

Poetryclass Fresh Ideas for Learning from the Poetry Society

The Lake Isle of Innisfree

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KS2

Topics at a glance

- Descriptive language
- Imagery
- Sound

W.B. Yeats

2015 is the 150th anniversary of the birth of poet and playwright W.B. Yeats. Yeats was born in Ireland but spent the first sixteen years of his life in England, only returning to his native Sligo for holidays. Much later in his life he was in London when he heard tinkling water and was transported back to the small island of Innisfree on Lough Gill, a lake in Sligo, where he had dreamed of living when he was young. This experience inspired 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree', which is rich in its use of image, rhyme and rhythm to evoke sound and place.

This resource focuses on how Yeats uses sound and rhythm in 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree', culminating in pupils planning and performing their own soundscape performance of the poem.

Pre-reading activities

Ask pupils to make a list of city sounds and share them together.

Now play [this recording \(bit.ly/1c6WVYS\)](https://bit.ly/1c6WVYS) of water lapping on the shore of a lake to the class. Whilst they are listening, ask them to focus on the atmosphere the sounds create and how they make them feel. Share responses.

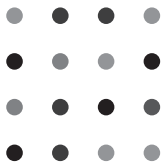


W.B. Yeats

In pairs ask pupils to discuss what other natural sounds might be heard on this island and jot them down. Get them to think of small and big sounds, close up and distant sounds. You might want to show [pictures of Innisfree](#) to help this (search for 'Lake Isle of Innisfree').

Listening to the poem

Play [this recording \(bit.ly/1F3pxuc\)](https://bit.ly/1F3pxuc) of Yeats reading the poem three times (start from 01:16 into the recording to just play the poem), focusing your class on the following elements.



First listen: Ask the class to listen carefully to the *ideas*. What is the main message of the poem, and the pictures or feelings the poem creates? Collate responses.

You may want to use the following questions as prompts or guides.

- Where is the poem set?
- How many different places does the speaker talk about?
- What information are we given about the island at different times of the day?
- What things does the speaker say he is going to do?
- What animals and insects are mentioned?

Second listen: This time ask the class to listen for *sounds*. These could be the sounds of the words in the poem, or noises it suggests through language. Listen to the audio and then share back what pupils heard.

- You could ask what a “bee-loud glade” sounds like before this listen.
- Check that the class know that a linnet is a small bird. What would this sound like?

Third listen: Ask pupils to focus on how Yeats *reads* the poem. How does the way he reads make them feel?

Preparing a performed reading

Place pupils in groups that will work well together. Give out copies of the poem (reproduced below) and ask them to read it through themselves.

Make sure they have their lists of city and island sounds and then give each group fifteen minutes to turn their copies of the poem into a reading accompanied by a soundscape.

Pupils need to decide who in their group will read the poem (this could be more than one person). The



The Lake Isle of Innisfree, on Lough Gill, Sligo.

reader/s should use speed, volume, tone of voice, and the swinging rhythm of Yeats’ lines to help bring out meaning and feeling.

The rest of the group will provide sound effects to enhance the poem. They need to decide whether they want to keep city sounds throughout or separate the town and country sections. Ask them to think about volume, foreground and background sounds.

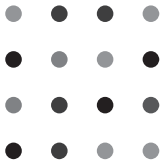
They can make all the sounds themselves or use musical instruments if available, or even use recorded sound effects (try www.audiomicro.com). If groups are small you could explore using sound editing software such as Garageband (www.apple.com/garageband) or LMMS (www.lmms.io) to build up the soundscapes.

When the class has had time to work on their poem, choose one group to perform.

Ask pupils to comment on what works well and how the sounds effects add to the poem. Use these comments for pupils to revise the work.

Extension ideas

Record or film the final outcomes. Produce a series of actions or frozen images to perform along with the recordings.



The Lake Isle of Innisfree

William Butler Yeats

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

