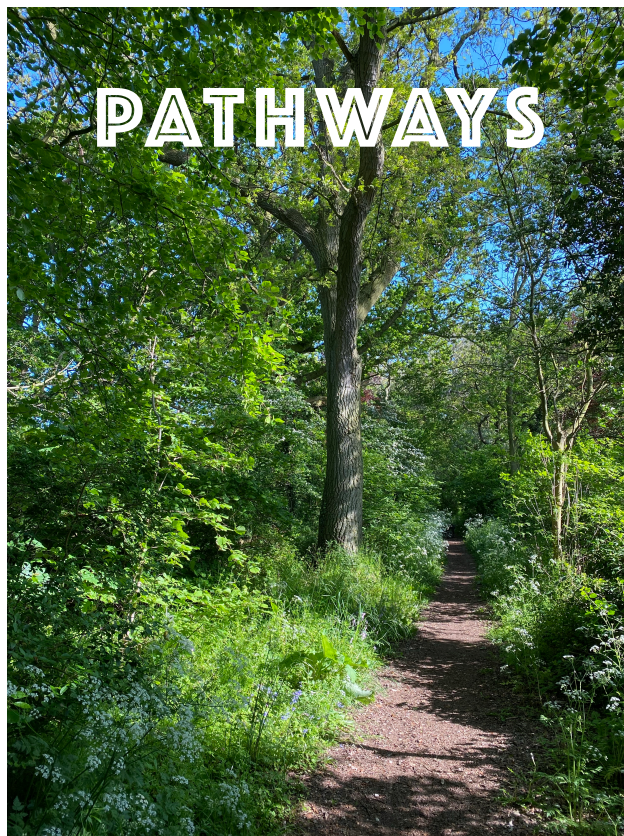




NORTH NORFOLK FESTIVAL OF LITERATURE & LANDSCAPE

2026 Schools' Poetry Competition



Writing poems about paths: ideas for teaching

LITERATURE & LANDSCAPE

is about getting out and connecting in practical and creative ways with the natural world and our North Norfolk landscape

Here are some suggestions for activities and discussions that may help pupils of different ages, abilities and interests to engage with this project.

Please first plan a short stroll to take your class on, along a path through a natural landscape, if possible in small groups.

To allow time for note-taking the route should not be very long, but it would help if there were a few changes in scenery along the way, even small ones

Did you know? Britain's paths include webs that run from coast to coast, prehistoric routes walked for thousands of years, pilgrim ways, coffin roads, turnpikes, towpaths, pavements, drove roads and local links between villages and places of work or worship, where people walked for hunting, herding, gathering and trade. 100,000 miles of footpaths were made in this country by walking and are now rights of way.

Classroom discussion **ONE** before the walk

- **ASK** if anyone knows the pathway you've chosen.
- Can they say where it goes to?
- What route does the path take?
- What does it pass along the way?

Classroom activity - draw a map of the path either as you know it or as you imagine it, adding illustrations of what you expect to see along the way.

Topic for discussion - what makes a pathway like a poem or story? (one to think about later if no one comes up with the answer today)



Discussion **TWO** on the way to the walk

- How many paths do you know well? Which are your favourites?
- How do pathways come into existence?
- Do other animals also make paths? Look out for these
- How old do you think the oldest paths in Norfolk are? (NB Peddars Way is 6,000 years old - develop this history for older children and upper sets)
- Did you know that England has over 100,000 miles of footpath? That's more public path per acre than any other country
- If you could travel back in time (choose how far) what sort of people might you see passing along the paths you know and why might they be walking there?
- What stories (animal or human) and changes might a path witness each day or year?

Hunting for material



OBSERVATION

the secret behind good science, good writing and many other pursuits

As you walk along the path, find suitable places to

○ Stop and **LOOK**: what do you see?

- look for **big**, important things that make this place what it is
- look for **small** details that could be missed
- the longer you **look**, the more you will start to see
- look up
- look down
- turn a full circle slowly and **look** all around

Jot down everything you see

○ Now shut your eyes and **LISTEN**.

- **listening** takes time, don't rush
- some sounds come in a run like a piece of music - try to **follow** the order
- some happen all at once - can you **pick out** each bird song, insect noise, sound of wind in trees, people's footsteps?
- what can you **tell** about a person or animal from the sounds they make?

Jot it all down.

○ Now close your eyes and cover your ears. Can you still **SENSE** where you are?

- can you **feel** the ground under your shoes? or warmth on the skin of your face and hands?
- what scents can you **smell** in the air? can you **tell** how big a space you are standing in?
- open your eyes and look for things you can safely **touch** like tree trunks or leaves or grass. Explore their textures

Jot down what you notice.

Discussion after the walk - how to turn your observations into a poem

Share your observations on the way back from the walk or in the following lesson.

Discussion: Why does it help to record sensory details?

Because...

- ...there's a difference between what you might *expect* to see, hear and sense in a place and what you *really* see, hear and sense. Observing opens your mind to what is actually there
- ...freshly observed sensory information will bring the place to life for your reader
- ...noticing may give you fresh, fun or thought-provoking ideas to write about

Q: How to write a poem?

A: However you like!



If you already have an idea, dive in! If not, try one of these to get you started:

- Describe your walk along the path. Try to capture what it was like as if your words were doing the work of a movie camera.
- Write a conversation between two voices, one asking questions and the other answering in a stanza - for example: Where did you go today? What did you see / hear / feel / discover?
- Write in the imagined voice of a path, starting lines with 'I' or 'My' until you get the idea. Look at Anglo-Saxon riddles about ice, fish, the wind or the cat for inspiration.
- Describe someone walking and thinking - their thoughts, feelings and memories changing with the scenery
- Imagine discovering this path overgrown and forgotten, long after people have stopped using it
- Tell the walk as a journey - walking away from or towards something, or both
- Write a celebration of paths and what makes them special
- Imagine a person or animal walking the path for the first or the hundredth time. Do they pass someone or something else? What happens? Keep it simple.
- Tell the stories of different people or animals walking along that path at different times - one stanza for each character

If your plan starts to change as you write, run with the new idea

NEXT UP: how to edit your poem



EDITING and rewriting

Read, re-read and **enjoy** your poem. You can always improve it. Here are some ways:

- Check the **rhythm** or beat. Change or move words around so it sounds better.
- Does your poem make a particular **shape** on the page? Experiment with this.
- Does your poem have a **beginning, middle** and an **end**? Develop each section.
- Do your descriptions **capture what the path was like**? Have you used **details**?
- Have you used imagery to paint a picture? Could you **play** around more with similes and metaphors or **make descriptions more interesting**?
- If you have created a voice other than your own, does it **stay in character**?
- Have you picked a good **title**?
- If you would like to, why not illustrate your poem too?

**That's it. You're done.
Congratulations on being a poet!
Make sure your poem has your first name, age and
class on it**