



Quarrybrook

EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION CENTER

Program Title: **Playing with Poetry**

Audience: 6th-8th grade students

Program Theme: Observing the natural world from a variety of angles and perspectives offers unique inspiration for creating poetry.

Program Goals: Students will challenge their current perceptions of the environment by exploring Nature through different lenses, at several activity stations along the trail. Through personal observation and group experiences, students will collect and record information, emotional responses, and spontaneous ideas in take-home field journals. Students will be encouraged to pay attention to small details they might otherwise miss and begin to think about how they would describe an object, space, or emotion in a new and meaningful way. Their notes and experiences will support them in creating an original work of poetry.

Common Core: Writing Standard #3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

Objectives:

- **What are the objectives?** Students will conduct close observations of the flora, fauna, and landscapes found along the trail, while also observing sounds and sensations present in the environment. They will explore the use of imagery and creative wording to convey the tone, mood, or feeling of a place or thing. Students will actively engage in activities that will help them develop a word bank and a collection of ideas, points of view, and multiple perspectives to help them craft a poem. Students will begin to write an original piece of poetry inspired by their surroundings and personal experiences at Quarrybrook.
- **How will they be measured?** Student teams will successfully complete the challenges at each activity station. Students will record personal observations and ideas in field journals. Students will verbally share some of their observations and engage in group discussion. Students will begin to write a piece of poetry.

Program Outline:

Activity 1: PLAYING WITH PERSPECTIVE (40 min.) – This activity is designed to challenge students' assumptions about Nature and their current ways of observing the world. Task cards found along the trail will direct students to complete an action or make an observation. Often, they will be asked to view an object one way and then view it again from a different angle. Students will be given field journals to record their observations and impressions, and to begin assembling a creative word bank.



Teachers will be asked to split students into small teams that will travel together to the different activity stations. Teachers and other adults will be helpful in guiding the teams through the different challenges as needed. Teachers are always welcome to interject with meaningful connections back to the classroom or pose additional questions as we go.

Activity 2: POETRY READING AND ADJECTIVE GAME (20 min.) – We will discuss briefly how different people perceive things in very different ways, and how that can be a good thing! Poets are people who see things in very creative and interesting ways. Then we will read aloud a poem by Mary Oliver and encourage a discussion on the imaginative ways she describes objects and places, focusing on particular words and phrases that convey tone, mood, and symbolism. This will lead us into a fun adjective game where students are challenged to think of creative one-word descriptions for a fast-moving object.



Teachers will be helpful in encouraging the students to participate in a discussion of the poem and its component parts. Teachers are also asked to participate in the adjective game with the students, to offer useful, creative words for their resulting wordbank of adjectives and similes.

Activity 3: OBSERVATION SOLOS AND WRITING TIME (60 min.) – As we continue on our woods walk, students will have the opportunity to think on their own about how they might apply some of the words, phrases, and ideas generated during the first two activities to the forest around them. Once we reach our destination, we will explain to the students that they are going to spend the next 15 minutes on their own to allow for personal observations and quiet reflection. They will have the choice of doing a “silent solo sit” in the immediate area, or joining a “silent solo hike,” where students will be in a single-file line and spaced several paces apart, silently walking along the trail. During this solo time they will be silently observing the world around them. They can record notes in their journals if they wish, in words or images. Upon completion of this solo time, we will gather the group together and let the students share some of their thoughts and reflections. They will then have time to begin writing their poems.



Teachers will be needed to help reinforce the code of silence that is so important in achieving the solo experience. During the writing stage, teachers are welcome to wander among their students and check in with them or give them space, as they see fit.

Conclusion/Wrap-up: At the end of the writing time, the full group will gather together to hear from the students about their experiences, and to give them the opportunity to read their poems to the group. We will finish with another poem by Mary Oliver. This is always a very inspiring and positive day for everyone!