



# Tales from the Riverbank Poetry Activity Guide



Photo by Matthew Roberts



# Hello, writers!

In this guide, we'll create a poem inspired by the wild world of chalk streams.



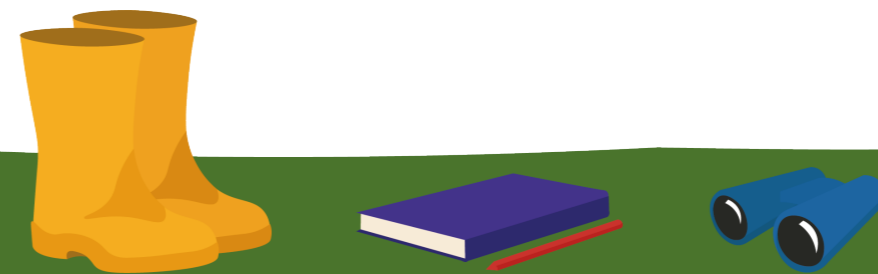
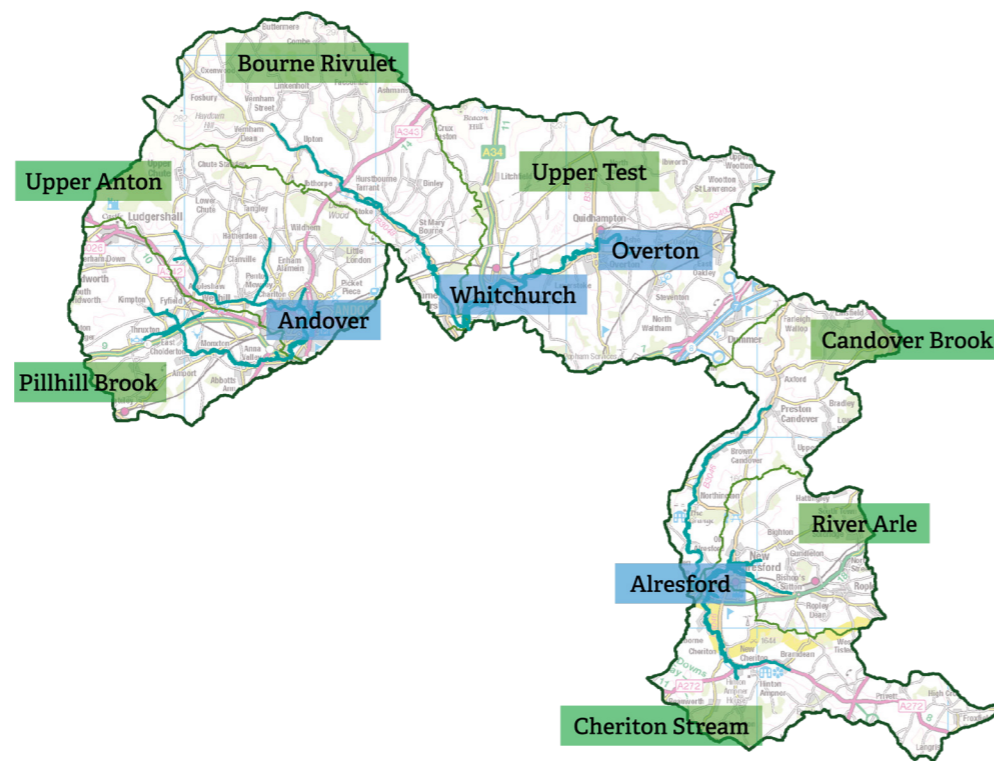
# Find inspiration

If you'd like to see how other young writers have been inspired by the wild world of chalk streams, you might like to read our poetry anthology. In 2024, we awarded prizes to 16 poets aged 7-17, and put their brilliant poems into an anthology.

An anthology is a collection of written works, like stories or poems, by different writers. Although they're written by different people, they might have the same style, or "genre", of writing (like scary, funny, or mysterious). They might also be about the same subject.

The poems in our anthology talk about themes like learning, memory, and using your senses to explore nature. They're brought to life by colourful illustrations of chalk stream animals. You can read the anthology for free by visiting [www.hiwwt.org.uk/tales/poetry](http://www.hiwwt.org.uk/tales/poetry).

This competition was part of the Watercress and Winterbournes Landscape Partnership Scheme, which is made possible by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Learn more about the scheme at [www.hiwwt.org.uk/winterbournes](http://www.hiwwt.org.uk/winterbournes).



# About chalk streams

Did you know that there are only 220 chalk streams in the whole world, and 85% of those are in England? Here in Hampshire, we're lucky to have quite a few, but what makes them so important?

## A secret source

The water in our chalk streams comes from a huge layer of chalk hidden deep underground. This rock "aquifer" has lots of tiny holes, allowing it to soak up rain like a giant sponge. When all of the holes get filled, the water comes back up to the surface!

## Super-powered water

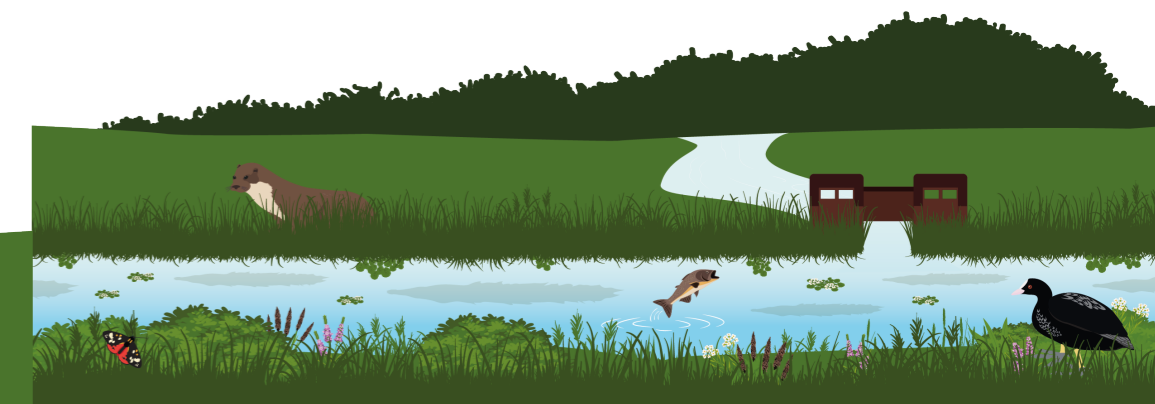
Because it comes from the aquifer, the water in chalk streams is very special. It stays cool in the summer, is clear like glass, and contains lots of oxygen. This means that chalk streams are great habitats for many different plants and animals.

## Wonderful wildlife

Lots of wildlife species call our chalk streams home. Above the water, you can spot kingfishers, damselflies, and scarlet tiger moths. On the banks you might find otters and water voles. Below the surface live brown trout, eels, and white-clawed crayfish.

## Places to protect

Chalk streams are amazing places, but they need our protection. Many of their animals are endangered, and their habitats aren't always healthy. Learning about these unique streams helps us to care for them, both now and in the future.



# Where to go

Hampshire has lots of places where you can explore chalk streams. You might have one flowing through your village, town, or city - even if it's hidden from view!

Don't worry if there isn't an accessible chalk stream on your doorstep. Ask your parent or guardian if you can visit one that's nearby. Here are four of our favourites...

## Alresford

You can find a lovely streamside walk right in the town centre. Combining the Millennium and Arle Valley trails, this footpath runs along the River Arle. Look out for the historic Eel House, the old Fulling Mill, and lots of ducks, swans, and moorhens.

## Andover

This town has several great nature reserves along the Upper Anton. Charlton Lakes, Anton Lakes, and Rooksbury Mill are all filled with wildlife, and some of their footpaths are wheelchair-friendly. You can spot lots of birds, and sometimes water voles.

## Overton

Flashetts footpath is a local treasure: it's only a ten-minute walk from the High Street, and right next to the Upper Test. Pause at the gravelly area to watch for small fish in the water. Remember to keep your eyes peeled for dragonflies and kingfishers.

## Whitchurch

This town has many places where you can enjoy the Upper Test. Check out the Millennium Green - a peaceful meadow where you might see water voles. For a longer walk, visit the Silk Mill or follow the streamside footpath from Town Mill Lane.

# Curriculum links

Poetry remains a key part of the English curriculum in schools, through reading (comprehension), writing (composition), and speaking. This makes it a great way to learn literacy skills!

## Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils are taught to...

- Develop pleasure in and positive attitudes to reading, by listening to and discussing a wide range of poetry.
- Recognise simple recurring literary language and some different forms of poetry.
- Read and write poetry at an age-appropriate interest level.

## Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils are taught to...

- Write accurately, fluently, effectively, and at length for pleasure and information through different formats, including poetry.
- Improvise, rehearse, and perform poetry in order to discuss language use and meaning, using role, intonation, tone, volume, mood, silence, stillness, and action to add impact.
- Read and appreciate the depth and power of the English literary heritage through poetry.

# Get poetic

Now it's time to start writing your poem. Grab your pen and paper, and think about what you want to say.

## Try new words

Choose a word you want to use, then think of other words that have a similar meaning (synonyms). Don't be afraid to use a thesaurus! Do you like any of these other words better? How do they change the sound or meaning of your poem?

## Play with sound

Try out words that start with the same sound (alliteration) or contain similar sounds (assonance). Your poem might rhyme, or have a rhythm (its "metre"). You could also use words that describe sounds (onomatopoeia) like "splash" or "buzz".

## Compare and contrast

Have a go at writing a metaphor (when one thing "is" another: "the stream is a blue ribbon") or a simile (when one thing is "like" another: "the stream is like a blue ribbon"). You could also describe how things are different from each other (juxtaposition).

## Experiment with structure

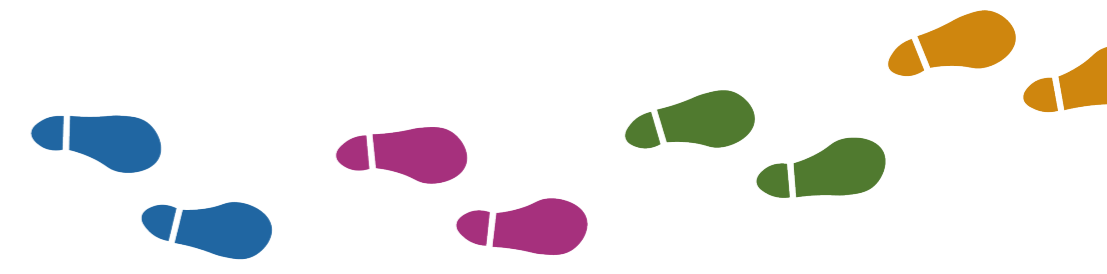
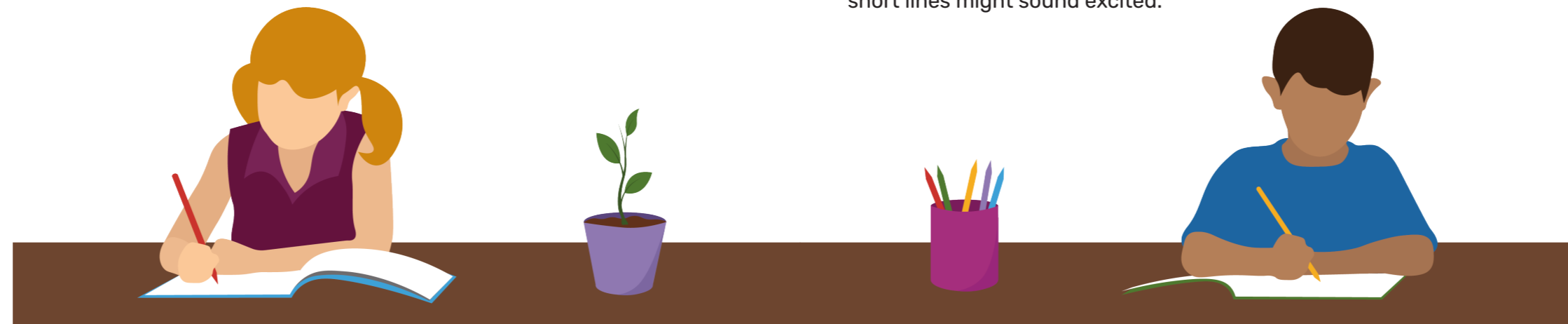
Write phrases on pieces of paper, and arrange them in different orders. How does this affect the story you want to tell? Your poem's structure (its "form") could reflect the subject: long lines might sound calm, but short lines might sound excited.

# Staying safe

It's important to stay safe when you're exploring chalk streams. Take an adult with you, or ask your parent or guardian if you can go with just a friend. Here are our top safety tips...

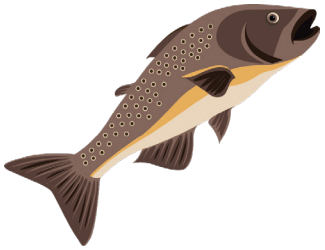
- If you're exploring without an adult, tell your parent or guardian where you're going and what time you'll be back.
- If you have a mobile phone, take it with you.
- Check that the place you're visiting is open to the public. Turn back if you see any signs telling you it's private land.
- If you walk along the stream banks, stay away from the edge.
- If you go for a paddle, avoid fast currents and stick to ankle-deep water that you can get into and out of easily.
- Never go in the water barefoot, because there could be sharp objects on the stream bed.
- Wear trousers and a long-sleeved top, because they will help to protect you from stings and scratches.
- Cover any open cuts or scratches with waterproof plasters.
- Wash your hands before eating or drinking anything.

For advice on keeping a school class or youth group safe around chalk streams, please contact Tracy Standish (Watercress and Winterbournes Education Officer) at [tracy@wessexrt.org.uk](mailto:tracy@wessexrt.org.uk).





# Look out for



**Brown trout**



**Water vole**



**Kingfisher**



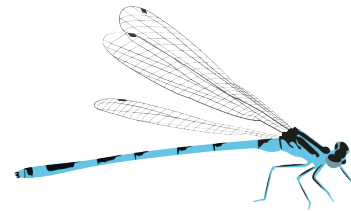
**Otter**



**Scarlet tiger moth**



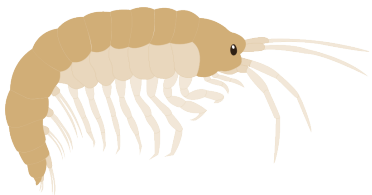
**Caddisfly**



**Southern damselfly**



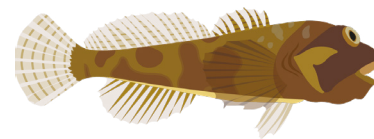
**White-clawed crayfish**



**Freshwater shrimp**



**Coot**



**Bullhead**



**Eel**