



# MODERNIST CANADIAN ART AND POETRY

Scientists often collect data “in the field” which could mean underwater, in a forest, in a cave, on a reef, or even the moon. Two essential methods to gather ecological information in a standardized way are: Transect Sampling (using a single line) and Quadrat Sampling (counted within a grid or fixed area). These sampling methods provide more accurate data than random sampling or simply guessing, but they take less time than counting every specimen in a certain area. Sampling helps us estimate & compare different parts of an ecosystem.

## MATERIALS

Pencils, notebooks, copies of “The Lonely Land” (attached), several Group of Seven images (either printed out, in a book, or pulled up on a computer or Smartboard—the book *Images of Nature: Canadian Poets and the Group of Seven* is an excellent resource)

## PRIOR TO THE ACTIVITY

Have students examine Group of Seven paintings and notice what draws them into the landscapes. You might do this through a quick-write, small group discussion and sharing, or whole group analysis of features such as line, colour, shape, and composition. Draw on students’ prior knowledge of the Group of Seven to remind students that the Group of Seven were rebelling against the European tradition of painting in what they considered to be a lifeless style. They wanted to create a uniquely Canadian art style that brought to life the raw and overwhelming beauty of the Canadian wilderness. In order to do this they left their studios and painted in the wild. They wanted to bring the experience of being outdoors to those who viewed their paintings of nature and were more concerned with expressing emotion than with representing precise colours and shapes. Some of the Group of Seven’s contemporaries were





poets who also shared the same vision of bringing the raw Canadian landscape to life through their poetry. Three of these poets who have had an important impact on Canadian literature are A.J.M. Smith, F.R. Scott, and Emily Carr (who was also an artist in her own right).

If you have lots of time to spend on this lesson you may wish to have students further research the Group of Seven and the poets mentioned above.

## THE ACTIVITY

1. Pass out copies of “The Lonely Land” by A.J.M. Smith and have students read it twice carefully.
2. Read the poem out loud and have students note the features of the poem that vividly draw them into the landscape or make them feel as though they are outdoors. These might include descriptive phrases, line breaks, onomatopoeia, rhythm, repetition, metaphor, and other poetic devices.
3. Have students put on their winter clothes and go outside. Each student should find a quiet place to sit and spend 5-10 minutes simply observing and recording sounds, colours, and feelings.
4. Back in the classroom, have students immediately begin to draft a poem that will draw readers into the outdoor experience they just had.
5. If there is time, have students illustrate their poems in the style of the Group of Seven.

*Applications: Social Studies and Language Arts.*

## EXTENSION

Have students repeat this experience in different settings and on different days. They might create a class book or personal portfolio to illustrate and publish.

If you are interested in sharing your project's results, or would like more ideas on teaching outside at your school, please contact FortWhyte Alive by email at [education@fortwhyte.org](mailto:education@fortwhyte.org).

