

Spider Poems: The Spider and the Fly



Objective: students will incorporate the knowledge they learned about spiders on the ISM Web site, Spider Collection, and other Web sites they viewed on spiders to write a rhyming poem (possibly choosing a poem type illustrated here) about an aspect of spider anatomy, habitat, or behavior.

Grade Levels: 3 – 6

Time Required: two class periods (one for research, one for writing; not including editing and rewriting time)

Online Resources:

<http://www.museum.state.il.us/ismdepts/zoology/collections/spiders.html>

Illinois State Museum's Spider Collection Online

<http://www.maryhowitt.co.uk/profile.htm>

Mary Howitt, the English poet's, Web site.

<http://rip.physics.unk.edu/Astronomy/PoetryType.html>

A University of Nebraska Web page on types of poetry.

http://www.challenge.state.la.us/k12act/data/poetry_alive.html

Poetry teaching site for teachers with lessons, terms, Web sites and rhyming dictionary for students on a Louisiana education Web site.

<http://www.arachnology.org/> International Society of Arachnology

Click on Arachnology Pages, then For the Kids and Their Teachers links. Lots of information here.

[Http://www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

Use a search engine and keyword in the species of spider or the spider topic you wish to research.

Motivation:

Below is a copy of the model poem, *The Spider and the Fly*.

What scientific information about spiders can be learned from this poem? Check with scientific print or Web information to compare for accuracy.

What fantasy aspects are there to the poem? Do animals really talk to one another? Do they use flattery to catch prey? How is this poem a fable?

How do we know this is a poem? Does it rhyme? Is it written in a special format?

The Spider and the Fly
By Mary Howitt

Will you walk into my parlour? said the spider to the fly.
Tis the prettiest little parlour that ever you did spy,
The way into my parlour is up a winding stair,
And I've a many curious things to shew when you are there.

Oh no, no, said the little Fly, to ask me is in vain,
For who goes up your winding stair, can ne'er come down again.

I'm sure you must be weary, dear, with soaring up so high
Will you rest upon my little bed? said the Spider to the Fly.
There are pretty curtains drawn around; the sheets are fine and thin,
And if you like to rest awhile, I'll snugly tuck you in!

Oh no, no, said the little Fly, for I've often heard it said
They never, never wake again, who sleep upon your bed!

Said the cunning Spider to the Fly, Dear friend what can I do,
To prove the warm affection I 've always felt for you?
I have within my pantry, good store of all that's nice
I'm sure you're very welcome, will you please to take a slice?

Oh no, no, said the little Fly, Kind Sir, that cannot be,
I've heard what's in your pantry, and I do not wish to see!

Sweet creature! said the Spider, you're witty and you're wise,
How handsome are your gauzy wings, how brilliant are your eyes!
I've a little looking-glass upon my parlour shelf,
If you'll step in one moment, dear, you shall behold yourself.

I thank you, gentle sir, she said, for what you 're pleased to say,
And bidding you good morning now, I'll call another day.

The Spider turned him round about, and went into his den,
For well he knew the silly Fly would soon come back again
So he wove a subtle web, in a little corner sly,
And set his table ready, to dine upon the Fly.

Then he came out to his door again, and merrily did sing,
Come hither, hither, pretty Fly, with the pearl and silver wing,
Your robes are green and purple, there's a crest upon your head
Your eyes are like the diamond bright, but mine are dull as lead!

Alas, alas! How very soon this silly little Fly,

Hearing his wily, flattering words, came slowly flitting by
With buzzing wings she hung aloft, then near and nearer drew,
Thinking only of her brilliant eyes, and green and purple hue

Thinking only of her crested head, poor foolish thing!
At last,
Up jumped the cunning Spider, and fiercely held her fast.
He dragged her up his winding stair, into his dismal den,
Within his little parlour, but she ne'er came out again!

And now dear little children, who may this story read,
To idle, silly flattering words, I pray you ne'er give heed.
Unto an evil counsellor, close heart and ear and eye,
And take a lesson from this tale, of the Spider and the Fly.

Procedure:**The Poem**

Print out copies of the poem *The Spider and the Fly* for each student.

Read it aloud (teacher, taking parts in turns, as a group, etc).

Discuss the spider facts and the aspects of the poem that are not factual, based upon the information students have studied about spiders.

Poetry

Talk about how the poem's lines rhyme. Present some basic poem types with rhyming schemes. Practice constructing a few lines as examples. Consult the Web sites on poetry listed above.

Spider Facts

Each student will decide what to research about spiders. Brainstorming and listing topics on the board will help organize thoughts. (Webs and web-making, spiders' prey, spider species (brown recluse, black widow, garden spiders, etc), spider body parts, spider habitats, indoor spiders, spider bites and poison). Students use print and Web resources to write information about their topic.

Poem Writing

Students will organize information about their topic, listing key words and writing sentences. They may want to download to disk an image to accompany their poem, paying attention to copyrighted images.

Then they will choose a poetry form from those studied to use.

They will write a draft of a short poem.

Editing, Honing, and Publishing

Students will proofread, edit, and rewrite their poem according to classroom procedures and standards. The finished products could be a book, a Web page, or a display.

Assessment:

Teachers may want to establish a rubric for the following categories, or use their state or local standards.

Does the poem contain correct factual information about the spider topic? (Did the student do the research?)

Does the poem reflect a poetry type the student chose?

Does the grammar and spelling meet classroom standards?

Illinois State Board of Education Standards and Goals Addressed:**Science:****Early Elementary:**

12.A.1a Identify and describe the component parts of living things (e.g., birds have feathers; people have bones, blood, hair, skin) and their major functions.

12.A.1b Categorize living organisms using a variety of observable features (e.g., size, color, shape, backbone).

12.B.1a Describe and compare characteristics of living things in relationship to their environments.

12.B.1b Describe how living things depend on one another for survival.

Late Elementary:

12.A.2a Describe simple life cycles of plants and animals and the similarities and differences in their offspring.

12.B.2a Describe relationships among various organisms in their environments (e.g., predator/prey, parasite/host, food chains and food webs).

12.B.2b Identify physical features of plants and animals that help them live in different environments (e.g., specialized teeth for eating certain foods, thorns for protection, insulation for cold temperature).

Language Arts:

Early Elementary: Literature

2.B.1a Respond to literary materials by connecting them to their own experience and communicate those responses to others.

2.B.1c Relate character, setting and plot to real-life situations.

Late Elementary:

2.B.2a Respond to literary material by making inferences, drawing conclusions and comparing it to their own experience, prior knowledge and other texts.

2.A.2c Identify definitive features of literary forms

Language Arts: Writing

Early Elementary:

3.B.1a Use prewriting strategies to generate and organize ideas (e.g., focus on one topic; organize writing to include a beginning, middle and end; use descriptive words when writing about people, places, things, events).

3.B.1b Demonstrate focus, organization, elaboration and integration in written compositions

Late Elementary:

3.B.2a Generate and organize ideas using a variety of planning strategies (e.g., mapping, outlining, drafting).

3.B.2b Establish central idea, organization, elaboration and unity in relation to purpose and audience.

General: C. Communicate ideas in writing to accomplish a variety of purposes.