

# Minnesota Writing Project

--- Demonstration Lesson ---

**Title:** Pond Poetry      An Outdoor observational writing lesson.

**Grade appropriate:** All    **Approximate Length of time to complete lesson/unit:** One week

**Learning objectives and significance of lesson:**

- Bring an Outdoor Observational Writing Lesson to your students, at any age, with the use of our sense of sight, smell, sound and feeling.
- Pure Observation: Nothing goes with the students to the viewing, just their bodies and their senses.
- Quiet observation skills at full capacity.
- Recognition that observing nature is a wonderful way to engage students and motivate them to not only observe through their senses but then write about the experience.
- We produced poetry that we constructed on a scroll to be given as a gift.

**Brief summary/outline:**

(Is this lesson an intro? middle? end? All or part of a unit? Does it scaffold a certain learning?)

This was an end of the year project I used with my fourth grade class. I had 31 students out on this lesson and we went to the nature center behind our school. Prior knowledge was in place and had been taught, practiced and applied. Prior to this lesson, we had practiced observing and writing in detail about the student's observations.

We were outside for about 45 minutes on a floating dock over a pond. The Writing Institute demonstration was done with the use of a video due to time and environmental restraints.

Here is the video link used: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImThBvu32Iw>

I would play the video through twice to get better visual context.

**Outline: My Fourth Grade Lesson Plan**

**Phase 1:** 30-45 minutes sitting on a pond floating dock. Students sat single file next to one another in a straight row down the middle of the dock. They could observe both to their left and their right. Not talking was necessary but pointing out living creatures was used to communicate with in the group. I did this with 31 students at one sitting. Prior to going outside, the perimeters were set up and our focus was to gather mental observations using our 4 senses: sight, smell, sound and feeling.

**Phase 2:** Walking back to the classroom, students discussed their observations making use of their 4 senses.

**Phase 3:** Back in the classroom, notebooks out, the students made notes in the 4 senses boxes and then we held a brainstorm session with the entire class with the recording of words on the board. See Sample A

Then we moved into a Big W Poem: Who, What, Where, When & Why. See Sample B

**Phase 4:** From this, we wrote the draft poem making changes and revisions, again collaboratively. See Sample C.

**Phase 5:** The students wanted to do another short poem and include the muskrat so we did an action poem.

**Phase 6:** We brainstormed the Big W again. See Sample D.

**Phase 7:** We wrote the draft poem making changes and revisions as before. See Sample E.

**Phase 8:** The making of the scroll: We went outside and collected 2 flat pieces of dead wood each. They had to look for the flattest ones they could find so they could glue them down.

We then went and they chose their color of roller paper and colored writing papers. They could jazz up their scrolls as they wanted. Some cut edges, some tore them, and some used one colored paper while some used many and so on. They glued the papers in place. We let them dry overnight.

**Phase 9:** They wrote out both their poems in pencil on the scrolls. They edited and then peer edited. Once it was alright they went over their writing in ink and added picture drawings. They glued on the two sticks and set them out to dry overnight. At this point I walked around and graded their work.

**Phase 10:** They made their choice of ribbon or yarn, rolled the scrolls up and tied them for their final product.

### **Related Resources:**

**Last Child in the Woods by Richard Louv**

**Moon Journals; writing, art and inquiry through focused nature study by Chancer & Rester-Zodrow**

**Books to use with students: A Drop of Water by Walter Wick and Salmon Forest by David Suzuki**

**Email me for copies of the "Samples" listed above.**

### **Possible extensions or adaptations for different purposes/student needs:**

I suggest that you only use the video if you absolutely can't get outside. Also you could use it as a beginning lesson to preview outdoor observations but it would have to be scaffolded prior to use.

Please go outside. Observing through a window removes the element of realism.

Remember: Students can have a wonderful outdoor experience even on a small patch of green grass. It really doesn't take much if you set it up right. Go outside, it is a natural learning environment for us all.

**For additional information, contact:**

**Pamela Doerr: [pameladoerr@gmail.com](mailto:pameladoerr@gmail.com)**