

LITFEST

'THIS PLACE, THIS PLANET'

POETRY MAP

RESOURCE PACK

Notes for Teachers

This resource pack is full of ideas, inspirations, and suggestions to help pupils write their own poems about 'This Place, This Planet', which is the theme of this year's festival (8–20 March 2022).

We'd love to see your students' poems! Please submit them as a group in a single Word document via email to info@litfest.org by 10 March.

Those that are accepted for publication will then form part of our '**This Place, This Planet**' poetry map and will remain on the website (www.litfest.org), with all the other poems from the region, as a permanent resource after the festival has ended.

Litfest, with leading poet Helen Mort, will select three outstanding poems from among the schools' submissions, and on 13 March will invite those three poets to read their poems either in person or online at the event at 5.30pm on 19 March in The Auditorium at The Storey.

Please note that the deadline for submissions is midnight on 10 March 2022.



For Litfest's 'This Place, This Planet' Poetry Map you are going to write a poem about planet Earth.

Our natural world is **a beautiful place**, but it is **under threat** and we can **see the changes** all around us. From our food choices, plastic packaging and car pollution to the melting polar-ice caps in Antarctica and Greenland, vanishing wilderness and oceans filled with plastic rubbish... There is a clear link between **what we humans choose to do**, and **how our actions continue to change the world** we live in.

Most importantly, there are the **positive steps** we can all take to reduce our impact on our world. **Some of these steps are little** – like turning off a light or recycling waste – **others are bigger**, like switching to electric cars, solar panels and wind turbines – **and some are huge**, like saving the oceans and the Amazon and African rainforests!

But the solution is not always so far away – sometimes the response to human-made climate change is right on your doorstep – **doing what you can to look after your parks, your forests, your rivers and your local wildlife**, and **not exporting your plastic rubbish to the other side of the world**.

For your poem, you'll need to **think about a local place** you want to write about, **what you love about it**, how it has **experienced pollution or the effects of climate change**, and what you would miss about it if it were to vanish entirely. Then you need to think about **how you want to write about it**.

There are as many ways to write a poem as there are **fish in the sea**, but to start with, you'll need:

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

and then a

BAG OF TRICKS!

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

Before you start writing, you need to think of an **idea** – **what** are you going to write about?

Inspiration can come from **anywhere**. The most important thing is to be **open** to things you might normally miss in your busy everyday life. Poems are a good way of seeing **the world** in a different way.

Try thinking about a place outdoors (locally or in your imagination) that you've visited in the past.



You don't have to write about a place that you have been to – you can always **make something up!**

If you're stuck for inspiration, there are lots of things you can try...

- Some people are inspired by **music**
- Some people are inspired while **walking** (in the country or in town)
- **Talking to other people** can help you to come up with ideas too.

People are often inspired by **what they see in the world**. On the next few pages, there are some **pictures** of **Lancaster** and **Morecambe** that may help to inspire you...

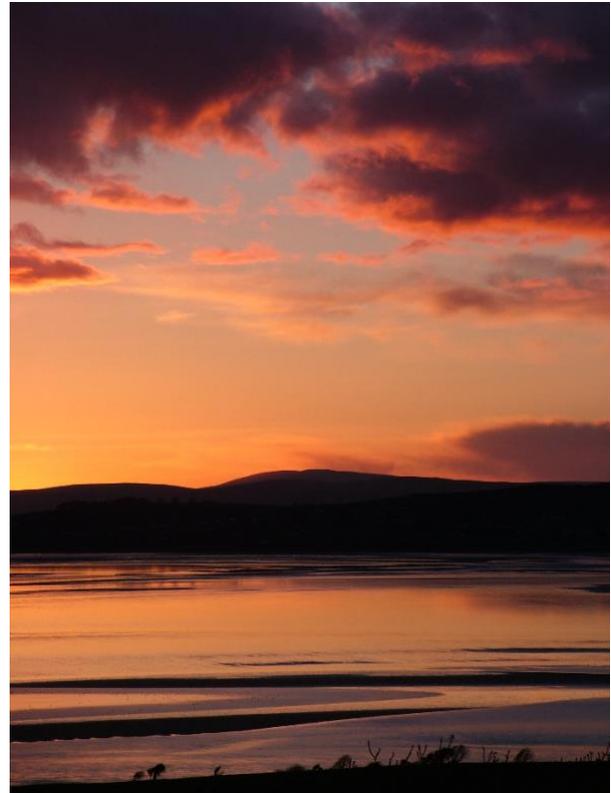
All these photos were taken by **Johnny Bean**, and you can find many more at:
Lancaster: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/jonathanbean/albums/72157604635585287>
Morecambe: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/jonathanbean/albums/72157604631496838>



Boats, Morecambe Bay



Ashton Memorial, Lancaster (2019)



Silverdale Coastline (c. 2006)



Humanity Needs You (Lancaster, 2011)



School of Art (The Storey, Lancaster, 2011)



Climate Change (Luminate Project, Morecambe, 2020)

BAG OF TRICKS

So you've come up with an **idea** – **great!** Now you need to decide **how** you're going to write it. Try to choose a poem **type** that matches your content. E.g. a funny poem might be **short** and **rhyiming**. A **serious** poem might be longer.

Couplet (2 lines that rhyme)

Each outcry of the hunted *Hare*
A fibre from the Brain does *tear*
William Blake, from *Auguries of Innocence* (1805)

Quatrain (4 lines, at least some of which rhyme)

And now there came *both* mist and *snow*,
And it grew wondrous *cold*:
And ice, mast-*high*, came floating *by*,
As green as eme*rald*.
Samuel Taylor Coleridge,
from 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (1798)

Spot the **assonance** in lines 1 and 3.

Limerick (funny poem. Lines 1, 2 and 5 rhyme, and lines 3 and 4 form a separate rhyme)

Raised in the valleys and fed by the *seas*
Borne on the breeze with the birds and the *bees*
 Gifted with birth
 From the womb of the earth
My origins are not unlike those of the *trees*
Fred Hornaday (2014), reprinted by permission of the author, kingoflimericks.com

Sonnet
(A 14-line poem that can rhyme or not rhyme.)

In most sonnets, the last two lines either solve a problem or emphasise the main point.

Sonnet for a Sphere
Take an apple. Chop it into quarters.
Count out three. These represent the lakes that nestle inside countries, all the snaking rivers joined with seas – the blue that's water.

Put them aside. This last remaining slice stands for the land. Divide it into eight.
Discard the barren: the distant icy waste,
The thirsty desert, rocky unreachable heights.

What's left? Just one last sliver of a sphere.
Unpeel its skin. Hold up that patch of green between your thumb and fingertip. It's here the soil is rich and seeds take root. The crops we need to harvest, where our livestock feed are all in this. Be careful now – don't drop it.

Rachel Rooney, *The Language of Cat* (Otter-Barry Books), by permission of the author.

Haiku

A *haiku* is a Japanese poetic form. It has three lines, each with a set number of syllables. The first and last lines usually have **five** syllables, and the middle line has **seven**.

Here's one from Greg C. Johnson, USA:

*Our industry has
warmed oceans, air, lands - changed rains
melted ice - raised seas.*

<https://www.sightline.org/2018/12/05/climate-change-told-in-19-heartbreaking-haiku/>

And another from Maureen McGreevy, Canada:

*something grabs my leg
plastic bag churned by the tide
ocean clings for life*

https://www.poetrysoup.com/poem/woe_is_the_sea_1020445

(Reprinted by permission)

And lastly one from Dan Farber, USA:

*'Global climate change' –
A long and abstract title
For a world in pain.*

<https://blogs.berkeley.edu/2013/07/03/environmental-haiku-for-summer/>

(Reprinted by permission)

As you can tell from these examples, haiku can be **witty** or **serious**. They're a good way to focus on an **important idea** or **feeling**. And because they only have a few words in them, you'll need to **choose** and **arrange** your words **carefully**: use adjectives, verbs and adverbs that will have an **impact** on the audience.

Poems are great for reading aloud

You can listen to 'A Climate of Change' by George the Poet here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfEF_P73RE0

Once you've got your **idea** and thought about the **sort** of poem you want to write, you need to think about the **words** you're going to use and how your poem is going to **sound** when read out loud.

A poem will be a discovery – for you and the reader – and might:

- Contain a **surprise** or something you've just **found out**
- Express a **feeling** – like joy, sadness or anger, or all three
- Use your **favourite** words, or **unusual** and **new** ones
- Say very clearly what it **means**
- ... or be **ambiguous** and mean two things at once

The only rule is that there are **NO RULES** – just lots of different things to try as you find a way to express what you want to say.

The brilliant Michael Rosen has very kindly set out 9 tips for writing poems: <https://www.theschoolrun.com/poetry-writing-tips-for-kids>

Here are some extra things you could try:

Unexpected language — Choose descriptive words that the reader might not expect, e.g. *His peppery wit* or *Her salty tongue*

Simile — You can use these to make imaginative comparisons, e.g. *Wind turbines like daffodils*

Metaphor — These are often stronger than similes, so you can use them when you want to create a really powerful image in the reader's mind, e.g. *My teacher is a game ranger* or *This classroom is a safari park*

Fable — Sometimes a fable can describe a complex situation in a simple way. Here is one from Aesop which you could try rewriting as a poem:

A man came into a forest and asked the Trees to provide him a handle for his axe. The Trees consented to his request and gave him a young ash-tree. No sooner had the man fitted a new handle to his axe from it, than he began to use it and quickly felled with his strokes the noblest giants of the forest. An old oak, lamenting when too late the destruction of his companions, said to a neighbouring cedar, 'The first step has lost us all. If we had not given up the rights of the ash, we might yet have retained our own privileges and have stood for ages.'

Translated by George Fyler Townsend (1814–1900)

Repetition — This can be an effective way to make a point, as you can see in this poem, 'Let Them Not Say' by Jane Hirshfield:

Let Them Not Say

Let them not say: we did not see it.
We saw.

Let them not say: we did not hear it.
We heard.

Let them not say: they did not taste it.
We ate, we trembled.

Let them not say: it was not spoken, not written.
We spoke,
we witnessed with voices and hands.

Let them not say: they did nothing.
We did not-enough.

Let them say, as they must say something:

A kerosene beauty.
It burned.

Let them say we warmed ourselves by it,
read by its light, praised,
and it burned.

Jane Hirshfield, from *Each Happiness Ringed by Lions: Selected Poems* (Bloodaxe Books) www.bloodaxebooks.com Reprinted by permission

And finally... the power of a last line — A strong last line can really bring home the emotional power of a poem, as we saw with Rachel Rooney's 'Sonnet for a Sphere', Jane Hirshfield's 'Let Them Not Say' and as you can see with Adrian Mitchell's 'Song in Space' (<https://poemsontheunderground.org/song-in-space>).

Whatever you decide to write about, and however you decide to write it, Litfest is looking forward to reading your poem!