

SPARKS

The Beast with Ada Limón

by Ada Limón

GRADES 7–12

TYPE

POETRY

This poetry prompt from Ada Limón invites students to consider a personal connection to an animal.

WHAT YOU WILL DO

Special guest author [Ada Limón](#) joins us for this Spark from [826NYC’s quaranTEEN voices program](#). Ada Limón is the author of six books of poetry, including *The Carrying*, which won the National Book Critics Circle Award for Poetry. Limón is also the host of the critically-acclaimed poetry podcast, *The Slowdown*. Her new book of poetry, *The Hurting Kind*, is out now from Milkweed Editions. She is the 24th Poet Laureate of The United States.

From Ada:

So many of us are connected to certain animals. We see a bird everyday and think that we have a connection with that bird. Or a dog or a cat, or even something smaller like a bee or a mouse. Paying attention to animals that are around us or that we feel connected to even if we don’t see them on a daily basis, is a good way to remember that we are animals too.

To begin, read Ada Limón’s two poems, “The Visitor” and “Bald Eagles in a Field”. After you read each poem, answer these questions—you can free-write or free-draw your answers, or talk about them with a friend.

- How does the speaker describe the animal? What does this description tell us about the speaker?

- What is the speaker struggling with, in each poem? Is this something you've struggled with before?
- Does the speaker learn anything about herself through observing the animal in each poem? If so, what do you think she learns?

Next, choose an animal that you feel connected to in some way or another and write a poem about that animal. It doesn't have to be an animal you see everyday, maybe it's your favorite animal or the one you feel best represents you. Pay attention to the sounds of the language, describe how the animal moves, how the animal senses the world. How are you and that animal similar? Can you make a connection between the two of you. What do you want for the animal? Do you want the same for yourself? Let the poem lead you somewhere unexpected and surprising.

Below are additional prompts, if you get stuck:

- Pretend you are watching your animal from afar. Describe its movements, the sounds it makes, where it goes, how it interacts with other creatures, etc. Use these descriptions in your final poem.
- What do you imagine your animal thinks about, worries about, gets excited about during its day? Do you ever think, worry, or get excited about similar things? How can you connect the animal to you, through your shared emotions?
- Imagine your chosen animal moving through a normal day of yours. How do you think the animal would do things differently or similarly to you? Is there anything you could learn from the animal?

MATERIALS

[Two Poems by Ada Limón](#)