



La-La Land

Writing poems about place

La-La Land

'You are not here' – graffiti on boarded-up shop, Newport town centre, September 2013

Town centre. Docks. 10% off.
Pillgwenlly. Buy one, get one free.
Tattoo. Heddlu. No u-turn.
Pensioners' special. £10 perm.
Undertaker. One-way street.
RSPCA. Organic meat.
Nike. Adidas. No Fear.
You are not here. You are not here.

Allt-yr-yn. Caerleon. Maindee.
Pound shop. All goods 50p.
Opening soon. Last week. To let.
Win £300 for a £10 bet.
Keys cut now. Neighbourhood Watch.
Private shop. School crossing. Stop.
Hospital parking. Lager. Beer.
You are not here. You are not here.

Bettws. Bassaleg. Gaer. High Cross.
Liquidation of bankrupt stock.
Budweiser. Smirnoff. Sanyo. Sony.
Resident permit holders only.
Bought for cash. Zone ends. Look up.
This is the home of the Ryder Cup.
Walk-in sunbeds. Keep your skin clear.
You are not here. You are not here.

New B & Q in Ebbw Vale.
Newport. Museum. Closed. For sale.
Westgate. Stow Hill. John Frost Square.
TJ's. Angel. Service. Repair.
Jesus saves. Now open Sunday.
Own it on DVD from Monday.
Job Centre. Wait. Parking to rear.
You are not here. You are not here.

Gathering materials for your poem

- If you are able to, go for a walk around where you live and make a note of the words from any signs you see.
- If you can't get out, or just want extra options, do an internet search for road and street signs, and add these to your list.
- If you are able to, see if you can include words from different languages.
- Include different types of words from road signs: use place names, adverts, instructions, graffiti, shop signs.
- The next few slides are pictures of street and road signs, so if you aren't able to get out for a walk around where you live at the moment, you can also use text from these to start you off.





Yst Ddiw Mochdre
Mochdre Ind Est

1½



Canol y dref
Town centre



Ysbyty
Hospital

1½

Llanllwchaearn

1½

Aberhafesb
B 4568

4

PWLLYPANT

Ystrad Mynach
Llanbradach

A 469

Cardiff
Caerdydd

Merthyr Tydfil

A 468/A 469

(A 470)

Newport
Casnewydd

Bedwas

A 468




Industrial Estate
Ystrad Mynach
Llanbradach
Merthyr
Caerdydd
Merthyr Tydfil
Newport
Casnewydd
Bedwas
A 468
A 469
A 470
A 468/A 469
A 470



The Summerhouse
   Y Tŷ Haf

Sophia Gardens
Gerddi Sophia

Cycle hire
Llogi beiciau
Pedal power

  Nursery
 Meithrinfa

Water Bus Stop
Arhosfan y Bws Dŵr

West Lodge   
Porthdy'r Gorllewin

Cardiff Castle
Castell Caerdydd





Walters OPEN TILL LATE
TEAROOM

ALBERTO'S
PIZZA & PASTA

Free
Delivery

ALL DAY
BREAKFAST
& LUNCHES
HOME MADE
QUALITY FOOD

Rajshahi Restaurant
Authentic Indian Tandoori Restaurant

SUE'S CAFE

Boots

Top Note Records
BUY SELL TRADE
HIP POP JAZZ

Boots

DISPENSING
CHEMISTS

INTERNET CAFE

SUPER CHEAP INTERNET AND TELEPHONE ACCESS

GENERAL APPLIANCES
SALES SERVICING
REPAIRS PARTS

Panasonic

GENERAL APPLIANCES
SALES SERVICING REPAIRS PARTS

Panasonic

BROUGHS

FURNITURE AND ELECTRICAL

BROUGHS

FURNITURE AND ELECTRICAL

Crane
Estate Agents

CONROY BOOKS

SECONDHAND BOOKS BOUGHT AND SOLD

NEWSAGENT

MAGAZINES CONFECTIONERY NEWSPAPERS

Fresh
MEAT & POULTRY
WILD GAME & VENISON

A. HENDERSON
FAMILY BUTCHER

Leepright BED & MATTRESS

BEDROOM FURNITURE SPECIALISTS

SPAR



NEWTON'S RUG AND CARPET DEPOT

CARPET, ORIENTAL, MODERN, TRADITIONAL RUGS

Currys

Currys

Ladbroke's

Speedy Clean

SPECIALIST DRY CLEANER REPAIRS AND ALTERATIONS

BROOKES

HARDWARE & TIMBER

Ideas for your poem – playing with language

- Write out the words from your signs on different little bits of paper, and spread them out in front of you on your desk.
- Move the words around and see what happens. What sorts of relationships emerge between the words – how do meanings change when different words are put together?
- Say the different combinations of words aloud. How do the sound patterns change when you put different words together?
- Make notes of any especially interesting combinations of words, so that you can use them in your poem.

Writing your poem

- Use your notes to write a first draft of your poem.
- If you want to, think about how the signs go together as rhymes or half-rhymes, and whether these rhyme sounds appear in the middle or at the end of lines.
- Again, if you want to, think about the rhythm of your line. 'La-La Land' uses a four-beat line. Do you want this for your poem too, or is there some different sort of form you would like to use?
- Is there a particular phrase you have found that you would like to repeat? In my poem, I especially wanted to repeat 'You are not here.' Is there a phrase from your signs which you think sums up the place?
- Don't worry if you don't want to do any of the above! Enjoy the words of the signs and let the poem emerge.

Performing your poem

- Think about the pace of your reading. Are there parts of your poem which especially need to be slowed down and dwelt on?
- Think about rhythm, mood and meaning and the best ways in which your reading can communicate the poem.
- Give each other feedback on the readings you hear. What do you like about these poems? What do you think could be further improved? Have they captured the spirit of a place?

Extension tasks

- If you'd like to write another poem or need more ideas, have a look at the following poems by the French writer Jacques Roubaud...



Jacques Roubaud, tr. Keith and Rosmarie Waldrop

Rainbow



It's raining

it stops raining

It's nice

the sun's shining
you can see

on Rue VIOLET

on Rue BLEUE

on Rue du Chemin-VERT

on Place du Château-ROUGE

a rainbow full of holes



Rainbow

- Using 'Rainbow' as an inspiration, write a poem set in the place in which you live.
- Start with description of the weather, or something else you notice about the place.
- Include some street names.
- Finish with some description of nature – it might be something going on in the sky, a bird that flies past or is pecking on the ground, an image of a tree. Think about making your final image beautiful!



The Hour

the hour of awakening of the inhabitants of the passage de la reine de hongrie
the hour of the café opening in rue du moulin de la pointe
the hour of garbage collection in rue du sommet des alpes
the hour of the bakery opening in rue du roi de sicile
the hour of the streetlights going off in the rue du pot de fer
the hour of the butcher opening in rue du faubourg du temple
the hour of the children getting up in rue de la poterne des peupliers
the hour of the delicatessen opening in rue du moulin des prés
the hour of walking the dogs in avenue of de la porte de pantin
the hour of opening of the kindergarten in rue de la pointe d'ivry
the hour of cleaning the gutters in rue des nonnains d'hyères
the hour of the garage opening in rue du val de grâce
the hour of airy manner of cats in rue du père teilhard de chardin
the hour of the driving school opening on boulevard des filles du calvaire
the hour of turtledoves cooing on rue du moulin de la vierge
the hour of the hat shop opening in the galerie des marchands de la gare saint-lazare
the hour of car invasion in the avenue de la porte d'orléans
the hour of the school opening on avenue de la porte de champerret
the hour of the rumbling of motors of the avenue de la porte d'italie
the hour of the optician opening in rue du pas de la mule
the hour of the mission opening in rue du pont de lodi
the hour of the libraries opening in rue de l'école de médecine
the hour of the bookshop opening in rue du champ de mars
the hour of the church opening in the place d'estienne d'orves
the hour of the brasserie opening in rue du château d'eau
the hour of the electrician opening in rue patrice de la tour du pin
the hour of the salon opening in rue des colonnes du trône
the hour of the flower shop opening in avenue de la porte de Montrouge

the hour of the shoemaker opening in rue du dessous des berges
the hour of the time of the jeweler's opening on place de la porte de
saint-cloud

the hour of the restaurant opening on avenue de la porte de clichy
the hour of the printer opening in rue de la cour des noues
the hour of the heliport opening on avenue de la porte de sèvres
the hour of the church opening off rue du chevalier de la barre
the hour of the hospital opening in rue de la porte d'aubervilliers
the hour of the the funeral home opening on avenue de la porte de
clignancourt

the hour of bath of the sparrows – of the alley of the soleil d'or
the hour of recess for the schoolchildren in rue du val de marne

the hour of asphyxiation of pedestrians on avenue de la porte de vitry
the hour of asphyxiation of dogs on avenue de la porte de choisy
the hour of asphyxiation of cats on avenue de la porte d'ivry
the hour of asphyxiation of sparrows on avenue de la porte de gentilly
the hour of asphyxiation of children on avenue de la porte de vanves
the hour of asphyxiation of lettuces on avenue de la porte de la plaine
the hour of asphyxiation of chestnut trees on avenue de la porte d'issy
the hour of asphyxiation of drivers on avenue de la porte d'auteuil
the hour of asphyxiation of motorcyclists on avenue du parc de passy
the hour of asphyxiation of rugbymen on venue du parc des princes
the hour of asphyxiation of the cyclists on avenue de la porte des ternes
the hour of asphyxiation of potted violets on avenue de la porte
d'asnières

the hour of asphyxiation of geraniums on avenue of the door of the
chapel

the hour of asphyxiation of lilacs on avenue de la porte de lilas

the hour of lengthening shadows on avenue du maréchal franchet
d'espérey

the hour of the chapel closing on avenue de la porte de vincennes
the hour of take-off of pigeons on the place de la porte de versailles
the hour of the café closing in rue du roi d'alger
the hour of lighting the streetlights in the place de la porte de passy
the hour of invisible cats in the rue du bois de boulogne
the hour of sleepiness of inhabitants in rue du parc de charonne

the hour of remembering the disappearance of rue du moulin de beurre

from *The Penguin Book of Oulipo*, ed. Philip Terry (Penguin, 2019)

The Hour

- Using ‘The Hour’ as inspiration, write a poem about where you live.
- Begin each line with ‘The hour of...’, then add a description of what’s going on at that time, and the name of the street in which it’s happening.
- Try and include every street in your town, so we get a sense of the whole place.
- Think about using something other than ‘The Hour’ as your repeated phrase, to vary things, and make the poem more your own: ‘The day of...’ ‘The time of...’ ‘The morning of...’ ‘The vision of...’ ‘The collection of...’ ‘The sound of...’ ‘The smell of...’ and so on.