

This Common Home

Pause, Listen, Create, Write, Publish



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This Common Home

Dear poets,

The poems in this year's Mindful Poetry Moments turn their attention to our relationship with the natural world. They are poems of beauty, honesty, and care that invite us to reconnect with nature as a place of profound belonging, intelligence, and kinship—a shared home for humans and the more-than-human alike. These poems remind us that we are deeply intertwined with the natural world, not separate from it, and that care—for ourselves, one another, and the earth—is a practice we can return to again and again. Expansive enough to hold the depth and variety of human emotions, they ask us to slow down, listen closely, and notice what stirs in us when we give our attention to the world around us. In doing so, they encourage us to approach life with tenderness, curiosity, and reverence, imagining together how we might live more attentively and lovingly within it.

—Eddie Gonzalez, Mindful Poetry Moments 2026 Curator

Artistic responses by Lyric Morris-Lachaw





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2026 Playlist: This Common Home

**POETRY SELECTED BY
EDDIE GONZALEZ**

Week 1, March 30-April 3rd
Poem: "Heliophilia"
Poet: Aimee Nezhukumatathil

Week 2, April 6-10th
Poem: "Lullaby for the Grieving"
Poet: Ashley M. Jones

Week 3, April 13-17th
Poem: "Quemado, Texas"
Poet: Analicia Sotelo

Week 4, April 20-24
Poem: "If Fire"
Poet: Jake Skeets



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This poetry lesson was created by The Well offering students and teachers alike the chance to pause and reflect on poetry's ability to encounter ourselves, the world, and the mystery of each other.

Poem: "Heliophilia"*

Poet: Aimee Nezhukumatathil, read by Eddie Gonzalez

Published: [You Are Here: Poetry in the Natural World](#), edited by Ada Limón in 2024

"Heliophilia" is a word that describes the "desire to stay in the sun" and the "love of sunlight." The speaker of this poem explores her affection for sunlight and how much the natural world loves the sun, too.

DAY 1: Today, let's just settle in and notice: how does this poem make you feel?

DAY 2: Heliophilia means the "love of sunlight." When you listen to the poem today, imagine you are a plant or flower in the sun. Feel your body rise and receive the warmth of the sun.

DAY 3: The poet writes about flowers, butterflies, and seals "lounging / on a rock" all enjoying the sun. Today while listening, those creatures all together on a rock, enjoying the sun.

DAY 4: The poet says that loving the sunlight "is nothing to be ashamed of." Feel your own sense of pride as you listen to this poem today.

DAY 5: The poet writes about how the sun and other types of light are "easy to love." Today, think about all things in your life that are also easy to love.

ABOUT THE POET

AIMEE NEZHUKUMATATHIL is an American poet and essayist. She is author of four poetry collections. This poet draws upon her Filipina and Malayali Indian background to give her perspective on love, loss, and land.

POETRY PROMPT

An ode is a lyrical poem of praise, glorifying or celebrating a person, object, event, or idea with deep feeling. Heliophilia is an ode the sun and light.

Write an ode that describes your own affection for something in nature. It could be the sun, the moon, clouds, rain, anything. When writing, also consider how this thing affects not just you, but other people, animals, plants, and things in the world.



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Heliophilia

BY AIMEE NEZHUKUMATATHIL

Desire to stay in the sun / love of sunlight

Don't call it an affliction –
call it *affection*. I'd stay under
the sun all day, never hiding
under a copse of trees if I knew

I wouldn't burn, but isn't it
more accurate – that I burn
for the sun? To be pulled to the light
is nothing to be ashamed of: look

at flowers, butterflies, seals lounging
on a rock. Rhubarb sings in dark gardens
but truth be told it sounds more like
a wet cracking and popping. I think

it secretly counts the hours till it can turn
towards the sun again. For me, the sun
has always been easy to love, as easy
as it is to love whatever small light

bees bestow on fallen leaves – easy
to love the light they give just before
they crawl into a honey-hungry sleep,
just before the first fall of snow.



Artistic response by Lyric Morris-Lachaw

from *You Are Here: Poetry in the Natural World*
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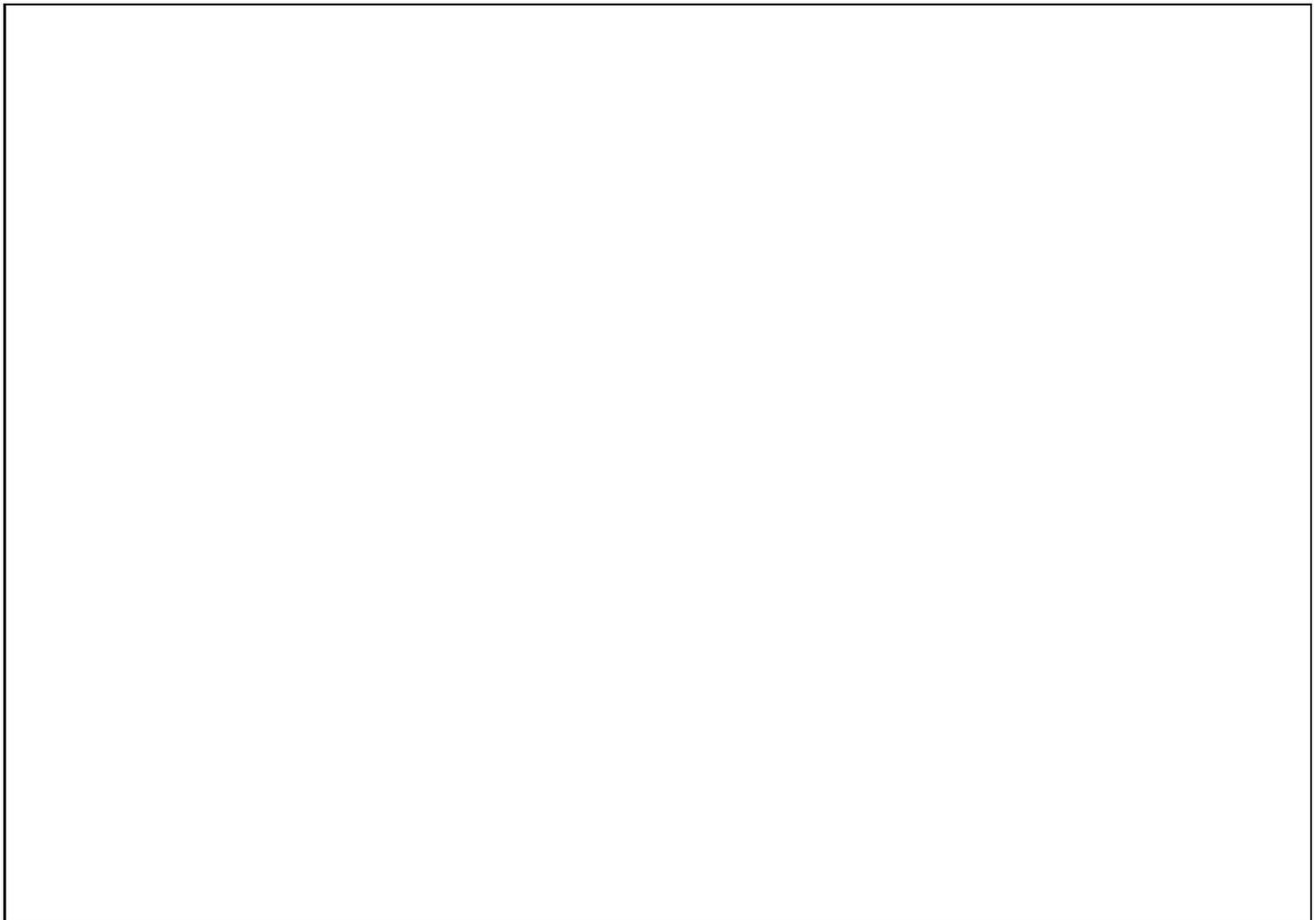
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RESPONSE/PRACTICE

“Heliophilia” invites the reader to take a moment to look at the natural world around them.

Create a drawing inspired by the plants and animals in nature that you love. Notice the smallest details and include them into your artwork. Think about how the sunlight filters through the branches of a tree or the way water ripples as it dances through a stream. By turning your attention to these small moments, you are taking a mindful pause to find deep affection and love for all the beauty surrounding you.



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BONUS ACTIVITIES



ART ACTIVITY

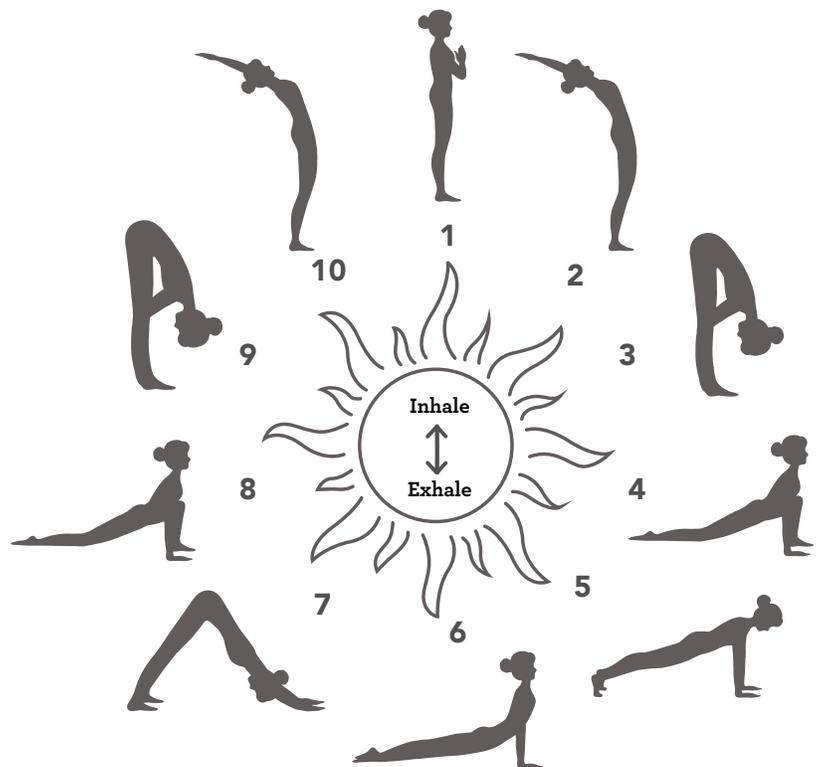
Shadow play- Sunlight is constantly creating interesting shadows as it moves through the sky. We invite you to collect natural objects to create "shadow artwork." Once you have your object, hold it above your paper and sketch the shapes- or work with a partner to help hold your object!

MOVEMENT ACTIVITY

Try a Sun Salutation! This sequence of moves is a "salute to the sun," and is used in yoga as a warmup to stretch the body and create a flow of movement and breath that can be thought of as a moving meditation.

Breath Challenge:

For each movement, try to inhale on the expanding moves and exhale on the contraction or folding moves.





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Poem: "Lullaby for the Grieving"*

Poet: Ashley M. Jones, read by Eddie Gonzalez

Published: You Are Here: Poetry in the Natural World, edited by Ada Limón in 2024

Ashley M. Jones wrote this poem while hiking at Sipsey Wilderness, a national forest in Alabama. She says that the feeling of missing her father was very similar to the difficult hiking path to the river. Even though she was afraid and tired on her path, she also saw images of hope.

DAY 1: Today, let's just listen. How does this poem make you feel?

DAY 2: A lullaby is a song that's traditionally sung to children to help them sleep. As you listen today, let the calming nature of this poem relax you for the rest of your day.

DAY 3: The Sipsey Wilderness is a national forest in west central Alabama with many creeks, rivers, and waterfalls. Imagine you are on such a path. Visualize all of the natural world you see and hear around you in this poem.

DAY 4: When Ashley M. Jones wrote this poem, she was thinking about her father. Today, think of someone you love, and keep them in mind as you listen today.

DAY 5: Often when we sing a lullaby, we rock the baby back and forth. As you listen, rock side to side, or front to back, and notice how you feel.

ABOUT THE POET

ASHLEY M. JONES is an American poet and activist. She is the first Black Poet Laureate of Alabama (2022-2026) and the youngest person to hold this position. She often writes about the Black experience in the South.

POETRY PROMPT

Can a lullaby be birdsong? Ashley M. Jones mentions the faraway birds that she hears on her hike and "the safety / in their promise of song." Now imagine yourself hiking through the woods. You might be scared, even sorrowful — until you hear those birds like the poet does.

Write a lullaby from the perspective of a bird. You can write your song to baby birds, to the whole forest, or write it to yourself, promising safety, life, and hope.



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Lullaby for the Grieving

BY ASHLEY M. JONES

at the Sipsey River

make small steps.
in this wide place
there are signs of life
everywhere.
sharp spaces, too:
the slip of a rain-glazed rock
against my searching feet.
small steps, like prayers –
each one a hope exhaled
into the trees. please,
let me enter. please, let me
leave whole.
there are, too, the tiny sounds
of faraway birds. the safety
in their promise of song.
the puddle forming, finally,
after summer rain.
the golden butterfly
against the cave-dark.
maybe there are angels here, too –
what else can i call the crown of light
atop the leaves?
what else can i call
my footsteps forward,
small, small, sure?



Artistic Response by Lyric Morris-Lachaw

from *You Are Here: Poetry in the Natural World*
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RESPONSE/PRACTICE

Safety is a theme that comes up a few times in this poem. The poet searches her environment and finds safety in nature in the form of birdsong and a golden butterfly.

Take a moment to reflect on something in nature makes you feel safe. It could be the moss in a forest, a patch of wildflowers, or a calm stream. Draw these natural elements below in as much detail as you can.

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BONUS ACTIVITY

MOVEMENT ACTIVITY

Nature Walk Meditation

Using your 5 senses, quietly go on a walk outside while noticing the nature around you. After you return, think about your experience. Write your answers down or talk to a friend about what you experienced.

What insects did you see?
What surfaces did you feel?
What animals did you hear?
What plants did you smell?
What did you taste in the air?

ART ACTIVITY

Group Mandala Creation

A mandala is a circular structure with a design that radiates out symmetrically from the center. You can create a group mandala using only objects you find outside!

As a group, gather multiples of a few different natural objects. Then, begin to carefully place these objects in a circular pattern on a flat surface. Try your best to place objects in a sunburst orientation and evenly space them apart. Have fun adding your final touches as a group and take a moment to appreciate the beauty you created together!





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Poem: "Quemado, Texas"*

Poet: Analicia Sotelo, read by Eddie Gonzalez

Published: You Are Here: Poetry in the Natural World, edited by Ada Limón in 2024

The title of "Quemado, Texas" is the name of a small town right on the border of Texas and Mexico. When growing up, the poet Analicia Sotelo would frequently visit her grandparents in West Texas, never forgetting the wild landscape she saw. In the poem, her grandfather seems to be part of that landscape, too.

DAY 1: Today, let's just listen. How does this poem make you feel?

DAY 2: Today while listening, imagine the landscape Sotelo is describing: What does it *feel* like? Can you feel the warmth of this place?

DAY 3: The poet gives us several different images of the landscape she's in: the creatures and plants, the land and the river, and the different objects within it. Today, really try to see the images that the poet writes about in your imagination, almost as though you're painting or sketching those images in your mind.

DAY 4: The poem features a lot of different colors to help the reader really visualize the landscape. Notice all the different colors you hear, and see if you can visualize the objects and bright colors the poet suggests.

DAY 5: This poem is an ode to the place the poet was raised in and the people that helped raise her. After listening to this poem today, think about different people in your life and the places that they are connected to.

ABOUT THE POET

ANALICIA SOTELO is a poet from South Texas. She has written two collections of poetry.

POETRY PROMPT

What are you made of? Analicia Sotelo imagines the different parts of her grandfather as parts of the landscape itself: his boots have creatures inside, his bandana is connected to the river. The poet herself feels related to the sky.

Write a poem listing the different things in nature, connecting them with a part of your body: grass stains on your shoes, mud on your hands, rain on your head, anything. Try to include include all different types of elements in your nature self-portrait.



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Quemado, Texas

BY ANALICIA SOTELO

My grandfather vanished into the land of yellow jackets, swerving in their upper kingdoms. The land of the rattlers, ensconced in the cool of wide, flat rock. The dry land, where the grass is laden with a hungry hue and the mesquites now their time to burn is coming. My grandfather's outline is at the welding station. The butterflies, in cream and marigold, accost the air with a sentient beauty. The boots he wore harbor spiders in the living room. And his red paisley bandana, cured with sweat, calls the river line to attention. Today is a rare day. I have finally had the courage to tell him what the sky said to me all those years ago. That I am bound to its bloodline, though I can never know its true body. That I am, in essence, a peacock. Neither native nor foreign, just an iridescence doing what nature demands. "What a bunch of baloney," I hear him say with his signature humor, like a splash of grenadine, as the sun pours its gold silt throughout the valley.



**Artistic Response by
Lyric Morris-Lachaw**

from *You Are Here: Poetry in the Natural World*
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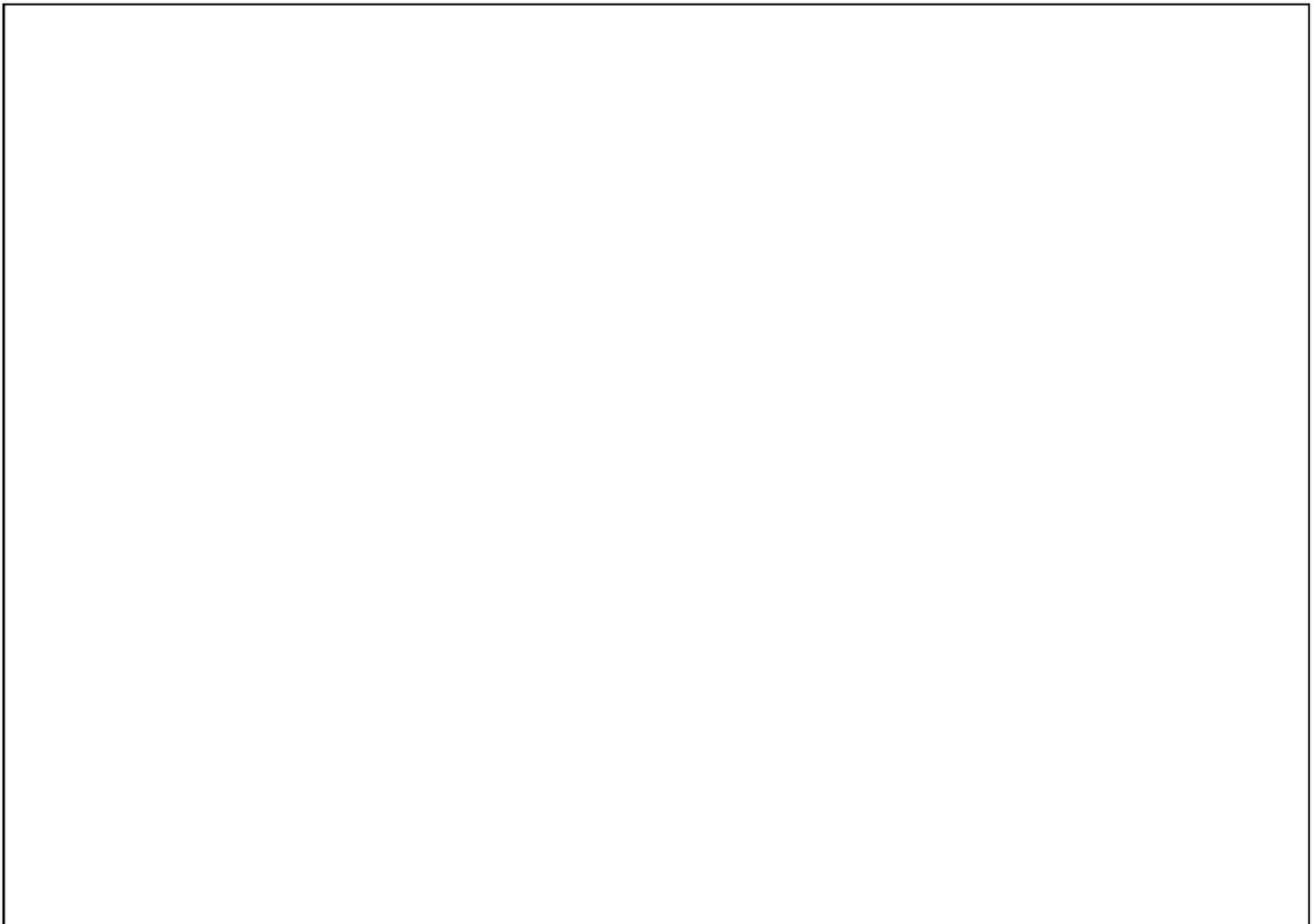
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RESPONSE/PRACTICE

What is someone made of? Analicia Sotelo thinks about this question with her grandfather in mind. Small details about the Texas landscape he lived in form important pieces of his portrait.

Below, draw the elements in nature that YOU are made of. Think about the landscape that you live in, and the small details in nature that feel connected to. Try your best to place these images all together to form your nature self portrait.



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Name _____

STUDENT POEM WORKSHEET

Use the mad libs below to create a nature poem about your own homeland.

_____ , _____
(city) (state)

I am from the land of _____ .
(noun)

The _____ land,
(adjective)

where the _____ roam
(noun, animal)

and the _____ grow.
(noun, plant)

The air around me feels _____
(adjective)

and it makes me want to _____ .
(verb)

I see the _____ in the sky
(noun)

and the _____ below me.
(noun)

I am from the family of _____ .
(noun)

I am part of the _____ world surrounding all of us.
(adjective)



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BONUS ACTIVITY

ART / MOVEMENT ACTIVITY

Photography Time Capsule

Go on a walk in a familiar place. This could be your home, your neighborhood, or a nearby park. While you walk around, take pictures (or make sketches) of your surroundings. Pay special attention to all of the corners or areas in these places that you've made memories in. Be sure to photograph these areas with those memories in mind. When you're finished, you can print these pictures out and place them together in a frame to create a time capsule. You'll be able to remember these areas even if the actual places change over time.



Photos by documentary photographer, Greg Miller. These images were taken in his hometown of Nashville, Tennessee. Greg took these photos to remember the town he grew up in even after it had changed since he'd moved away.



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Poem: "If Fire"*

Poet: Jake Skeets, read by Eddie Gonzalez

Published: You Are Here: Poetry in the Natural World, edited by Ada Limón in 2024

A sleeper fire is started when lightning strikes in areas with dry soil. The fire is able to smoulder for a time before becoming a wildfire. In 2025, the Rio Grande river has begun to face a water crisis, causing the land around it to be dry. This poem by Jake Skeets paints a picture of the current landscape of the American Southwest, showing us how precious life is around the area.

DAY 1: Today, let's simply listen. How does this poem make you feel?

DAY 2: This poem is about a wildfire in nature. Today while listening, imagine seeing or feeling the heat of such a large flame.

DAY 3: An ecosystem is a community where living things interact with each other. This poem is a look into the ecosystem of the southwest. Today while listening, try to visualize how interconnected the nature is around the Rio Grande.

DAY 4: The Rio Grande runs from the south of Colorado, through New Mexico, Texas, and Northern Mexico into the Gulf of Mexico. Today, see if you can imagine a river running through a desert across many states and countries while listening to the poem.

DAY 5: Today after listening to this poem, think about the natural landscapes that you're surrounded by in your own life, and how you want to protect them.

ABOUT THE POET

JAKE SKEETS is a Diné poet from Vanderwagen, New Mexico, currently serving as the third Navajo Nation Poet Laureate.

Jake Skeets has written about wildfires in the past in his poem "Anthropocenic."

POETRY PROMPT

Each stanza of this poem by Jake Skeets crawls slowly to the right, showing us visually how a fire might move through an environment.

Write a poem following a natural phenomena like wind, rain, clouds, wildfire. What parts of the landscape does it see? What kinds of animals and plants does it encounter? Let the stanzas and lines of the poem move along with this natural force.



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If Fire

BY JAKE SKEETS

river brush float on the Rio Grande in very little water
to the north a sleeper fire holdover from last season's wilds
bust sprout

flame crawl

the moon mistaken

for a hole in the sky :

if the next world
still deer soften
into field field field
meadow hawk
rodent nests
overgrown undergrowth

all tinder is white space
its span a mirror
your mouth around light



Artistic Response by
Lyric Morris-Lachaw

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RESPONSE/PRACTICE

In his poem "If, Fire," Jake Skeets describes fire using human-like qualities. The author personifies the flames, describing them as a "sleeper fire," a "wildfire," or even a "crawling fire." This concept is called personification. By giving natural elements human movements and moods, he makes the element feel alive.

Think about a natural phenomenon and give it a human trait. How does it move or act? Is the rain spitting? Is the wind dancing? Now, bring it to life! Draw your chosen natural element below portrayed with a human characteristic.

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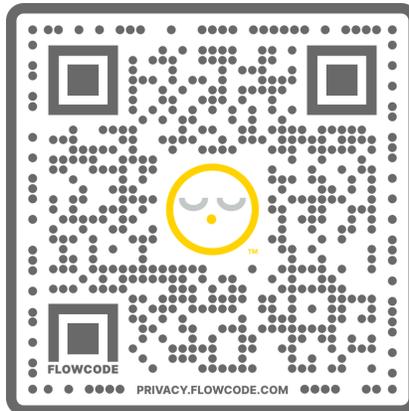
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