

POETRY FOR WELLBEING
WORKSHOPS

WORKSHOP 2

HOME



EXERCISE 1: MAKE A LIST OF WORDS

Start by making a list of words that you associate with HOME.

Now, make a list of words you associate with AWAY.

Go round the group and share your lists of words. It may be interesting to reflect on how different and how similar our lists may be. Encourage everyone to write down words they like that others share.

Lists of words can help us in our writing. We can turn to them to challenge our brains, or push our writing in unexpected ways by trying to find ways to work these words into your poetry. These lists can also be helpful if you are stuck or you need help warming up to a writing task.


EXERCISE 2: BEING AT HOME

As well as thinking about the 'bigger' questions and words we might associate with home - like safety, family, or tension - it can also be useful to focus on the smaller things.

Make a list of five objects you can see in your current home, or that you can remember about a previous home from a past time in your life.

For example, these might include:

- Table
- Door
- Bowl
- Cup
- Drawer



Read: 'Table' by Turkish poet Edip Cansever Richard Tillinghast, from the collection *The Stone Cutter's Hand*.

<https://standrewspoetrywall.com/2017/08/30/table-edip-cansever/>

See also Kate Clanchy talking about how to use this poem here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmIB7SM8koQ>

Discuss together: Read this poem twice. After the first reading, spend some time discussing the poem. Then get someone else to read it aloud, to see how that changes your experience of reading the poem.

If you need some prompts for discussion, feel free to use these:

- What do we see in this poem?
- Do we see an actual table in our minds, or do we see it as a space or a metaphor?
- What does it tell us about the man?
- This is a poem that touches on the themes of containment – where do we put things? How are they held and by whom?
- This may also be a poem about the mind and connect to ideas of mindfulness: the mind is endlessly putting things on the table. What is in your mind/ on your table? Taking an inventory of what is there can help us to be grounded to be 'at home' in ourselves.
- This poem also has humour – 'Now I call that a table!'. Thinking about the value of humour and 'A man filled with the gladness of living', what fills us with this gladness?

Write: Write a poem inspired by 'Table'. What will you put on your table just now? What goes on your table?

AN EXAMPLE FROM AUTUMN

A woman who was late in coming home put her keys on the table.
She put on the table the things she wanted to say.
She put on the table flowers, a fruit bowl, sticky placemats.
She put on the table finger paints and pots of glitter and glue for the children who swarmed there.
She chopped vegetables there and she left on the table her culinary successes and failures.
On the table she found questions she didn't have answers for and she gathered them into her best bowl.
Sometimes the woman wanted just to wait at the table for a while and have nothing to do.

EXERCISE 3: AN OBJECT OUT OF PLACE

Write: Write a short poem about an object from the list of five you made earlier - or something else that comes to mind. Make the poem about taking that object from where you'd usually see it to a place where it doesn't necessarily fit it.

Discuss together: How does the feeling of home travel with objects? What do they hold for us?

AN EXAMPLE FROM AUTUMN: OFFICE BUDDHA

She brought the small laughing Buddha to work with her and put it on the ledge behind her desk.
She wondered what they would think of his very round belly and his wide grin.
Would they imagine she was a secret Buddhist?
When the meetings got hard, and especially when they were dull,
she would catch his eye and imagine herself interrupting things to rub his belly.
She wondered, as she snacked on illicit candy bars late in the afternoon,
if the things he said about suffering were really true.

EXERCISE 4

Read: The Finished House by George Mackay Brown

<https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poem/finished-house/>

Discuss together: As before, read this poem twice. First, read, reflect on, and discuss the poem. Then read it a second time. You might want to discuss the cultural references to 'home' and 'house' in this poem and the importance of drawing on the things that are meaningful to us.

Write: Now write a poem inspired by George Mackay Brown. Take 10 minutes to write this, and then come together to share your work.

The poem should begin: [In the finished house . . .](#)

A FINAL POEM FOR THE SESSION

Read: 'Spent' by Mark Doty

<https://poets.org/poem/spent>

It can be nice to end a session with a poem. You might not have time to discuss it, but do try to choose ones like this with a lovely uplifting feel to them.

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