

NYBG

POETRY FOR EVERY SEASON: HOLIDAY TRAIN SHOW® LESSON PLAN

GOAL

Explore the The New York Botanical Garden and poems by Billy Collins. Consider the ways our surroundings can be interpreted in words, as in Collins' poems. Compose spontaneous poems inspired by New York City and its landmarks.

Objectives:

Students will. . .

- Observe and describe the The New York Botanical Garden and New York City in consideration of:
 - movement
 - change
 - color
 - light
 - architecture
 - natural landscapes
 - being outdoors
 - transformation of natural objects
- Share ideas with peers about the connections they find between the Holiday Train Show® sculptures and organic shapes that may have inspired them or that surround them
- Identify New York City landmarks in the sculptures
- Compose individual or collaborative poems reflecting experiences with nature, architecture, or train travel in or around New York City

Materials:

- Paper
- Pencils
- Billy Collins Poem

Garden Etiquette:

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.

Garden Visit: Close Looking

As your group explores the Garden, (or views images the Holiday Train Show®, included in the Teacher Guide) encourage students to look closely at the different elements of the exhibition space:

- What plant parts can you find outdoors?
- Which buildings do you recognize? Where have you seen them?
- How do/would 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 Garden exhibition space as well as the Billy Collins poem. Ask students to write down all of the words that came to mind as they absorbed the exhibition space and walked throughout the Garden grounds. Extend the idea about how 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.