

**Topic**  
Poetry

**Grades**  
PreK-5

**Site**  
Indoors

**Duration**  
30 minutes (minimum)

**Materials**

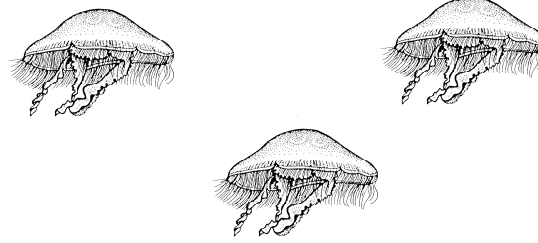
- **Poetry Styles and Examples**
- Aquarium, aquarium web cam or ocean-themed images
- Chart paper for creating word lists
- Science notebooks or writing paper
- Drawing materials (crayons, colored pencils, markers, paper)

**Vocabulary**  
metaphor, poetry, simile

**National Science Education Standards**  
*Science as Inquiry* (K-4)  
Abilities necessary to do scientific inquiry

*Life Science* (K-4)  
Characteristics of organisms

## Ocean Poetry



### Overview

*What rhymes with sea star? What do you notice about a kelp forest habitat? In this activity, students make observations of ocean animals and habitats in aquarium exhibits, on web cams or in other nonfiction resources. The students then use their findings to write and illustrate poems.*

### Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Make careful observations and record data in a notebook.
- Identify and write various styles of poetry.
- Understand there are many different animal adaptations and ocean habitats.

### Background

**Poetry** can be used as a tool for focusing observations, developing content vocabulary and reinforcing science concepts while developing language art skills. Poems can be written using a variety of styles. Some styles may be used to convey a message or express a feeling. Others articulate observations. **Similes, metaphors** and other literary devices may be used. Some styles may include rhyming, like limericks. Others may be organized by line length and number of syllables, like Haiku or Quinzaine. See **Ocean Poetry Styles and Examples** for more information.

An aquarium lends itself to both poetry and science concepts. It is a place where students are able to observe ocean organisms they may not be able to see otherwise. They can make connections between habitats, body shapes, adaptations and diets. They can identify:

- living organisms versus nonliving objects (corals compared to rocks)
- animals versus plants (an anemone looks like a plant but is an animal)
- animal adaptations (Does a hermit crab grow a shell or borrow one? How do sea stars stay "stuck" to rocks? Why do some fish hang motionless in the water and others "speed" around?)
- life cycles (What does a baby jelly look like? How are seahorses born?)

An aquarium also can be inspirational and a natural source of descriptive words and feelings.



## VOCABULARY

**Metaphor:** a way of describing something by calling it something else; “The fish is a race car that speeds by all the others.”

**Poetry:** literary work in verses, often lyrical or inspirational

**Simile:** a way of describing something by calling it something else using the words “like” or “as”; “The jelly is like a dancer, swaying back and forth with the waves.”

## Procedure

1. **SHARE THE SCIENCE THEME WITH STUDENTS.**  
Choose a theme or science learning goal for your students’ ocean poetry. Animals, habitats, adaptations, life cycles, even living and nonliving may be potential themes. Share with students and ensure understanding (new content vocabulary, science concepts and so on). For example, if “adaptations” is your focus, define adaptations and ask them to give you examples.
2. **REVIEW POETRY STYLES WITH STUDENTS.**  
Use **Ocean Poetry Styles and Examples** to select the poetry style you would like students to use or have students choose one. Read a few examples to the class.
3. **PRACTICE MAKING OBSERVATIONS AND BUILD VOCABULARY.**  
Show students an object or animal image and have them describe it. You may have them write the words in a notebook. Help students generate more examples of descriptive words. See catalog verse on **Ocean Poetry Styles and Examples** for ideas.
4. **OBSERVE OCEAN HABITATS AND ORGANISMS.**  
Take students to an aquarium or project the view from one of Monterey Bay Aquarium’s web cams ([www.montereybayaquarium.org](http://www.montereybayaquarium.org)). You may also have students look at ocean-themed books and magazines. Depending on your theme, you may guide their observations with questions such as; *What do you notice about the habitat? What do you notice about the animals’ behaviors? How might an animal’s behavior help it survive?* Older students can record their observations in a science notebook.
5. **STUDENTS WRITE OCEAN POEMS.**  
Encourage students to refer to their notebooks and use actual observations to create their poems. You may allow them to include creative or imaginary aspects, too, but if so, ensure students know the difference between real and imaginary. If there is time, pass out art supplies for students to illustrate their poems.
6. **STUDENTS SHARE POEMS.**  
Have students volunteer to read their poems to the class or share them with a partner. You may want to display the finished poems in the classroom.

## Extensions

- Students can read their ocean poems to another class.
- Celebrate an ocean poetry day with poetry readings and artwork.
- Invite a local poet to visit your school. Ask the poet to teach a new style of poetry.

## Resources

### Books

*Animal Acrostics.* Hummon, David. Dawn Publications, 1999.  
*In the Swim.* Florian, Douglas. Harcourt Brace & Company, 1997.  
*Sea Searcher's Handbook.* Monterey Bay Aquarium, 1996.  
*Young Explorer's Guide to Undersea Life.* Armstrong, Pam. Monterey Bay Aquarium Press, 2001.

### Websites

*Giggle Poetry.* [www.gigglepoetry.com](http://www.gigglepoetry.com)  
 Includes favorite kids' poems, mini-lessons on writing a variety of poems and student poetry contests.

*Monterey Bay Aquarium.* [www.montereybayaquarium.org](http://www.montereybayaquarium.org)  
 Webcams and other information about ocean animals, habitats and video clips.

*Poetry Teachers.* [www.poetryteachers.com](http://www.poetryteachers.com)  
 Instructions on how to write poetry, poetry examples, contests for students and more.

Rhyme Zone. [www.rhymezone.com/](http://www.rhymezone.com/)  
 Find rhyming words and synonyms.

## Standards

### California Science Standards

Grade K: 2a, b, c; 4a, b, e  
 Grade 1: 2a, b, c, d; 4a, b  
 Grade 2: 2a, b, c, d; 4d  
 Grade 3: 3a, b, c, d; 5b  
 Grade 4: 2b; 3a, b; 6a  
 Grade 5: 2a, b, c, d; 6a

### California Language Arts Standards

Reading  
 Writing  
 Written and Oral English Language Conventions  
 Listening and Speaking

### Head Start Child Outcomes Framework

- Demonstrates increasing ability to attend to and understand conversations, stories, songs and poems.
- Understands an increasingly complex and varied spoken vocabulary.
- Develops increased ability to observe and discuss common properties, differences and comparisons among objects and materials.
- Expands knowledge of and abilities to observe, describe and discuss the natural world, materials, living things and natural processes.

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**THE MISSION OF THE  
 MONTEREY BAY  
 AQUARIUM  
 IS TO INSPIRE  
 CONSERVATION OF THE  
 OCEANS.**

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### ELL TIPS

Provide visual scaffolding for English Language Learners to develop new vocabulary.

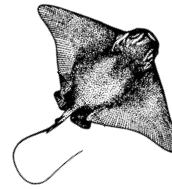
Post new vocabulary on a classroom word wall and be sure to include images with the new words.

## Poetry Styles and Examples

### Acrostic

A short poem in which each letter of the title is used as the first letter for one line. The poem does not need to rhyme.

Rays, lurking in the sand,  
 Are Amazon River dwellers.  
 You'll have to look closely to  
 See these well-camouflaged, ocellated swimmers!



### Alliteration

Poem uses repetition of a sound within a word, line or phrase. Examples are tongue twisters and nursery rhymes.

**J**ellies water  
 ourney is more  
 ive than jolt  
 iggle than jag.  
 ellies jam through water like  
 azz!

**S**wimming in the sea  
 oupfin sharks' tails  
 swish,  
 earching hungrily for a  
 quid and fish dish!

### Catalogue Verse

Brainstorm verbs that describe actions of ocean animals. Add "-ing" to the verbs and list them in a column.

#### Example verb list:

Breathing	Flowing	Sleeping
Camouflaging	Fluttering	Smashing
Clinging	Grasping	Smelling
Closing	Grazing	Splashing
Crashing	Gulping	Stinging
Crawling	Hiding	Swallowing
Diving	Holding	Swimming
Eating	Lurking	Touching
Eyeing	Munching	Walking
Floating	Opening	Wobbling



Clinging  
 Crawling  
 Gripping  
 Turning  
**Sea Star**

### Japanese Haiku

A three-line, unrhymed poem often written about nature and expressing a feeling.

#### Structure:

Line 1: five syllables  
 Line 2: seven syllables  
 Line 3: five syllables

#### Turtle and Trash

Sunshine warms the back  
 of a bobbing sea turtle.  
 Plastic drifts nearby.

#### Zebra Shark

Night hunter of prey  
 squeezes into crevices.  
 Feelers find their mark.

## Poetry Styles and Examples

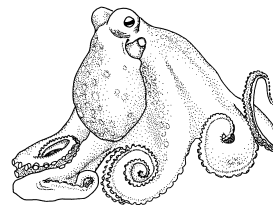
### A B C Poem

Choose three components to become the three-line poem. In the example: A= animal, B=behavior, C=color but the B could be body part or the C could be camouflage.

**Octopus** (Animal)

**Looking** (Behavior)

**Red** (Color)



### Quinzaine

An unrhymed verse of fifteen syllables distributed among three lines. The first line makes a statement. The next two lines ask a question related to the statement. This style of poetry integrates inquiry-based teaching with language arts and science. Students then research their questions.

#### **Structure:**

Line 1: seven syllables

Line 2: five syllables

Line 3: three syllables

Hungry catsharks prowl at night.  
Can they see in the  
dark ocean?

Octopi snug in their dens.  
Will they find their prey  
or just hide?

### Participation Poem

All students contribute to this type of poem, creating a class poem. For example "An animal is ..." Students write several endings to this phrase and then choose their favorite one. Have students add their ending to the poem on a class poster decorated with their favorite ocean animals or habitat items.



### Picture Poems

Draw an outline of the shape of an animal you observed. Fill the outline with descriptive words or phrases.

### Window Poems

Window poems are simple verses that are inspired by the picture caught within a window frame. This format can be adapted for use in the aquarium by having students choose one exhibit "window" to observe for several minutes. Students jot down their observations and impressions, and then compose a poem from their ideas.