

the outdoor classroom

watery words 2

Subject focus: Literacy

Keywords: Rivers, Geography

Skills learnt in this worksheet include:

- Observing
- Using literary images
- Group work

Resources required for this activity:

- Summary sheet



This activity could take place by the river or in the classroom.
It could be an individual activity or a group activity.

Background

Charles Dickens visited the Hounslow Gunpowder Mills (now Crane Park) in the autumn of 1851 and gave a detailed account of his visit in the February 7th issue of his weekly journal 'Household Words'. Dickens visited a year after the worst of the many explosions at the mills had killed 9 people, destroyed 5 mills and devastated the landscape.

In the article he describes the River Crane *'which meanders through the whole of these grounds, partly by nature, but also by art'*.

He describes a river *'which sometimes broad, sometimes narrow, sometimes in a line and sometimes coiling, and escaping by a curve out of sight, intersects the whole place. It is in fact a great straggling plantation of firs, over swells and declivities of land, with a branch or neck of river meeting you unexpectedly at almost every turn'...*

- In a group think of words that describe the river e.g. coiling, swirling. Write these words on your summary sheet.
- Write a description of the river that you see today in a style similar to Dickens.
- Alternatively half the group could write a modern description and the other half in the style of Dickens. Read out your work and discuss the differences.
- Illustrate what you have written about.