

WRITING THE
CLIMATE



Dawn Chorus Collective Project: Primary School Lesson Plan



CLIMATE
READING GROUP

Objectives:

- To contribute recorded words, lines and phrases to the Dawn Chorus collective sound poem project
- To introduce the idea of the ecology of the Dawn Chorus and connect more closely with the natural world
- To encourage listening and an auditory awareness of different sounds and words
- To extend vocabulary and instil confidence with language
- To model collective collaborative ways of working and thinking and participate in an international cultural project (newwritingnorth.com/dawn-chorus)

Ask children: who knows what the Dawn Chorus is?

Explain the Dawn Chorus – that in the Spring when the sun starts to rise and the light returns the birds wake up and sing themselves awake – like a big yawn and a stretch.

Group brainstorm to add to the explanation/description:

Do the children know the names of any birds they see or hear?

What might they be saying when they sing?

Why might they be happy?

Maybe they're saying *this is where I live*. Maybe they're inviting another bird to come and join them, to build a nest and lay some eggs. Maybe they're just happy to be alive – to have survived the cold and the hunger of the long night.

Complete explanation by listening to a recording of a Dawn Chorus

[youtube.com/watch?v=AFQByOoeG8M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFQByOoeG8M) (this RSPB YouTube recording also has a gentle slideshow which the children might appreciate and find helpful)

Ask children what it sounds like?

What words might they use to describe what they've heard?

Even though they might have seen the visuals, try to keep them in touch with the aural sense, focus on 'sound' words rather than 'sight' words.

Encourage the children to imagine what it might be like to wake up – like the birds – after a long night's sleep, into another day and looking forward to what's ahead.

What might the birds feel like? What would it be like to have beaks and wings? What might they hear? What do the children feel like when they wake up? What do they hear? What are the sensations in their bodies? Are they hot or cold? Fresh or achy? Hungry or thirsty? What do they look forward to at the beginning of the day?

Listen to the Dawn Chorus collective poem trailer

[youtube.com/watch?v=8Y4jsZ34Dzg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Y4jsZ34Dzg)

What are their favourite words in it?

Are there any new words for them? Explain, where appropriate.

What does listening to it make them feel like? Does any part of their body change? Any tingles or butterflies?

What does it make them think of? Any memories of places or people?

Ask the children to close their eyes and, after a short while of sitting quietly, when they open them, say how waking up and seeing the world again feels – as themselves or as a bird

Gather words and phrases beginning with 'Today...'

Help them be clear and concise and choose the most truthful and exciting words.

What makes a word 'truthful' or 'exciting'?

Play a bit more of the Dawn Chorus extract and encourage the children to say how listening to it makes them feel – what are the best words to describe what they hear.

Gather phrases and words beginning with 'I am...'

Looking around at all their friends, everyone else in the room, imagine how it is to wake up with them there and what would you say beginning with 'We are...'

Ask the children what makes them happy, what makes them feel it is good to be alive, especially when they're outdoors and the sun is shining.

Brainstorm and gather phrases and words beginning with 'Here...'

Record as many individual voices as possible saying their favourite words and phrases – using separate sound files.

See instructions below. Keep a record of the children's names to be included in the credits of the collective poem, if appropriate – or you can simply use Class x, _ Primary School, Newcastle upon Tyne.

While you are recording, the other children could be drawing pictures of the Dawn Chorus and all the feelings and ideas the session has stimulated.

If it is easier in some cases to write the words and phrases down, rather than record them, you can send them in an email to office@newwritingnorth.com and we will supply the voices. But it would be great if we could hear a range of voices – the more varied the better.

The lines and/or phrases don't have to be complete – single words and fragments that capture the essence of the Dawn Chorus are all most welcome.

Recording and Uploading Instructions:

- You can upload a recording from your phone to airtable.com/shr7M9lpMIA6X8Sfa
- Record a voice memo and send it to us by WhatsApp on 07902 973392.
- Remember to include your name and email address in the message!
- If any contributions are in a language other than English, please tell us what language it is and provide a translation.
- Remember the deadline is 2nd August 2021.

FAQs

How long can the recording be?

Maximum length is 30 seconds – please record 5 seconds of silence before you start speaking and carry on recording for 5 seconds after you have finished.

Are there any tips for getting good sound quality?

Choose a day when it isn't windy if you are recording outside, or record in good conditions indoors. If you sit quietly for a moment, you can hear noisy things like fridges or traffic. Try to minimise them as much as possible by closing windows/ turning things off.

Speak clearly and slowly. If the sound quality of your contribution is compromised, it can't be used but might be rerecorded by us using another voice.

What if I am just recording onto my smart phone?

That is absolutely fine! It is useful to locate where the microphones are on your particular make of phone, so that you can make sure you are not covering them, and so that you can point them directly at the sound source. Being close up to the mic makes a much clearer recording. If your voice is distorting when you play it back, then we won't be able to use it.

If you want to go a step further, you can go into the Settings of your voice recording app (e.g. Voice Memo on iOS) and change the recording quality to Lossless.

Can you recommend any other recording apps?

You are welcome to simply use the Whats App voice messaging function. If you want to go for higher quality, using a smart phone, Voice Record Pro is popular for iOS, as is Easy Voice Recorder for Android.

Does the file format matter?

Not at all. Please send the highest quality recording you can as an .mp3, .wav, .aiff, or .mp4.

In sending your recordings in, you are agreeing to them being used as part of the collective soundscape, according to the editors' discretion.

Thank you!

We look forward to sharing our finished Dawn Chorus with you in the Autumn.

Linda France, Christo Wallers & New Writing North