

NYBG

Poetry for Every Season: *Holiday Train Show*® Lesson Plan

Goal:

Explore the *Holiday Train Show*® at The New York Botanical Garden and the poems by Billy Collins on display. Consider the ways our surroundings can be interpreted in words, as in Collins' poems, and in the plant-material sculptures in the exhibition. Compose spontaneous poems inspired by art, nature, and the holiday season.

Objectives: *Students will. . .*

- *Observe and describe the Holiday Train Show® in consideration of:*
 - *color*
 - *form*
 - *light*
 - *movement*
 - *transformation of natural objects*
- *Share ideas with peers about the connections between the sculptures and organic shapes that may have inspired them or that surround them*
- *Find and identify plant parts within the sculptures*
- *Compose individual or collaborative poems reflecting experiences with nature, architecture, train travel, or the Holiday Train Show®*

Materials:

- Paper
- Pencils

Garden Etiquette Reminders: NYBG is a museum of plants. At a museum we have special behaviors. Remember:

- Stay on the paths
- Please don't pick plants or flowers
- Please don't touch artworks
- Please speak with your friends about what you notice and see
- Stay with your group

Suggested Activities:

Poetry Reading: Thinking and Drawing

Distribute Billy Collins' poem "Grand Central" or read it aloud. Give time for students to think about the poem and the place Collins is describing, then create a drawing of the setting they imagine. Alternatively, students can write their own story imagining the setting of the poem.

Exhibition Viewing: Close Looking

As your group explores the *Holiday Train Show*®, encourage students to look closely at the different elements of the exhibit:

- *What plant parts can you find?*
- *Which buildings do you recognize and why?*
- *How do the trains affect your impression of the landscape?*

Compose Original Poems (15 minutes)

Bring students to a quiet area. Invite them to reflect on their experiences observing the exhibition as well as the Billy Collins poem. Ask students to write down all of the words that came to mind as they absorbed the exhibit and walked on the Garden grounds. Extend the idea about they used illustrations and words to react to Billy Collins' poem; they can apply the same practice here to express a sense about their experiences here today.

Ask them, *"How might you express your experiences at the Garden today in a poem?"*

Pass out blank sheets of paper and build on ideas about the many elements of the exhibition and their feelings about the experience. "Encourage students to write poems based on favorite poems they admire (but using their own ideas and language) or to create a free form poem.

Poetry Read Aloud: Pair Share

After students write their poems, invite them to share their poems with a partner and recite them aloud.