

Custodian

A National Poetry Day
resource from Brian Moses

Key Stages 1-2

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Custodian

I am a custodian.
Custodian of the landscape,
its mysteries and memories.

Custodian of the may blossom
that wakes the hedges
after winter slumbers.

Custodian of languages:
The calling of cattle at first light,
the arguments of foxes,
the complaining of sheep,
the gossip from overhead geese.

Custodian of the berries and sloes,
the rich bounty of hedgerows.
Custodian of the fallen trees,
the scampering of squirrels,
the whirring of pheasants' wings,
the hide and seek deer,
the woodpecker's drum roll.

Custodian of winter's snow and summer's draught,
of sunset and sunrise, of misty hideaways,
of dripping fog, of woods and streams,
the valleys, hills and skies.

I am a custodian.
I have no desire to own these things,
these places, just to know
that on my watch,
and until I relinquish responsibility,
all is as it should be.

Brian Moses

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CONTEXT

'Custodian' is a person who guards, protects or maintains, and I wrote my poem during the first covid lockdown when the world closed in around us and we had to make the best out of where we lived.

I'm fortunate to live in the countryside and everyday the dog and I took our exercise in the valley beyond our back garden. Most days we followed the same route and I began to notice small changes in the landscape as winter gave way to spring.

I began taking notes of things that I saw and heard – the first May blossom, geese flying overhead, cattle calls and arguing foxes. I made an inventory, as I often do before writing a poem, filling pages of my notebook and then sifting through them to see what I wanted to include in the poem.



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WRITE IT

You can write a poem based on this idea, about being a custodian of the landscape where you live.

Begin by making an inventory of the sights and sounds around you and once you have as long a list as you can get, start to be selective and pick out what you think works best for a poem.

If you wish, you could use my line 'I am a custodian' and hang your ideas on that but don't feel constrained by that if you'd like to try a different approach.

Don't ever think that where you live is dull and uninspiring. It is the poet's job to bring places to life, to point out things that people might miss as they pass by in a hurry. I once wrote a poem about signs of spring in the city and included the lines – 'and a single primrose shows its head/ at the dump, like a lucky charm.'

So wherever you are, in a city street, by a railway line, looking out from a tower block, by the seaside, in a village – become a custodian and bring that place to life for your reader.



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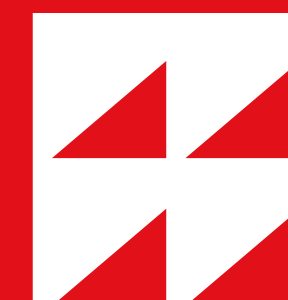
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