



Mother Earth Father Sky: Poems of Our Planet

Poems Selected by Jane Yolan
Created by Carol Ann Bloom/skydog

With her choice of 40 poems about the Earth by 35 different poets, Jane Yolan has put together a collection of verses that both celebrate Mother Earth and remind us of her fragile place in the universe. The poetry is presented under 3 themes: “Celebrate the Earth”, “Sacrifice the Earth”, and “Save the Earth.” The beauty and abundance of Earth has inspired such poets as Christina Rossetti, C. S. Lewis, John Keats, Carl Sandburg, and the Teton Sioux peoples to pay tribute to Earth’s many riches, warn of Earth’s many sacrifices, and offer hope for the future of our planet.

As Jane Yolan writes, “Millions of years have passed, but the Earth has remained a singular miracle. The breadth and depth of its abundance and beauty never ceases to amaze us. For years it has nurtured and protected us and inspired poets to write of its wonders. It is only through our efforts and those of the coming generations that our global habitat will endure.”

After reading the beautiful variety of poems in Mother Earth Father Sky: Poems of Our Planet stretch the book with poem writing and creating unique Earth-honoring ways to display your creations.

Your poem can rhyme or not, be serious or funny, long or short.

When you are the poet, you can write your poems any way you choose.

Don’t forget to title your poem at the top and write your name and the date at the bottom.

If you choose not to write a poem, you can select one or two of your favorite poems about Earth or a few of the inspiring poems in this book to use with these Book Stretching activities.

Before beginning any of these framing and displaying projects, write or copy your poem on a size of paper that will fit the frame or display you choose to make.

1 – Nature Frame

Cut a 2” wide frame to fit your poem from thin cardboard or poster board.

Place two holes in the top of the frame and tie a piece of string through the holes.

Use the string to hang your framed poem.

Cover the frame with one or a combination of the following attached with glue: pebbles, twigs, leaves, small seashells, or sunflower seeds.

Spread glue on one small section of the frame at a time. Place the items on top of the glue, filling in all the spaces.

You can also glue the items on the outer edge of the frame only.
Hang your poem on a wall, doorknob, or bulletin board. Enjoy a bit of nature as you read your own special words.

2 – Rock Writing and Seashell Scribbles

If you have written a short poem, you can write it directly on a rock or seashell.
Find a rock with a smooth side or a seashell with either a smooth top or a smooth inside (a clam shell works well).
Use a thin-tipped black marker to write your poem. If you choose, you can write your name and the date on the reverse side of the rock or the shell.
Put your Rock Writing or Seashell Scribble on a desk or table.
It also makes an interesting paperweight.

3 – Plant A Poem

Write your poem on a 3”x 3” piece of heavy paper.
Decorate the paper with a drawing or a line border if you choose.
Find a stick or piece of tree branch (about 10”- 12” long) on the ground.
*When collecting natural materials outdoors, take only those things you find on the ground. Never break branches from trees or disturb areas where Earth’s creatures may inhabit.
Use tape to attach the back of the paper to one end of the stick or branch.
Place the other end of the stick in the soil of one of your favorite potted plants.
Anybody who admires your plant can also read your poem.

4 – Poem Tree

Write your poem on a 3”x 5” card or piece of heavy paper.
Decorate the paper with a drawing or a line border if you choose.
Place one hole in the center of the top of the paper.
Find a Y-shaped branch on the ground.
Tie one end of an 18”- 24” piece of string or yarn to one side of the Y section. Wrap the string over and under the two sides of the Y shape, filling it in as much as you like.
String a few beads or bells on a separate piece of string and tie it on one end of the Y branch. Place string through the hole in your poem and tie it on the other end of the Y. If you have written more than one poem, hang several from the branch in the same way.
You can also tuck a feather, a dried flower, or a small branch into the string weaving.
Hang your Poem Tree on the wall, on your door, or place the straight end in a vase or pencil holder.
Enjoy your tree branch weaving and your poem hanging from it.

5 – Pressed Flower Frame

Write your poem in the center of any size paper you choose, leaving a 1”- 2” margin around the poem.
Pick several small flowers and leaves to press.

*Take flowers from your own garden or, with permission, from a friend's garden. If you pick wildflowers or flowers you find in a meadow or forest, pick only a few. Leave some flowers for others to enjoy, for animals habitats, and for reseeding.

Place the flower and leaves between two pieces of white construction paper. Put the paper holding the flowers inside a book and set something heavy (like a rock or a pile of books) on top of the book.

In about a week your flowers will be dry, pressed flat, and ready to use.

Carefully peel the flowers from the paper and arrange them in the margin around your poem. When you have an arrangement you like, begin gluing the flowers in place.

Use rubber cement or a glue stick to attach the pressed flowers and leaves. Lift each flower or leaf from the paper and place a small amount of glue directly on the paper.

Replace the flower or leaf on top on the glue.

When all the flowers and leaves are attached, gently rub away any excess glue around them with your fingertip.

Hang your Pressed Flower Frame, tack it on a bulletin board, put it in a book, or place it under a piece of glass on a table or dresser.

6 – Poem in the Grass

Make a grass frame for your poem by following the same directions for the Pressed Flower Frame. Rather than flowers and leaves, pick long blades of grass.

Press the grasses and use glue to attach them end to end to make a straight border in the margin around your poem.

7 – Poem in the Garden

Collect some large flat rocks and stones. Find a place in your garden or yard where you can arrange them in a straight or curvy line.

Use permanent markers to write your poem on the rocks. Write one verse on each rock or if your poem is short write a word or two on each rock.

You can also draw pictures around your words on the rocks: a sun or moon, clouds, flowers and leaves, trees, insects, birds, animals, or your own special designs.

Enjoy reading your own poem anytime you take a walk in your garden or yard.

Think of your poem as a gift for Mother Earth!

8 – Poem Sculpture

Write your poem on a 4" x 4" piece of heavy paper.

Find a rock you like about the size of your fist. The rock can be any shape, but should have one flat side.

Cut a piece of 18" x 24" wire. Use plain wire or colored wire found in craft stores. Thin wire can be cut with scissors. Ask an adult to cut heavier gauge wire with wire cutters.

Bend one end of the wire to make a spiral circle or several loops (like a row of paper clips might look).

Using the flat side of the rock as the bottom, wrap the straight end of the wire around the rock several times forming an X on the bottom and the top. Twist and bend the rest of the wire so it extends straight up from the rock with the curved, looped section at the top. Place your poem in the paper clip-like or spiral holder on the end of the wire.

You can twist a second piece of wire on the rock and attach a drawing on the wire holder end.

Or, if your poem is 2 or 3 verses, attach a wire for each verse.

9 – The Poem Is the Frame!

Use a pencil and a ruler to make a 1” margin on all four sides of a piece of paper.

In the center of the paper make a nature drawing, glue several pressed naturals (flowers, leaves, grasses), or attach a nature photo you have taken or found in a magazine.

If you want to try something different (and fun) make a bark rubbing or a leaf rubbing to attach in the center of the paper.

To make a Bark Rubbing, tape a piece of paper against a tree trunk. Using the side of a crayon, rub in one direction over the paper. The crayon will pick up the unique and beautiful textures in the bark. Do the same to make a Leaf Rubbing, placing the paper on the back of a leaf and rubbing with a crayon.

Trim around your tree or leaf rubbing and glue it in the center of the paper.

“Frame” whatever you have chosen with your poem by writing it in the 1” margin.

Begin writing at the top left hand corner of the paper. When you reach the right corner, turn the paper and continue writing. Turn the paper at each of the other two corners. If you reach the top left hand corner where you began your poem and you have more to write, simply begin a second line. Keep writing and turning the paper until you reach the end of your poem.

Instead of framing your poem, your poem is now the frame!

10 – Paper Bag Poem Journal

Make this fun journal with pages to both write your poems on and keep your poems (and other treasures of nature) inside.

You need 10 paper lunch bags, a hole punch, a pencil, a rubber band, and a 3”– 4” stick to construct your journal. Find the stick on the ground outdoors.

Hold the paper bags sideways with the bottoms to the left and the open end to the right.

Use a hole punch to place two holes about 2” apart in the bottom end of one bag.

Place this bag on top of each of the other 9 bags and use a pencil to mark where the holes will be. Use a hole punch and follow your pencil marks to place two holes in each of the 9 bags.

Stack the 10 paper bags, lining up the holes on the left side.

Push a loop from one end of the rubber band up through one set of holes (from bottom to top). Push the other looped end of the rubber band up through the other set of holes.

Place the stick through both loops of the rubber band to hold the bags together.

This is the front of your journal.

Decorate the front with a nature drawing or a poem.

Each bag is a two sided page with an opening on the right. Write your own Earth poems, copy some of your favorite Earth poems by other poets, or draw pictures on the fronts and backs of the bags.

Tuck things inside the bags such as other poems you write or find, things you find outdoors (small stones, seashells, leaves, flower petals, seeds, feathers, small branches or twigs), and nature photos and pictures. You can even tuck a pencil and paper inside one of the bags, so you can create your own Earth poems anywhere, anytime!