

Urban Spaces

A National Poetry Day
resource from First Story

Key Stage 3-5

FIRST STORY

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Urban Spaces

from SJ Bradley for
First Story

Night Music

I saw sounds at night
altering the shapes of trees

tickling shadows
dancing on an owl's tongue,

I saw sounds skipping
from door to door,

rattling the letterbox,
slipping into dreams,

I saw a gentle drumbeat
chase a prancing fox,

amongst a tiny applause
of closing flowers.

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from *Daydreams and Jellybeans* by
Alex Wharton, illustrated by Katy
Riddell (Firefly Press, 2021)



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Warm Up - Questions about the text

Spend 5-10 minutes thinking about, or discussing the following questions:

1. Wharton's poem focuses on a particular time of day. Why do you think he chose this time of day to focus on?
2. What do you think is the mood of this poem and why?
3. Wharton uses a lot of continuous (-ing) verbs. Why do you think that might be?
4. Which of the metaphors in this poem do you like the most and why?
5. The simple phrase 'I saw' is repeated throughout the poem. Do you like this repetition? Why or why not?
6. Sibilance is a feature of this poem. Why might that be considered effective?



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Focus on the Details

Think of a wild animal you see often in your local environment. It doesn't have to be fancy or exotic, in fact we're focusing on the lesser celebrated, everyday animals such as squirrels, pigeons, crows, spiders or hedgehogs.

STEP 1

Take 5 minutes to describe what that animal looks like. What colour is it? How is its body shaped? Where can it be seen? What time of day do you usually see it? Where do you usually see it? How does it move? What does it do when you see it?

STEP 2

Take another 5 minutes to describe the animal using senses other than seeing. If I couldn't see that animal, what might I hear, smell, or touch? Be creative - you don't have to be literal!



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Vivid Vignette Poem

You now have fifteen minutes to create a poem about a narrator who is closely observing an animal going about its life. You can use the repeated words 'I saw' if you would like to. Your poem should draw heavily on senses other than sight, to force yourself into more adventurous descriptions.

Try to describe your animal using bright and rich imagery by considering:

What does your animal smell like? You can be figurative here and bring in other images. Hedgehogs can smell of fallen chestnuts, pigeons of sad memories.

What does your animal feel like? Again, don't feel you have to be literal. Crows feathers can feel like wax.

What does your animal sound like? Perhaps spiders sound like your sister's shrieks echoing around the bathtub? Maybe seagulls shrieks are like battle cries?



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Let's Share

Take 15 minutes to share your work and listen to others. If you're reading, remember: this is only your first draft. Nobody is expecting perfection so read loud and proud!

If you're listening, remember: listen gratefully and sincerely. Offer positive, specific feedback if you can – it's helpful and validating.

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