

The Write Team

Poetry in the Park: *a six week poetry teaching schedule*

Key Stage 2

by Mandy Coe

A Bath Festivals Learning and Participation
Project funded by

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Foundation

Introduction:

Poetry in the Park centres on a particular place: Bath's Prior Park. However, the activities explore features common to any park or wildlife area – such as wildlife, fossils, history, landscapes and geology.

Poetry in the Park is rich with cross-curricular possibilities and a number of ideas in the schedule provide an ideal opportunity to explore poetry beyond English, and outside Write-Team sessions.

A key figure in Prior Park's history is the entrepreneur and philanthropist, Ralph Allen, whose wealth came not only from the local quarries (used to build many of Bath's distinctive buildings), but from his key role in a radical redesign of the Postal Services in the 18th century. Because of this connection, some of the resulting poems will be written on postcards and posted to Bath's Postal Museum to be displayed there.

Warm-up exercises & main activities

In past Write Now Teaching Schedules, the warm-ups and main exercises were interchangeable, but in this schedule each warm-up is designed to prepare the group for a specific main writing activity.

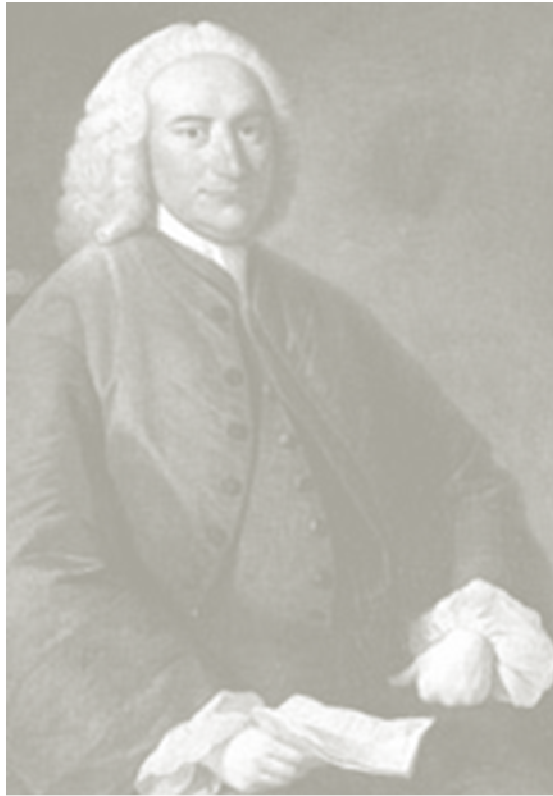
The warm-ups are still designed to create a relaxed welcome to 'Write-Team time' through whole-group activities, modelling new techniques and encouraging observation, discussion, questioning and invention, and most can be used outside the schedule as stand-alone activities. Most of these writing activities can be done individually or in groups.

Onsite/offsite: *this schedule includes an actual visit to Prior Park. During this visit (alongside related ranger-led activities), these writing exercises will help us to create new poems. Activities suitable for writing in the park, or any outdoor venue are clearly marked.*

Resources: *some activities require copies of poems and other materials in the schedule. Required materials are indicated in each introduction. All activities will need pens and paper.*

**WEEK 1: Warm-Up: Local-Sounds-Poem,
place names of Ralph Allen's time (suitable for ONSITE)**

Resources: *copies of the map, pens & paper, brochures/postcards about the park/Ralph Allen/Postal Museum.*



Born in Cornwall in 1693 **Ralph Allen** went to work in the post office. When he was 17 he was transferred to Bath and became postmaster of Bath two years later.

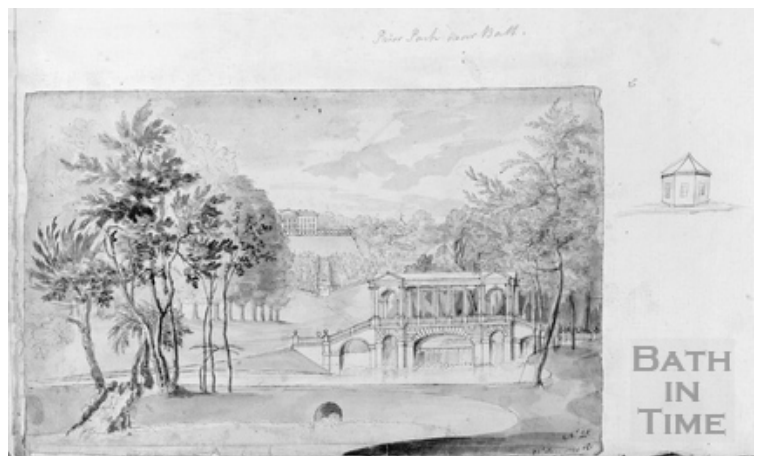
He reorganised much of the nation's post office (creating a network of roads so post could arrive faster). This made him a very wealthy man.

With this money he bought the stone quarries of Combe Down. The wealth from the quarries enabled him to build the landscaped gardens called Prior Park.

Despite being a very rich man, he did not forget his humble beginnings and gave money and stone to several charitable institutions in Bath. He was elected Mayor of Bath in 1742. The old railway line that carried stone from his quarries, past his mansion and down to his wharf, is now called Ralph Allen Drive.

As well as a lake, woodland, a grotto, and spectacular views, Prior Park has one of the few surviving palladium bridges in the world!

The bridge is famous for its graffiti names and initials, some of it from hundreds of years ago.



Local-Sounds-Poem (suitable for ONSITE)

This is a 19th Century map of Bath showing places that Ralph Allen would have been familiar with. (Prior Park is in the middle, can you find it?). If you are in the park, imagine yourself right in the middle of the map!

In pairs or small groups, say aloud the place names. See if you can find a rhythm by saying them one after the other. Write about ten place-names you like the most in the space under the map; then read it out as a found-sound-poem.



Write your list of favourite place-names here:

.....

.....

.....

.....

WEEK 1 Main Activity: *Writing to Ralph* (suitable for ONSITE)

Resources: *blank postcards, paper, coloured pens, copies of recipe/sample cinquains below.*

On your own or in pairs, choose any object in the park, the lake, bridge, a tree, an bird or plant, (rangers will suggest ideas too). Use this subject to write a short poem called a cinquain (pronounced: sing-cane)... perfect for a postcard as its only five lines long!

Recipe for a cinquain

Line 1 = the title, one word - the name of your person, place or thing (a noun).

Line 2 = two words describing your subject (adjectives).

Line 3 = is three 'ing-words'. Words that tell what your subject does, such as whispering, jumping, hiding.

Line 4 = a sentence about your subject.

Line 5 = one word - it should be another name for your subject (noun).

Two cinquains...

1. **Crow**
2. Ragged shadow.
3. Waiting, watching, thinking,
4. Your feathers lead you upwards.
5. Caw-bird.

* * * * *

1. **Stream**
2. Clear and icy,
3. Dancing, singing, eroding,
4. You cut rock, know the underworld.
5. Water.

Mandy Coe

In the park (or later in school), write your postcard to Ralph Allen. On the right-hand side of your postcard write this address.



**Mr Ralph Allen
Bath Postal Museum,
27 Northgate Street,
Bath BA1 1AJ**

On the left, where you write a message, copy out your cinquain poem. If it's a blank postcard, you can colour in a picture of your object on the back. This card will be posted to the Postal Museum and displayed there, so be sure to sign it with your name!

WEEK 2: Warm-Up: *An invitation to visit* (suitable for ONSITE)

Resources: copies of 'Invitation from a Mole'.

Invitation from A Mole

come on down

live among worms awhile

taste dirt

on the tip of your tongue

smell

the sweet damp feet of

mushrooms

listen to roots

reaching

deeper

press your cheek against

the cold face of a stone

wear the earth like a glove

close your eyes

wrap yourself in darkness

see

what you're missing

Alice Schertle's poem 'Invitation from a Mole' draws us slowly into the underground world of moles where beneath the earth we can see the *damp feet of mushrooms* and *listen to the roots*.

The poem has no full stops, capital letters or commas - and the lines are all different lengths; starting in all sorts of places.

Did you know that a shorter a line is - the slower we read it!

Read the poem aloud and see what parts of the mole's home are mentioned.

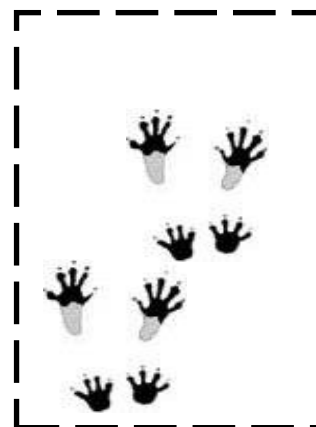
See how the writer asks questions:

- *How do we get to this place? Do we come down, up, inside?*
- *What will we live among?*
- *What will we see, hear, smell or feel?*
- *What will is it like to be in such a place? (texture, light, size).*

WEEK 2 Main Activity: *Welcome to My Home!* (Suitable for ONSITE)

Resources: *copy and cut up these three sets of tracks,*

Cut up the following sets of tracks and invite pupils to pick them out of a hat. After pupils have discussed what they think they might be, show them the information relevant to each animal (top left: hare, top right: badger, bottom right: field mouse).



Here's some information about the three animals. Can you guess which is which? Have a go at saying the lovely Latin names!

Badger

Name: Brock, Mochyn daear. Official name: Meles meles. Weight: Approx. 8 - 12kgs Lifespan: 14 years.

Home: a Badger sett (tunnels and dens underground in sloping woodland) may be many centuries old. The Badger is an extremely clean animal changing its bedding regularly. A group of Badgers living together is known as a clan. Badgers are nocturnal creatures emerging from their setts usually as dusk.

Hare

Hare. Official name: Lepus europaeus. Weight: 48-70g Lifespan: 3 - 4 years. Home: hares live in the open ground. They do not burrow underground (like rabbits), instead, hares raise their young in shallow nests of grass in the open air, relying on stillness and colouring for camouflage.

Known for their habit of squaring up, as if to box, particularly during March and April, the hare if cornered by a man and dog, will choose to challenge the man. When fleeing predators, these shy animals can reach speeds of up to 45mph (72km/h).

Field Mouse

Field Mouse and Long Tailed Field Mouse. Official name: Apodemus sylvaticus. Weight: Up to 27g Lifespan: Approx. 18 months. Home: field mice live almost anywhere, in a hedge, a shed, a tree, underground. Domestic cats, foxes and weasels prey on the field Mouse, as do owls.

The Wood Mouse is usually nocturnal and has a good night vision and an acute sense of smell.

Invitation Poem

Write an invitation to humans to visit your home. Describe where you live, what can be found there. It is your home, so you are proud of it!

Let the lines of your poem be any length, some might only have one or two words. This is a short, 'slow poem'.

Start your poem with the right sort of opening line:

Come on down...

Come on in...

Come on over...

Come on up...

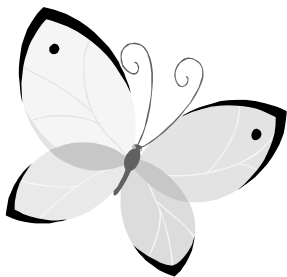
WEEK 3: Warm-Up: *The A-Z of Prior Park Wildlife* (Suitable for ONSITE)

Resources: *the 'A-Z' list, a bit of hinting and a lot of thinking!*

Challenge yourselves (and rangers, if onsite) to help draw up an alphabet of animals, insects, birds that live in Prior Park. If you get stuck, here's a cheat- list. You can whisper names or take it in turns to make movements or noises to give clues.

The A-Z of Parklife

A is for Ant, admiral butterfly, aphid, **B** is for beetles, badger, buzzard, **C** is for caterpillar, carp, cuckoo, **D** is for deer, damselfly, doe, dove, **E** is for ewe, eel, earthworm, **F** is for field mouse, ferret, fox, **G** is for grasshoppers, geese, **H** is for hare, hedgehog, hawk, **I** is for insects, **J** is for jay, June-bug, **K** is for kestrel, kingfisher, **L** is for lark, leech, **M** is for magpie, mice, mole, midges, **N** is for newt, nuthatch, **O** is for owl, **P** is for pheasant, pike, pipistrelle bat, **Q** is for quail, **R** is for rabbit, robin, **S** is for seagull, sheep, snail, spider, squirrel, **T** is for toad, turtle dove, **U** is for upland buzzard (at a push), **V** is for vole, **W** is for wasp, worms, woodpecker, **X** is for Xylodromus (is a beetle!), **Y** is for yellowhammer, **Z** is for if you were really lucky and the wind was blowing in the right direction...a zebra-swallowtail butterfly.



Week 3: Main Activity: *Ways of Looking*

Resources: *copies of For Those Who Don't Know what to do with a Lake*

For Those Who Don't Know what to do with a Lake

Like a silver knife, use it to spread sky-butter on the land.
Tie stars on your hook and fish for clouds.
In its eye see your water-twin.
Know it as a child born of ice-age.
Capture fish-jump sparkles; wear them in your hair.
Roll up its sheen and post it to the Sahara.
Keep its secrets secret.
Don't trust its creaking winter skin.
Dip your toe into the moon at midnight.
Use the ripples to skip with.
Pour its calm in your pocket for a stormy day.

Mandy Coe

This poem imagines that you can do anything with a lake! As well as all the ordinary things such as swimming in it, sailing on it and finding frogs in it – you can magical things as well, such as folding it up or wearing it. In this poem you could eat it, climb inside it. You can hear it, speak to it and send it into space. You can play with it, read it and make friends with it.

Pick something in the park; it can be any object, any size. Write a poem for someone who doesn't know what to do with this particular thing and suggest lots of real and imaginary things they can do with it. Let your imagination run wild!

WEEK 4: Warm-Up: *The changing landscape* (Suitable for ONSITE)

Resources: copies of the poem, 'A Cow Looks Down the Highway'

A Cow Looks Down the Highway

Poor silly things
 they never see
a thistle
 or a bumblebee;
closed up inside
 their shiny shells
they cannot know
 how clover smells.
I wonder why
 they hurry so.
Why do they think
 they have to go
so fast- as if
 the grass won't last
until tomorrow?

Alice Schertle

Read the poem aloud. Can you think of any other things people build that affect animals and the landscape? What do you think the countryside was like before motorways and cars?

In groups, write a poem about the changes people have made. The theme of the poem is 'Before...' It could be 'Before Cars', 'Before Towns', 'Before People', or a mixture of all of these. Start each line with 'before....' and imagine all the things to be seen, heard and felt before cars, roads or cities. If you are outside, look around you for ideas.

Go as far back in time as you want. Fossils and geology shows us that 'Before' (millions of years ago) Bath was originally a seabed! You would have been writing your poem among the waves and fish.

WEEK 4: Main Activity: *Stone Bones, listening to the past* (Suitable for ONSITE)

Resources: fossils to handle or pictures of fossils and the grotto, pens and paper, information about the fossils used to build Prior Park's grotto.

- Take a close look at a few fossils. Fossils can tell us amazing secrets as stories! Fossils will even tell us whether our home town was once an ocean-bed or a rainforest.
- Do you know how fossils are made? What imaginary things can fossils tell us?
- On your own, or in a group, write out the following lines and complete them. This becomes verse one.
- Add your own stone-bones lines to create verse two, let your poems describe how they feel, what they look like, how they make you feel.



Stone-bones tell us...

Stone-bones show us...

Stone-bones make us...

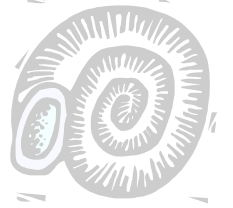
Stone-bones teach us...

Stone-bones...

Stone-bones...

Stone-bones...

Stone-bones...



WEEK 5: Warm-Up: *Creating characters* (Suitable for ONSITE)

Resources: copies of the Palladium Bridge graffiti initials below; copies of the 'cut-out character-sheet' & questions



.....
A. May 1897

J Dowling 1896

Maxwell 1894
.....

M. Mulcally 1953

C.P. 1931

J.M. 1949
.....

Sid Hippisly 1809

D White 1828

M Hughes 1981
.....

T BURI 1897

M Butler 1839

D Hall 1946
.....

G LECLERIC1893

Maude 1890

R.W. 1904
.....

E.R. Henderson 1968

M.I. 1833

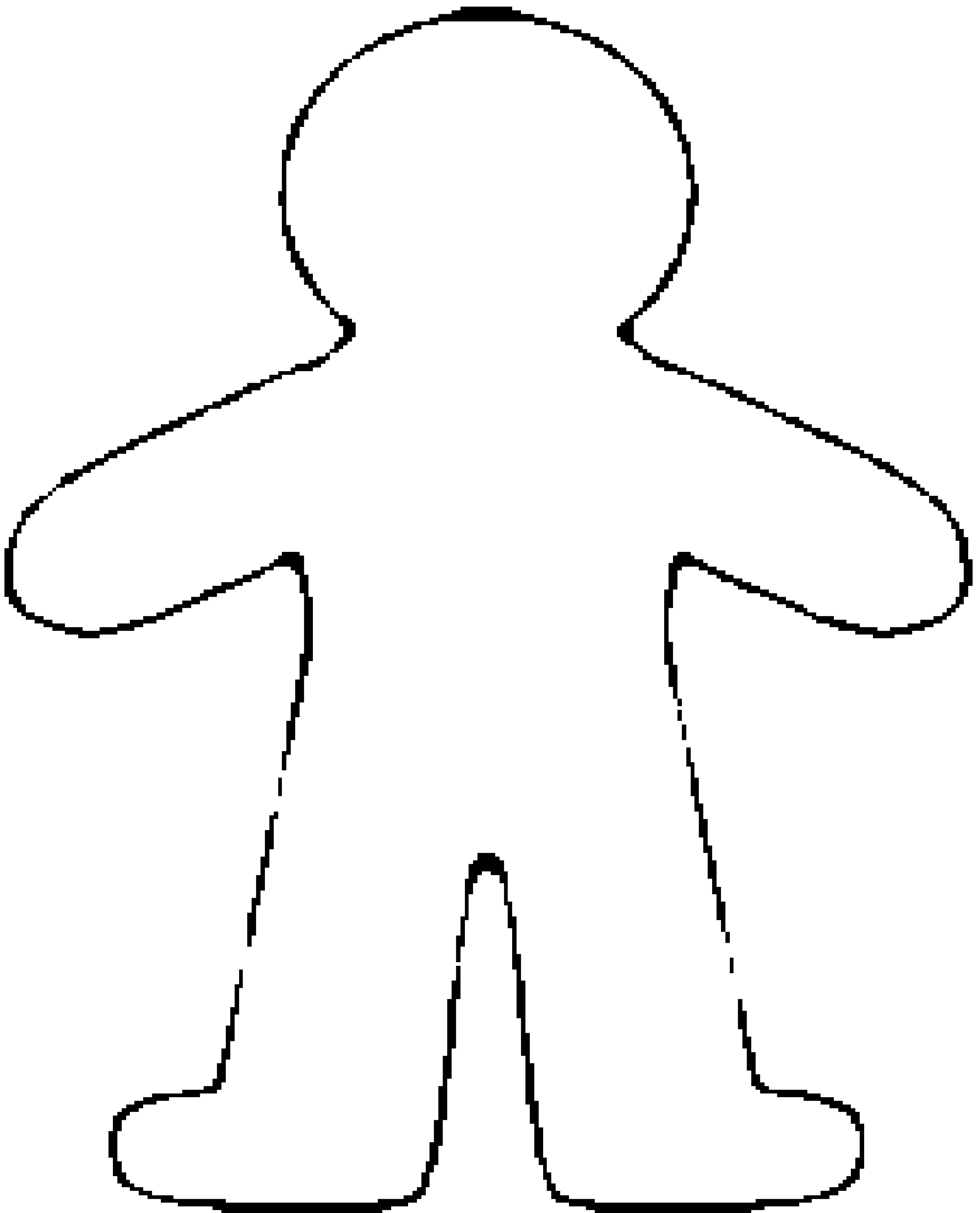
King 1896
.....

G. Thornhill 1865
.....



Pick your palladium bridge initials from the hat, then fill your cut-out character with answers to these questions:

- What is my name? ○ Am I tall or short? ○ What colour is my hair? ○ What can I see from the bridge?
- Where was I born? ○ What's my job? ○ How old am I? ○ Why am I on the bridge today? ○ Am alone?
- Am I rich or poor? ○ What is my favourite place? ○ Describe something about me. ○ What's my home like?
- How were these initials carved? ○ What time of day was my name carved on this bridge? ○ What was the weather like? ○ What do I want for my life?



WEEK 5: Main Activity: *On the Bridge* (Suitable for ONSITE)

Resources: postcards of the Palladium Bridge (if not in the park, photos of the graffiti).

The character you created was based on the initials of a real person. Travel back in time and step into their shoes. Imagine them on the bridge... their hands touching the stone your hands touch; their feet walking where you walk.

What sort of day do you think it was...? Perhaps they ran onto the bridge to shelter from the rain. Perhaps the park was white with snow. Perhaps it was summer and they had a picnic by the lake.

Using a postcard of the bridge, write a message from them – to you! Address it to yourself, either to your home or school. Sign the postcard with their initials.

Your postcard message from the past has to be short. What might your character want to share with you about their moment-in-time?

You can either write a straight message, or you might want to try an acrostic poem. An acrostic is created by writing a short word down the left-hand side and starting each line with that letter. You might use your character's name, or a short word like these:

PARK, BRIDGE, PAST, HULLO.

Here's an example of an acrostic poem:

Tell me where you are, stranger.
I am here on a bridge,
Many years apart, but sharing this park.
Everyone here sends their love.

WEEK 6: Warm-Up: *Collecting Words* (Suitable for ONSITE)

Resources: word-collection boxes below



Fill these word-boxes with the outdoors. On a real walk, (or closing your eyes and remembering a woodland walk, try to notice something no one else will.

Colours	
Shapes	
Sounds	
Textures	
On the ground	
Animal name	
Plant name	

Anything else you notice?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

WEEK 6: Main Activity: *Mystery Poem*

Resources: copies of word-search puzzle (see attached PDF – be sure to remove the answers to the puzzle!).

See how many words you can find in the word-search puzzle and write them down here:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Add these words to the words you gathered in your real (or virtual walk in the warm-up activity).

In pair, or on your own, write a poem, using as many of the words as you can! Don't think too hard; just let the ideas come from the words.

Development:

The activities in 'Poetry in the Park' are infinitely adaptable. They can feature your local place-names, landmarks as well as the geological history of area. Many museums, galleries and rangers' centres would be happy to display postcards sent from local schools. Prior Park Bridge is famous for its ancient graffiti, but the 'character-creation' activities could easily be in response to name sourced from local records (museums or local historians, may well supply you with a list).

Resources

(i) Books:

Yates, C: *Jumpstart: Poetry in the Secondary School* Poetry Society, 1999

Zielgler, A: *The Writing Workshop Vol 1*

Teachers & Writers Collaborative, 1981

Brownjohn, S: *Does it Have to Rhyme?* Hodder & Stoughton, 1980

Marzan, J (ed): *Luna, Luna: Creative Writing ideas from Spanish, Latin American and Latino Literature* Teachers and Writers Collaborative, 2000

(ii) Internet:

www.poetrysociety.org Teaching ideas and general information about poetry in the UK.

www.booktrust.org.uk Children's Laureate Website: The Poetry Friendly Classroom.

www.poetrybooks.co.uk Children's Poetry Bookshelf (and the 'T.S. Eliot Shadowing Scheme' for secondary schools)

www.poetryarchive.org An invaluable site for work in the classroom, featuring live readings of contemporary poets. Includes a specific area for teachers and pupils.