Remember
A poem reminds us to think about our roots in the world

About the Poem

Learning Objective
Students will read a challenging poem and discuss its meaning and what the poet might want readers to think about.

Key Skills
Interpreting text, vocabulary, fluency, author’s purpose, connecting texts

Online Resources
Audio version of poem

Skill Builders:
• Poetry Kit
• Comprehension Quiz

Standards Correlations
Common Core anchor standards: R.1, R.2, R.4, SL.1, SL.2, L.4, L.5

Check our website for more standards information.

Step-by-Step Lesson Plan
Close Reading, Critical Thinking, and Skill Building

About the Poet
Poet and musician Joy Harjo was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1951 and is a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. In 2019, she became the U.S. Poet Laureate, a position appointed by the Librarian of Congress to promote the reading and writing of poetry. As the first Native American in this role, she aims to bring attention to the poetry of indigenous people.

1. Preparing to Read
(10 minutes)
• Ask students to look at the title of the poem. In pairs, have them discuss the reasons we try to remember things. What do they think is important to remember?
• Come back together as a class and have students share their thoughts. Discuss: How is remembering a way of showing appreciation for something or someone?
• Invite a student to read aloud the Up Close box.

2. Reading the Poem
(5 minutes)
• Play our audio version or a video of Joy Harjo reading the poem, available at poets.org/lesson-plan/incredible-bridges-remember-joy-harjo.

3. Discussing the Poem (10 minutes)
Discuss the following questions:
• Look at what the poem says to remember. What do the things mentioned have in common? Why do you think the poet chose these to mention? (author’s purpose) The poem mentions the sun, the moon, earth, plants, trees, animals, the wind, and so on. All of these are part of nature. The poet probably chose them to encourage readers to appreciate the natural world and see themselves as part of it.
• Look at the line “Remember you are all people and all people are you.” What do you think this means? (interpreting text) Answers will vary. Students might suggest that the poet wants us to see what we have in common with each other.

4. Skill Building (30 minutes)
Connect this poem with our fiction story, “There Were Giants.” See the fiction lesson on page T5 and the Poetry Kit for ideas.