

# Campfire

A poem about a mother-daughter camping trip is paired with a note from the poet

## About the Poem

**Learning Objective:** Students will analyze the theme of a poem.

**Featured Skill:** analyzing poetry

### Essential Questions:

- How do we keep the stories of our elders alive?
- What does it mean to be resourceful?
- What makes an experience special?

### Standards:

The article and its suite of support materials support these Common Core anchor standards: R.1, R.2, R.4, W.4, W.5

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



## Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of support materials at [scope.scholastic.com](https://scope.scholastic.com).

### Audio:

- Poet read-aloud
- Text-to-speech

### Video:

- Poet read-aloud

### Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Featured Skill: Poetry Analysis
- Poetry Planner

# Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

## 1. Read and Discuss (30 minutes)

- As a class, watch the video of poet Janet Wong reading her poem and author's note aloud. The **video** is located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View. (Alternatively, have students listen to Wong's **audio read-alouds** of the poem and author's note.)
- For a second read, invite students to read the poem as well as the author's note and biographical information silently to themselves.
- *Note:* In her comments about the poem, Wong mentions the Japanese wartime occupation of Korea. You might share with students that this occupation began in 1910, when Japan seized control of Korea and declared it a colony of Japan. At the time, Korea was one unified country; it was not divided into North Korea and South Korea as it is today. The Japanese occupation of Korea lasted until 1945, when Japan lost World War II and the United States and the U.S.S.R. put an end to Japanese rule in Korea. (It was after this that the division of Korea began.)
- Discuss the following questions as a class.

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### Featured Skill: Poetry Analysis (20 minutes)

*The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.*

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1. **How much time passes in this poem? In other words, does the poem describe events that happen over a period of minutes, hours, days, or longer?** *Generally speaking, the poem describes events that take place over several minutes, from when the speaker's mom asks her daughter to find a stick to when the mom pulls the marshmallow out of the bag. Students might note, however, that the first stanza describes how the speaker's mom would build fires and roast fish and grasshoppers when she was a child. So taking the first stanza into account, the poem describes events that happen over a period of years, events that happen over a period of minutes, and also events that happen years apart.*
2. **What do the words *just think* at the very beginning of the poem tell you about the speaker's attitude or feelings about what her mother did as a child?** *The words just think tell you that the speaker is amazed or even a bit shocked that her mother built fires and roasted grasshoppers when she was a child.*

3. In the second stanza, the speaker says, “I see a brown bag/by her feet—/could it be?” What does the speaker think might be about to happen? *The speaker thinks the bag might be full of grasshoppers and that her mom might be about to pull one out for them to roast and eat.*
4. In the third stanza, the speaker describes the fire as “spitting ready.” What does she mean? *She means that the fire is hot and burning well—so well that it is spitting, or shooting out, sparks. She is saying that the fire is hot enough to roast marshmallows (or grasshoppers) over.*
5. Consider the words the speaker uses to describe the marshmallow: **big, fat, and luscious**. Why do you think the poet chose these words in particular? *It is likely the poet chose these words because she is developing the idea that the mom might be about to pull a grasshopper out of the bag, and big, fat, and luscious could describe a marshmallow or a grasshopper. What’s more, these words help create drama, because for those not accustomed to eating grasshoppers, the description of a grasshopper as big, fat, and luscious probably makes the idea of eating it all the more unappealing.*
6. Why might the poet have made the choice to put the last word of the poem, **marshmallow**, on its own line? *The poet likely put marshmallow on its own line to draw out the suspense at the end of the poem. When you read a poem, you naturally pause slightly at the end of each line, so by putting a line break before the last word, the poem creates a beat of silence (like a held breath or an inhale) before revealing what the mom pulls out of the bag.*
7. Were you surprised by the poem’s ending? Did you find it funny? *Answers will vary.*
8. What did the author’s note about the poem help you understand? Did it answer any questions you had about the poem? *Students are likely to offer that the author’s note helped them understand why the speaker’s mother roasted and ate grasshoppers as a child. Students might also offer that the author’s note helped them understand that Janet Wong wrote the poem about her own experience—in other words, that the poem is autobiographical.*

## 2. Write Your Own Poem (30 minutes)

- Have students complete the **Poetry Planner**. This activity will help them brainstorm ideas and provide tips for writing their own poem in response to the prompt:

***Write a poem about something you did over the summer. Focus on a particular moment, the way Janet Wong does in “Campfire.”***