonged exposure to the sun as well as to biting and stinging insects. Participants should bring water; there are water bottle filling stations in the Farm Barn. Participants should familiarize themselves with potential hazards and prepare accordingly. This is a carry-in, carry-out facility so all garbage created during your program should be taken back with you to your school.

Appendix: Table of Contents with Links to Poems

Copies of the poems follow this page. Each poem is followed by a suggested study guide. The study guides are not intended to provide comprehensive poetic analysis, but are designed to complement a student's Duke Farms experience. A chart with suggested groupings of poems for each location on the hike is found on the next page. (Poems marked "AP Selection" offer practice of advanced skills.)

Basho (Haiku)

1. "The Old Pond" (AP Selection)
 - a. Japanese characters and transliteration with English translation – youtube.com audio. [Click here.](#)
 - b. Multiple English translations of "The Old Pond." [Click here.](#)
2. Translations of other Basho Haiku. (Note: Printed page includes four haiku with the 5-7-5 syllable pattern in the English translation.) [Click here.](#)

Joyce Kilmer (Note: Alfred Joyce Kilmer is a native of New Brunswick, New Jersey!)

1. ["Alarm Clocks"](#)
2. ["Trees"](#)

Mary Oliver

1. ["Morning Poem"](#)
2. ["Sleeping in the Forest"](#) (AP Selection)
3. ["The Swan"](#)

Anne Spencer

1. ["Life-Long, Poor Browning"](#) (AP Selection) *
2. ["Requiem"](#)

Mary Tallmountain

1. ["The Last Wolf"](#) *
2. ["Soogha Dancing"](#) (AP Selection) *

Henry David Thoreau

1. ["Nature"](#)
2. ["The Summer Rain"](#) (AP Selection)

William Carlos Williams (Note: William Carlos Williams is a native of Rutherford, New Jersey!)

1. ["The Maneuver"](#) ([Click here](#) for an audio podcast of WCW reading this poem—See #1/1.)
2. ["The Red Wheelbarrow"](#) * ([Click here](#) for an audio podcast of WCW reading this poem—See #17/8.)

William Wordsworth

1. ["The World is Too Much With Us"](#) *
2. ["A Wren's Nest"](#)

William Butler Yeats

1. ["The Lake Isle of Innisfree"](#) *
2. ["The Wild Swans at Coole"](#) (AP Selection)

Note: The poems marked with an asterisk (*) are included particularly for their themes touching on the negative impact of humans on the natural world and/or the importance of responsible stewardship of the land.

Matsuo Basho (17th Century Japanese Poet)

1. The Old Pond (AP Selection)

<u>Transliteration from Japanese Kanji</u>	<u>An English Translation</u>
Furuike ya	An ancient pond
Kawazu tobikomu	A frog jumps in
Mizu no oto	The sound of water

2. Untitled Haiku: Basho, various translators

From all directions
Winds bring petals of cherry
Into the grebe lake

The lightning flashes
And slashing through the darkness
A night-heron's screech

A lovely spring night
Suddenly vanished while we
Viewed cherry blossoms

With a warbler for
A soul, it sleeps peacefully
This mountain willow

Matsuo Basho (17th Century Japanese Poet)- Haiku Study Guide

Terms to look up before visit:

Technical

transliteration:

Kanji:

syllable:

haiku:

From poems

grebe:

heron:

cherry blossoms:

warbler:

willow:

Exercises (Respond on separate paper):

1. As you sit beside this lake, try to filter out all other sounds (traffic, bicyclists, chatter, etc.) to hear only what is going on in the natural world. Look back at the haiku. Write down two or three words/lines from the haiku that best show the sounds the poet might have heard?
2. What sights and scents might the poet have experienced where he was sitting? What words/lines from the haiku suggest sights and scents?
3. How are the sounds, sights, and scents from where you sit similar? Different?
4. Finally, take a moment to notice the environment in which you sit and your feelings about it. Write down some words or phrases below that you could use later if you decide to try to write your own haiku.
5. Is there other commentary you would like to make?

Challenge/AP Questions (Respond on separate paper.):

1. Listen to the recitation in Japanese (youtube.com) of "The Old Pond". Try to say it in Japanese yourself. Does the Japanese language version give you any different sense of the haiku, and by extension of the scene it is describing? Explain.
2. What effect does the 5-7-5 syllable pattern have upon the tone, effect, and purpose of a haiku? Explain using reference to specific poems.

NOTE: It is always best to include specific reference to words, phrases, and/or lines from the poems in your responses.

Joyce Kilmer (Late 19th-Early 20th Century U.S. Poet—New Jersey Native)

Alarm Clocks

When Dawn strides out to wake a dewy farm
Across green fields and yellow hills of hay
The little twittering birds laugh in his way
And poise triumphant on his shining arm. (4)
He bears a sword of flame but not to harm
The wakened life that feels his quickening sway
And barnyard voices shrilling "It is day!"
Take by his grace a new and alien charm. (8)

But in the city, like a wounded thing
That limps to cover from the angry chase,
He steals down streets where sickly arc-lights sing,
And wanly mock his young and shameful face; (12)
And tiny gongs with cruel fervor ring
In many a high and dreary sleeping place.

Joyce Kilmer (Late 19th-Early 20th Century New Jersey Poet) – Study Guide: “Alarm Clocks”

Terms to look up before visit:

Technical

Personification:

Metaphor:

Diction:

End-rhyme scheme:

Petrarchan sonnet:

Octave:

Sestet:

From poem

Quickening:

Wanly:

Fervor:

Exercises (Respond on separate paper.):

1. Circle the words in the octave (first eight lines of the sonnet) that help to create the tone of this stanza. Describe the tone.
2. Circle the words in the sestet (final six lines of the sonnet) that help to create its contrasting tone. Describe the tone.
3. How does this diction as well as Kilmer’s personification and metaphors help to create the poem’s meaning? What do you think Kilmer’s meaning is?
4. Identify the aspect of this poem that gives it a theme of humanity losing touch with/corrupting nature.
5. Finally, take a moment to notice the environment in which you sit and your feelings about it. Write down some words or phrases below that you could use later if you decide to try to write your own poem.
6. Is there other commentary you would like to make?

NOTE: It is always best to include specific reference to words, phrases, and/or lines from the poems in your responses.

Joyce Kilmer (Late 19th-Early 20th Century New Jersey Poet)

Trees

I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.

Joyce Kilmer (Late 19th-Early 20th Century New Jersey Poet)-Study Guide: "Trees"

Terms to look up before visit:

Technical

Rhyming couplet:

Iambic tetrameter:

Lyric poem:

Personification:

Exercises (Respond on separate paper.):

1. Discuss the effect of the rhyming couplets and the regular rhythm of each line (iambic tetrameter). What do you think this simple song-like effect has upon Kilmer's message?
2. What is your impression of Kilmer's personification of trees in this poem? Do you find it ironic that the speaker refers to himself (a human being) as a "fool" in line 11, yet describes the tree using human attributes? Explain.
3. Finally, take a moment to notice the environment in which you sit and your feelings about it. Write down some words or phrases below that you could use later if you decide to try to write your own poem.
4. Is there other commentary you would like to make?

NOTE: It is always best to include specific reference to words, phrases, and/or lines from the poems in your responses.

Mary Oliver (20th Century U.S. Poet)

Morning Poem

Every morning
the world
is created.
Under the orange (4)

sticks of the sun
the heaped
ashes of the night
turn into leaves again (8)

and fasten themselves to the high branches ---
and the ponds appear
like black cloth
on which are painted islands (12)

of summer lilies.
If it is your nature
to be happy
you will swim away along the soft trails (16)

for hours, your imagination
alighting everywhere.
And if your spirit
carries within it (20)

the thorn
that is heavier than lead ---
if it's all you can do
to keep on trudging --- (24)

there is still
somewhere deep within you
a beast shouting that the earth
is exactly what it wanted --- (28)

each pond with its blazing lilies
is a prayer heard and answered
lavishly,
every morning, (32)

whether or not
you have ever dared to be happy,
whether or not
you have ever dared to pray. (36)

Mary Oliver (20th Century U.S. Poet) – Study Guide: “Morning Poem”

Terms to look up before visit:

Technical

Contrast:

Imagery:

Simile:

Second person:

From poem

Alighting:

Trudging:

Lavishly:

Exercises (Respond on separate paper.):

1. What is Mary Oliver suggesting when she writes in lines 4-5 “the orange sticks of the sun”?
2. What do you think about Oliver’s contrast of people with a happy nature versus people with heavier “spirits”?
3. What is her final conclusion about human nature versus the natural world?
4. Finally, take a moment to notice the environment in which you sit and your feelings about it. Write down some words or phrases below that you could use later if you decide to try to write your own poem.
5. Is there other commentary you would like to make?

NOTE: It is always best to include specific reference to words, phrases, and/or lines from the poems in your responses.

Mary Oliver (20th Century U.S. Poet)

Sleeping in the Forest

I thought the earth remembered me,
she took me back so tenderly,
arranging her dark skirts, her pockets
full of lichens and seeds. (4)

I slept as never before, a stone on the river bed,
nothing between me and the white fire of the stars
but my thoughts, and they floated light as moths
among the branches of the perfect trees. (8)

All night I heard the small kingdoms
breathing around me, the insects,
and the birds who do their work in the darkness. (12)

All night I rose and fell, as if in water,
grappling with a luminous doom. By morning
I had vanished at least a dozen times
into something better. (16)

Mary Oliver (20th Century U.S. Poet) – Study Guide: “Sleeping in the Forest”

Terms to look up before visit:

Technical

Consonance:

Internal rhyme:

Simile:

Syntax:

From poem

Lichens (pronounced “lie-kens”):

Grappling:

Luminous:

Exercises (Respond on separate paper.):

1. Identify the consonance in lines 2-4. Can you describe its effect on tone?
2. Identify the internal rhyme in line 13 (“grappling with a luminous doom. By morning”). Why do you think the poet draws attention to these words here?
3. Notice that the poem is comprised of 5 sentences. They begin: “I thought,” “I slept,” “All night,” “All night,” and “By morning.” How does this choice of syntax help Oliver create her meaning in this poem?
4. Finally, take a moment to notice the environment in which you sit and your feelings about it. Write down some words or phrases below that you could use later if you decide to try to write your own poem.
5. Is there other commentary you would like to make?

NOTE: It is always best to include specific reference to words, phrases, and/or lines from the poems in your responses.

Mary Oliver (20th Century U.S. Poet)

The Swan

Did you too see it, drifting, all night, on the black river?
Did you see it in the morning, rising into the silvery air -
An armful of white blossoms,
A perfect commotion of silk and linen as it leaned
into the bondage of its wings; a snowbank, a bank of lilies,
Biting the air with its black beak? (6)
Did you hear it, fluting and whistling
A shrill dark music – like the rain pelting the trees – like a waterfall
Knifing down the black ledges?
And did you see it, finally, just under the clouds -
A white cross Streaming across the sky, its feet
Like black leaves, its wings Like the stretching light of the river? (12)
And did you feel it, in your heart, how it pertained to everything?
And have you too finally figured out what beauty is for?
And have you changed your life?

Mary Oliver (20th Century U.S. Poet) – Study Guide: “The Swan”

Terms to look up before visit:

Technical

Alliteration:

Simile:

Imagery:

Anaphora:

Rhetorical question:

From poem

Commotion:

Bondage:

Fluting:

Pelting:

Pertaining:

Exercises (Respond on separate paper.):

1. Look at the definition for “rhetorical question.” Do you believe Oliver’s questions in this poem to be rhetorical, or do you believe they require answers? What might be your answers to the final two questions?
2. Circle all the words in the poem that elicit a feeling of tension or struggle. Now underline the words that give an impression of calm, joy, or exultation. What overall effect/tone does Oliver create in this poem?
3. What purpose do you think Mary Oliver has by using anaphora in this poem?
4. Finally, take a moment to notice the environment in which you sit and your feelings about it. Write down some words or phrases below that you could use later if you decide to try to write your own poem.
5. Is there other commentary you would like to make?

NOTE: It is always best to include specific reference to words, phrases, and/or lines from the poems in your responses.

Anne Spencer (20th Century U.S. Poet)

Life-Long, Poor Browning

Life-long, poor Browning never knew Virginia,
Or he'd not grieved in Florence for April sallies
Back to English gardens after Euclid's linear:
Cleft yews, Pomander Walks, and preached alleys; (4)

Primroses, prim indeed, in quiet ordered hedges,
Waterways, soberly, sedately enchanneled,
No thin riotous blade even among the sedges,
All the wild country-side tamely impaneled . . . (8)

Dead, now, dear Browning, lives on in heaven,--
(Heaven's Virginia when the year's at its Spring)
He's haunting the byways of wine-aired leaven
And throating the notes of the wildings on wing; (12)

Here canopied reaches of dogwood and hazel,
Beech tree and redbud fine-laced in vines,
Fleet clapping rills by lush fern and basil,
Drain blue hills to lowlands scented with pines . . . (16)

Think you he meets in this tender green sweetness
Shade that was Elizabeth . . . immortal completeness!

Anne Spencer (20th Century U.S. Poet) – Study Guide: “Life-Long, Poor Browning”

Terms to look up before visit:

Technical

Allusion:

Quatrain:

End rhyme:

Ellipsis:

From poem

Euclid:

Yew:

Pomander:

Primrose:

Prim:

Impaneled:

Leaven:

Wildings:

Rills:

Shade:

Exercises (Respond on separate paper.):

1. Spencer’s curious title tells the reader that she pities Browning. For what reason(s) does she pity him?
2. What do you think is her purpose in using ellipses at the ends of the second and fourth stanzas and in the middle of the last line?
3. Why, in particular, does Spencer allude to Browning, Euclid, and Elizabeth? Why does she refer in particular to Virginia, Florence, English gardens, and heaven?
4. How do lines 7 -8 prepare the reader for the description of heaven (stanzas 3-4)?
5. Is there a possible link between “Dead,”(line 9) “haunting,” (line 11) and “Shade” (line 18)?
6. Identify any aspect of the poem that may comment on humanity’s mistreatment (or at least counter-productive treatment) of the natural world.
7. Finally, take a moment to notice the environment in which you sit and your feelings about it. Write down some words or phrases below that you could use later if you decide to try to write your own poem.
8. Is there other commentary you would like to make?

NOTE: It is always best to include specific reference to words, phrases, and/or lines from the poems in your responses.

Spencer (20th Century U.S. Poet)

Requiem

Oh, I who so wanted to own some earth,
Am consumed by the earth instead:
Blood into river
Bone into land
The grave restores what finds its bed. (5)
Oh, I who did drink of Spring's fragrant clay,
Give back its wine for other men:
Breath into air
Heart into grass
My heart bereft—I might rest then. (10)

Anne Spencer (20th Century U.S. Poet) – Study Guide: “Requiem”

Terms to look up before visit:

Technical

Paradox:

Irony:

From poem

Requiem (In addition to the dictionary definitions, look up the etymology of *requiem*.):

Bereft:

Exercises:

1. Consider the etymology of the word *requiem*. Consider the meanings of the word “bereft.” How does the poet’s word choice here create tone and meaning in the poem? Is the poem hopeful?
2. Identify and discuss the paradox and irony found in the poem.
3. What does the poem say about the relationship between the speaker and the earth?
4. Finally, take a moment to notice the environment in which you sit and your feelings about it. Write down some words or phrases below that you could use later if you decide to try to write your own poem.
5. Is there other commentary you would like to make?

NOTE: It is always best to include specific reference to words, phrases, and/or lines from the poems in your responses.

Mary Tallmountain (20th Century U.S. Poet)

The Last Wolf

The last wolf hurried toward me
through the ruined city
and I heard his baying echoes
down the steep smashed warrens
of Montgomery Street and past (5)
the ruby-crowned highrises
left standing
their lighted elevators useless

Passing the flicking red and green
of traffic signals (10)
baying his way eastward
in the mystery of his wild loping gait
closer the sounds in the deadly night
through clutter and rubble of quiet blocks
I hear his voice ascending the hill (15)
and at last his low whine as he came
floor by empty floor to the room
where I sat
in my narrow bed looking west, waiting
I heard him snuffle at the door and (20)
I watched

He trotted across the floor
he laid his long gray muzzle
on the spare white spread
and his eyes burned yellow (25)
his small dotted eyebrows quivered

Yes, I said.
I know what they have done.

Mary Tallmountain (20th Century U.S. Poet) – Study Guide: “The Last Wolf”

Terms to look up before visit:

Technical

Symbol:

Imagery:

Assonance:

Syntax:

From poem

Warrens:

Loping:

Gait:

Exercises:

1. Of what might the last wolf be a symbol? The ruined city? The narrow bed?
2. The assonance in line 14 (“through clutter and rubble of quiet blocks”) mimics the same sound repeated throughout the poem: “hurried” (line 1), “snuffle” (line 20), “muzzle” (line 23). Tallmountain holds this poem together through this and other use of sound and through syntax choices. Describe the effect of sound on your appreciation of the poem.
3. Why is the last wolf hurrying toward the speaker? Who are “they” in the last line? What have “they” done?
4. Identify the aspect of this poem that gives it a theme of humanity losing touch with/corrupting nature.
5. Is there other commentary you would like to make?

NOTE: It is always best to include specific reference to words, phrases, and/or lines from the poems in your responses.

Mary Tallmountain (20th Century U.S. Poet)

Soogha Dancing

Soogha eldest brother I never knew,
the people gave you new clothes.
In spring they honored men
outstanding in Kaltag village.
At potlatch after giveaway
those honored danced alone (6)

Your arms flying
Ermine parka whirling
beaver hood like brown velvet
lynx-trimmed mukluks
furs trapped by your friends
the women stitched in winter. (12)

Dance house drums thumped,
people sang thirteen Koyukon songs,
fiddles thrummed,
wooden ocarina whistled,
you stomped around the floor.
what were your dreams? (18)

Did you see new tall
traders come lying, cheating?
You told the people to keep peace
overlook greed, bad bargains,
insults, but hold strong,
make friends. (24)

Did you remember Mother Earth's
lessons of the Being With No Name,
how in Distant Time the people
talked with animals in different voices,
played among Alaska's bluebells, roses,
small spruce trees, mastodon cliffs? (30)

You dance bright behind my eyes.
Soogha brother, I see you
in that spirit-given spring
dancing for the people,
arms open like furry wings. (35)

Mary Tallmountain (20th Century U.S. Poet) – Study Guide: “*Soogha* Dancing”

Terms to look up before visit:

Technical

Assonance:

Full circle:

Apostrophe:

From poem

Soogha: Athabaskan language for “brother”

Kaltag:

Potlatch:

Koyukon:

Ocarina:

Mastodon:

Exercises (Respond on separate paper.):

1. Why does the speaker use apostrophe to introduce the reader to her brother? Her purpose?
2. Why does the speaker describe the clothing and actions of her elder brother in such detail?
3. What is the effect of the questions the speaker asks *Soogha* in stanzas 4 & 5? Does she approve or disapprove of her elder brother’s actions/choices? How do you know?
4. What is the effect of the speaker coming full circle between stanzas 2 and 6” “Your arms flying” and “arms open like furry wings”?
5. Identify the aspect of this poem that gives it a theme of humanity losing touch with/corrupting nature.
6. Is there other commentary you would like to make?

NOTE: It is always best to include specific reference to words, phrases, and/or lines from the poems in your responses.

Henry David Thoreau (19th Century U.S. Poet)

Nature

O Nature! I do not aspire
To be the highest in thy choir, -
To be a meteor in thy sky,
Or comet that may range on high;
Only a zephyr that may blow (5)
Among the reeds by the river low;
Give me thy most privy place
Where to run my airy race.

In some withdrawn, unpublic mead
Let me sigh upon a reed, (10)
Or in the woods, with leafy din,
Whisper the still evening in:
Some still work give me to do, -
Only - be it near to you!

For I'd rather be thy child (15)
And pupil, in the forest wild,
Than be the king of men elsewhere,
And most sovereign slave of care;
To have one moment of thy dawn,
Than share the city's year forlorn. (20)

Henry David Thoreau (19th Century U.S. Poet) – Study Guide: “Nature”

Terms to look up before visit:

Technical

Enjambment:

Apostrophe:

Rhyming couplet:

Antithesis:

From poem

Zephyr:

Mead:

Din:

Sovereign:

Forlorn:

Exercises (Respond on separate paper.):

1. How does Thoreau use antithesis within each stanza to express his relationship to nature?
2. Could this poem have the same power if it were not written as an apostrophe to nature? Explain.
3. According to this poem, both nature and men have high positions and lowly positions. In what way does this enhance the purpose of the poem?
4. Finally, take a moment to notice the environment in which you sit and your feelings about it. Write down some words or phrases below that you could use later if you decide to try to write your own poem.
5. Is there other commentary you would like to make?

NOTE: It is always best to include specific reference to words, phrases, and/or lines from the poems in your responses.

Henry David Thoreau (19th Century U.S. Poet)

The Summer Rain

My books I'd fain cast off, I cannot read,
'Twixt every page my thoughts go stray at large
Down in the meadow, where is richer feed,
And will not mind to hit their proper targe. (4)

Plutarch was good, and so was Homer too,
Our Shakespeare's life were rich to live again,
What Plutarch read, that was not good nor true,
Nor Shakespeare's books, unless his books were men. (8)

Here while I lie beneath this walnut bough,
What care I for the Greeks or for Troy town,
If juster battles are enacted now
Between the ants upon this hummock's crown? (12)

Bid Homer wait till I the issue learn,
If red or black the gods will favor most,
Or yonder Ajax will the phalanx turn,
Struggling to heave some rock against the host. (16)

Tell Shakespeare to attend some leisure hour,
For now I've business with this drop of dew,
And see you not, the clouds prepare a shower--
I'll meet him shortly when the sky is blue. (20)

This bed of herd's grass and wild oats was spread
Last year with nicer skill than monarchs use.
A clover tuft is pillow for my head,
And violets quite overtop my shoes. (24)

And now the cordial clouds have shut all in,
And gently swells the wind to say all's well;
The scattered drops are falling fast and thin,
Some in the pool, some in the flower-bell. (28)

I am well drenched upon my bed of oats;
But see that globe come rolling down its stem,
Now like a lonely planet there it floats,
And now it sinks into my garment's hem. (32)

Drip drip the trees for all the country round,
And richness rare distills from every bough;
The wind alone it is makes every sound,
Shaking down crystals on the leaves below. (36)

For shame the sun will never show himself,
Who could not with his beams e'er melt me so;
My dripping locks--they would become an elf,
Who in a beaded coat does gayly go. (40)

Henry David Thoreau (19th Century U.S. Poet) – Study Guide: “The Summer Rain”

Terms to look up before visit:

Technical

Allusion:

Quatrain:

End rhyme:

Iambic pentameter:

From poem

Fain:

‘twixt:

Hummock:

Phalanx:

Tuft:

Cordial:

Swell:

Distill:

Plutarch:

Homer:

Shakespeare:

Ajax:

Troy:

Exercises (Respond on separate paper.):

1. Have you ever felt as the speaker expresses in the first stanza? Explain.
2. What is Thoreau’s purpose in his choice of classical figures to whom to allude? How does this choice strengthen his purpose?
3. What images/details from nature does the speaker prefer? Look around you. Do you see, hear, or feel any of what the poet describes?
4. Finally, take a moment to notice the environment in which you sit and your feelings about it. Write down some words or phrases below that you could use later if you decide to try to write your own poem.
5. Is there other commentary you would like to make?

NOTE: It is always best to include specific reference to words, phrases, and/or lines from the poems in your responses.

William Carlos Williams (Late 19th-20th Century U.S. Poet-New Jersey Native)

The Maneuver

I saw the two starlings
coming in toward the wires.
But at the last,
Just before alighting, they

turned in the air together
and landed backwards!
that's what got me—to
face into the wind's teeth.

The Red Wheelbarrow

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens.

William Carlos Williams (Late 19th-20th Century U.S. Poet-New Jersey Native)-
Study Guide “The Maneuver” and “The Red Wheelbarrow”

Terms to look up before visit:

Technical

Imagery:

First-person:

Personification:

Syntax:

From poem

Maneuver:

Starling:

Alighting:

Glazed:

Exercises:

1. What is the effect of the juxtaposition of the natural world and man/the man-made world in both these poems?
2. Notice in “The Maneuver” that Williams interrupts his brief, simple observation with personal commentary followed by a dash (“that’s what got me—“ line 7). What effect does this have on his poem?
3. How do the tones of these poems differ? How does the poet create these differences?
4. If you wrote “The Red Wheelbarrow” as a sentence, it would have one verb: depends. How does this influence your impression/understanding of this simple (but famous) poem?
5. Finally, take a moment to notice the environment in which you sit and your feelings about it. Write down some words or phrases below that you could use later if you decide to try to write your own poem.
6. Is there other commentary you would like to make?

NOTE: It is always best to include specific reference to words, phrases, and/or lines from the poems in your responses.

William Wordsworth (Romantic Era British Poet)

The World is Too Much With Us

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon! (4)
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers,
For this, for everything, we are out of tune; (8)
It moves us not.--Great God! I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn; (12)
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

William Wordsworth (Romantic Era British Poet) – Study Guide: “The World is Too Much With Us”

Terms to look up before visit:

Technical

Petrarchan sonnet:

Iambic pentameter:

Octave:

Sestet:

Allusion:

Imagery:

Personification:

From poem

Sordid:

Boon:

Pagan:

Lea:

Forlorn:

Proteus:

Triton:

Exercises (Respond on separate paper.):

1. How does Wordsworth’s choice of form (Petrarchan sonnet) help him reveal his purpose in this poem?
2. In lines 5-7, the speaker includes powerful imagery through the personification of the sea, the winds, and flowers. Look around you and identify aspects of nature that could be personified. How would they “feel” if mankind was “out of tune” with them?
3. What shocking confession (for his time) is Wordsworth making in the sestet when he says he’d rather be a pagan?
4. Identify the aspect of this poem that gives it a theme of humanity losing touch with nature.
5. Finally, take a moment to notice the environment in which you sit and your feelings about it. Write down some words or phrases below that you could use later if you decide to try to write your own poem.
6. Is there other commentary you would like to make?

NOTE: It is always best to include specific reference to words, phrases, and/or lines from the poems in your responses.

William Wordsworth (Romantic Era British Poet) -- A Wren's Nest

AMONG the dwellings framed by birds
In field or forest with nice care,
Is none that with the little Wren's
In snugness may compare. (4)

For She who planned the mossy lodge,
Mistrusting her evasive skill,
Had to a Primrose looked for aid
Her wishes to fulfill. (40)

No door the tenement requires,
And seldom needs a laboured roof;
Yet is it to the fiercest sun
Impervious, and storm-proof. (8)

High on the trunk's projecting brow,
And fixed an infant's span above
The budding flowers, peeped forth the nest
The prettiest of the grove! (44)

So warm, so beautiful withal,
In perfect fitness for its aim,
That to the Kind by special grace
Their instinct surely came. (12)

The treasure proudly did I show
To some whose minds without disdain
Can turn to little things; but once
Looked up for it in vain: (48)

And when for their abodes they seek
An opportune recess,
The hermit has no finer eye
For shadowy quietness. (16)

'Tis gone---a ruthless spoiler's prey,
Who heeds not beauty, love, or song,
'Tis gone! (so seemed it) and we grieved
Indignant at the wrong. (52)

These find, 'mid ivied abbey-walls,
A canopy in some still nook;
Others are pent-housed by a brae
That overhangs a brook. (20)

Just three days after, passing by
In clearer light the moss-built cell
I saw, espied its shaded mouth;
And felt that all was well. (56)

There to the brooding bird her mate
Warbles by fits his low clear song;
And by the busy streamlet both
Are sung to all day long. (24)

The Primrose for a veil had spread
The largest of her upright leaves;
And thus, for purposes benign,
A simple flower deceives. (60)

Or in sequestered lanes they build,
Where, till the flitting bird's return,
Her eggs within the nest repose,
Like relics in an urn. (28)

Concealed from friends who might disturb
Thy quiet with no ill intent,
Secure from evil eyes and hands
On barbarous plunder bent, (64)

But still, where general choice is good,
There is a better and a best;
And, among fairest objects, some
Are fairer than the rest; (32)

Rest, Mother-bird! and when thy young
Take flight, and thou art free to roam,
When withered is the guardian Flower,
And empty thy late home, (68)

This, one of those small builders proved
In a green covert, where, from out
The forehead of a pollard oak,
The leafy antlers sprout; (36)

Think how ye prospered, thou and thine,
Amid the unviolated grove
Housed near the growing Primrose-tuft
In foresight, or in love. (72)

William Wordsworth (Romantic Era British Poet) – Study Guide: “A Wren’s Nest”

Terms to look up before visit:

Technical

Quatrain:

Iambic tetrameter:

Iambic trimeter:

Symbol:

From poem

Wren:

Primrose:

Impervious:

Brae:

Brooding:

Sequestered:

Relics:

Covert:

Disdain:

Indignant:

Benign:

Bent:

Exercises (Respond on separate paper.):

1. What tone does the speaker achieve with his detailed descriptions of the many locations in which a wren builds its nest?
2. Circle all the words in the poem that suggest hiding or concealment. What is the poet’s purpose for this?
3. List all of the words the poet uses to describe the actions or intentions of people. What is the poet’s purpose for this?
4. How is the Primrose personified? What is the poet suggesting here?
5. Look around you and try to locate places that may “house” more than can be seen by the eye. Could you imagine writing as detailed and admiring a poem about that place as Wordsworth has done about the wren and her nest?
6. Finally, take a moment to notice the environment in which you sit and your feelings about it. Write down some words or phrases below that you could use later if you decide to try to write your own poem.
7. Is there other commentary you would like to make?

NOTE: It is always best to include specific reference to words, phrases, and/or lines from the poems in your responses.

William Butler Yeats (Late 19th – Early 20th Century Poet)

The Lake Isle of Innisfree

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honeybee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade. (4)

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a-glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings. (8)

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements gray,
I hear it in the deep heart's core. (12)

Terms to look up before visit:

Technical

Repetition:

Consonance:

Imagery:

From poem

Innisfree:

Wattles:

Glade:

Linnet:

Lapping:

Exercises (Respond on separate paper.):

1. Do you have a special place in nature (perhaps camping, cabins in the woods, at the seashore) that offers you a “retreat” of sorts? What makes you long to be there as the speaker longs to be at Innisfree?
2. Identify as much repetition in the poem as you can. What is the effect of this repetition?
3. What of the five senses are elicited by the imagery and sound in this poem?
4. Identify the aspect of this poem that gives it a theme of humanity losing touch with nature.
5. Finally, take a moment to notice the environment in which you sit and your feelings about it. Write down some words or phrases below that you could use later if you decide to try to write your own poem.
6. Is there other commentary you would like to make?

NOTE: It is always best to include specific reference to words, phrases, and/or lines from the poems in your responses.

William Butler Yeats (Late 19th – Early 20th Century Poet)

The Wild Swans at Coole

THE trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry,
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky;
Upon the brimming water among the stones
Are nine-and-fifty Swans. (6)

The nineteenth autumn has come upon me
Since I first made my count;
I saw, before I had well finished,
All suddenly mount
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings
Upon their clamorous wings. (12)

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,
And now my heart is sore.
All's changed since I, hearing at twilight,
The first time on this shore,
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,
Trode with a lighter tread. (18)

Unwearied still, lover by lover,
They paddle in the cold
Companionable streams or climb the air;
Their hearts have not grown old;
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,
Attend upon them still. (24)

But now they drift on the still water,
Mysterious, beautiful;
Among what rushes will they build,
By what lake's edge or pool
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day
To find they have flown away? (30)

William Butler Yeats (Late 19th – Early 20th Century Poet) – Study Guide: “The Wild Swans at Coole”

Terms to look up before visit:

Technical

Enjambment:

Repetition:

Alliteration:

From poem

Mount:

Wheeling:

Clamorous:

Exercises (Respond on separate paper.):

1. What changes and what does not change throughout the poem? How does Yeats show this?
2. Notice the different meanings of the word “still” (lines 4, 19, 24, 25). Why do you think Yeats made the choice to use this word as much as he does in the poem?
3. Identify some instances of alliteration in this poem and describe its effect on the tone and purpose of the poem.
4. Enjambment in this poem dictates how it should be read/heard. Why do you think Yeats made the choice to write this poem with a mix of enjambed and end-stopped lines?
5. What are your feelings when you read the question in the last line? Why do you think Yeats ends his poem this way?
6. Finally, take a moment to notice the environment in which you sit and your feelings about it. Write down some words or phrases below that you could use later if you decide to try to write your own poem.
7. Is there other commentary you would like to make?

NOTE: It is always best to include specific reference to words, phrases, and/or lines from the poems in your responses.