

# SOUTHBANK CENTRE



**Give me a land of boughs in leaf,  
A land of trees that stand;  
Where trees are fallen there is grief;  
I love no leafless land.**

A E Housman (1859-1936)





**Welcome to your third creative booklet from Art by Post, a way for us to stay connected and creative when we're not able to meet face to face.**



**This booklet's guest artist is Jacqueline Saphra. She has written plays, songs and film scripts, but poetry was her first love. She teaches at The Poetry School and is a founder of Poets for the Planet.**

'Trees are such an important part of our lives and the lives of our planet. I always enjoy using art as a starting point for poems and have an interest in the natural world as a subject.

'I find that giving my attention to an image is a great way to get into writing. You'll notice from the extract of poetry that I've chosen that I have a love of strong rhythm and rhyme (which I think goes back to obsessively reading Mother Goose anthologies as a small child). I think of writing a poem as a way of discovering something new. The use of rhythm and rhyme pushes me in unexpected directions and encourages me to use words I might not have thought of otherwise.

AE Housman's poem (see the front cover) addresses both his joy in nature and a sense of mortality. In this short extract you can see both the exuberance of the tree in leaf, and the sadness of the loss of the fallen tree.

**1**

Some of us are currently experiencing grief and loneliness. But for many this has also been a time when we are more aware than ever of the beauty in our lives.

**Think about contrasts.**

**Take a piece of paper and divide it into two columns.**

- a. In the left-hand column make a list of things that frustrate you now. Like not being able to get the fruit or biscuits you enjoy, or being kept on hold waiting on the phone for the doctor, or not being able to get out into the sunshine.
- b. In the right-hand column make a list of things of beauty in your life right now. They might be very small things: the first sip of a cup of tea in the morning, your favourite soap, the sound of birdsong, or blossoms, perhaps, like the ones in the photograph.



## 2

### Using your lists

- a. Write some lines about things that you are noticing and enjoying at the moment.

Write lines beginning: 'I notice ...'

Example: 'I notice the warmth of my morning tea ...'

- b. Write some lines about the things you want to do at the moment but can't, or things that frustrate you.

Write some lines beginning: 'I wish I could ...'

Example: 'I wish I could walk out and feel the sun'

**Keep adding new lines for as long as you can.**



## 3

Housman loves to use strong rhymes at the ends of lines of verse. In his poem he rhymes 'leaf' with 'grief' and 'stand' with 'land'.

The poem has the same kind of music as a song or nursery rhyme even though it addresses something adults can identify with.

**Have a go at finding some rhymes.**

**Take one of your lines and find a rhyme for the last word.**

You could make a list of rhymes to choose from:

Example: 'I wish I could walk out and feel the sun'

Rhymes: fun/run/done/none/begun

or 'I love the taste of morning tea'

me/be/see/flee/agree/knee

You might end up with a rhyming pair of lines (a couplet) like:

'I love the taste of morning tea

today that is enough for me'

or

'I wish I could go out and feel the sun

or take an evening trip when day is done'

**See if you can write some more couplets based on your favourite lines.**



**4**

## Arrange the lines in an order that you like.

Think about contrasts between the beauties and challenges of your life at the moment. Read your poem out loud. Enjoy the music and the rhymes.

**5**

The artwork on the cover is 'Tree... #2' by Myoung Ho Lee. This image is part of *Among the Trees*, a group exhibition at the Hayward Gallery that explores our relationship with trees and forests. While the exhibition is closed, we wanted to share a small part of it with you.

In Lee's photograph, the white canvas behind the tree in blossom highlights its simple and singular beauty but also its loneliness.

**Imagine an exhibition of photographs, with each one illustrating one of your rhyming couplets.**

**Describe in writing what is in each photograph.  
Or sketch what each picture would look like.**

## We'd love to see your sketches and hear your poetry.

Once we reopen our venues, we hope to create an exhibition of your work. If you'd like to send us a copy of what you've created, post it in the Freepost envelope included in this pack, or put it into your own envelope marked clearly 'Freepost SOUTHBANK CENTRE'. You don't need to add a stamp, but make sure you include your name and address.

Or email your work to: [artbypost@southbankcentre.co.uk](mailto:artbypost@southbankcentre.co.uk)

We will do our best to send it back to you after we've made a copy (but we may not always be able to). Along with your poem, please include your name on the yellow slip provided. If you are shielding (staying at home in order to keep yourself safe from the virus) please arrange for somebody else to post your work to us, or give us a phone call.

Southbank Creative Learning Team: 020 7960 4206

Leave us a message and we will reply as soon as possible. But please forgive us for taking a little longer than usual to get back to you at the moment.

No stamp needed

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**Thank you for taking part. We'll send you your next Art by Post booklet in the next couple of weeks so please look out for it.**



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