

Geo-literature: poems and stories inspired by all things 'geo' Create your own geo-poem or story

*"I know a man who regards rocks as books.
He breaks open their covers with a hammer, prises
leaves apart with a cold-chisel. To him
the earth is a library of neglected books."*

From 'Geologist' by W. Hart-Smith

From Shakespeare to Seamus Heaney, Coleridge to Carol Ann Duffy, poets have long been inspired by geology and landforms to create some of their most memorable work.

This activity links the natural world to literature. Read some literature that has been inspired by the Earth, rocks or landscapes to the pupils, for example:-

- 'The first ten million millennia or so'
by Don L Anderson,
- 'In a Marble Quarry' by James L. Dickey,
- 'Amber' by Eavan Boland,
- 'Ode to a Trilobite' by Timothy A. Conrad.

Ask the pupils to look at Earth-related words, preferably from topics they have studied, that have been written on a screen or board, or, if it is preferred, the words could be read out.

Ask them to really concentrate (maybe close their eyes) and let their imaginations conjure up 'mind pictures' for each word. Try familiar words like granite, dinosaur, chalk hills, volcanoes, rivers. Let the pupils realise that when a word is read or heard, they will have a related picture in their minds. This first picture quickly leads on to others and it is hard to follow the thought process unless the words are written down quickly.

To make the explanation clear, it may be a good idea to say some words with abstract meaning, like happiness or sadness. The word will conjure an instant 'mind picture' for the pupils.

Ask them to:

- choose the word that triggered the most vivid image for them;
- still concentrating on the word, let the image change until they have a series of images (about six), for example, one pupil thinking of granite, may then imagine granite landscapes, tors, hiking, rain but another may imagine kitchen worktops, food, cooking so moving a long way from the original word;
- quickly write words that describe the series of images;
- using their words and the pictures they imagined, write a series of sentences that describe the images. Many pupils will produce a piece of writing that is descriptive and emotional;
- turn their writing into a poem or story, (if it's a poem, it does not have to rhyme but should have a rhythm).

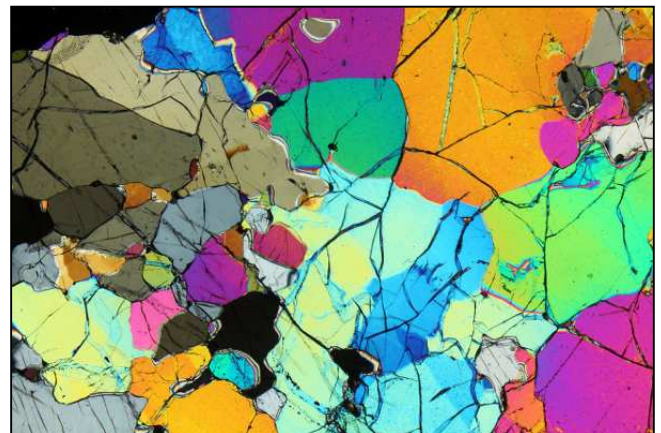
Photos to inspire



Antelope Canyon, Navajo Tribal Park, Arizona, USA
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Group of ammonites found in Brazil
This file by Reinhold Müller is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported licence.



Olivine crystals in Dunite (an Earth mantle rock).
Crossed nicols image, field of vision 7mm
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The back up:

Title: Geo poetry: poems and stories inspired by all things 'geo'.

Subtitle: Create your own geo-poem or story.

Topic: Much of our great literature was and is inspired by the natural world. This activity encourages pupils to write imaginatively about a topic they have studied in Earth science or geography. It creates a cross-curricular link between the sciences and arts.

Age range of pupils: 5 - 95 years.

Time needed to complete activity: variable - 30 minutes.

Pupil learning outcomes: Pupils can:

- create 'mind pictures' from a given word;
- let their imaginations explore that word;
- realise that all words create 'mind pictures';
- appreciate that everyone can write (or speak) in a creative way.

Context:

This activity fits in well at the end of a topic where pupils can explore different aspects of the subject of study. It encourages creative writing and breaks down any barrier pupils may make between scientific, factual subjects and the arts.

"Art and science are branches of the same tree".
(Albert Einstein).

Following up the activity:

Pupils can use search engines to explore material that has already been written, particularly about 'Geo-poetry'.

The Geological Society of London hosted an event 'Poetry and Geology: A Celebration'

<http://www.geolsoc.org.uk/geopoetry>. On this site there are talks to watch and suggested reading.

Perhaps some pupils will be inspired to write a play. The Wrosne project performances were held in caverns of the Dudley Limestone Mines (Shropshire, UK).

<http://www.andrewkristy.com/wrosne/4587312747>

Inspired by the Dudley bug (a trilobite) and world-renowned local geology, sixty young people from housing areas around the Wren's Nest National Nature Reserve in Birmingham, UK, worked to create a performance to celebrate the area's internationally important geo-industrial heritage.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zJrQ1YFc0A>

They could also try the Earthlearningidea 'Geo-art'.
<http://www.earthlearningidea.com>

Underlying principles:

- Much of our literature has been inspired by the natural world.

Thinking skill development:

Trying to interpret 'mind pictures' shows construction. Cognitive conflict is caused when the 'mind pictures' deviate wildly from the original image. Turning a scientific topic into literature is a bridging skill and is the aim of the activity.

Resource list:

- a good imagination
- access to the internet (optional)

Useful links:

'Blurring the line between Arts and Science' by Sarah Henton De Angelis, Natural England Earth Heritage Magazine, Issue 47

<http://www.earthheritage.org.uk/>

State of the Planet -

<http://blogs.ei.columbia.edu/features/geopoetry/>

Geography Poetry Corner -

<http://www.sln.org.uk/geography/pop/>

Rock Writing at Knockan Crag -

<http://cybercrofter.blogspot.co.uk/2013/09/rock-writing-at-knockan-crag.html>

Source: Elizabeth Devon of the Earthlearningidea

Team with material from various posts on the Geological Society of London blog -

<https://blog.geolsoc.org.uk>

Cross-curricular Earthlearningideas
Geo-art: paintings and sculptures inspired by all things 'geo'
Earthquakes and art: historic paintings of earthquakes
Geo-literature: poems and stories inspired by all things 'geo'
Geo-music: music inspired by all things 'geo'
Rocks music: create your own geo-instrument
Back in time: "Alligators spotted in London"

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