

Poetry 2012: The Written World



Resources for Teachers

Country: New Zealand

Poet: Adrian Croucher

Poem: Nowhere

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About this Resource

Activities in this resource are aimed at pupils in lower secondary school (S1–S3).

Curriculum for Excellence Correspondences (Levels 3–4)

Literacy and English experiences and outcomes

Reading the poem

*To show my understanding, I can comment, with evidence, on the content and form of short and extended texts, and respond to literal, inferential and evaluative questions and other types of close reading tasks. **ENG 3-17a***

*To show my understanding, I can give detailed, evaluative comments, with evidence, on the content and form of short and extended texts, and respond to different kinds of questions and other types of close reading tasks. **ENG 4-17a***

Creative Activity

*I can recreate a convincing impression of a personal experience for my reader, sharing my feelings and reactions to the changing circumstances with some attempt at reflection. **ENG 3-30a***

*I can create a convincing impression of my personal experience and reflect on my response to the changing circumstances to engage my reader. **ENG 4-30a***

Nowhere

By the side of the road
You unfold your flat earth
And consult it for directions.

Little round towns are threaded
Yellow on a red road
Winding round the numbered mountains.

But here, there is no
Golf course
Rest area
Scenic view
Historic place
Or motor camp:

Look up. Perfect summer blue
Shows between the leaves
Of a spreading puriri
Old as the hills.

Look down. Through the dry grass
The black ants crackle.
They've found your biscuits.

According to the AA
You are nowhere.

Now you know.

Adrian Croucher

from *121 New Zealand Poems*, edited by Bill Manhire (Auckland: Godwit, 2005)
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Notes:

“puriri” (*Vitex lucens*) is an evergreen tree native to New Zealand.

“the AA” is the Automobile Association, a motoring organisation which publishes road maps.

The Poet & His Work

Adrian Croucher lives in Auckland, New Zealand, where he was born (in 1969) and grew up. He works as a research scientist in the Department of Engineering Science at the University of Auckland.

His writing has appeared in local literary magazines, and in Bill Manhire's anthology *121 New Zealand Poems*.

Adrian's other main creative interest besides writing is music, and he performed internationally from 1996 to 2002 with the experimental music/performance group From Scratch. His current musical project involves inventing instruments from recycled bicycle parts.

Reading the poem

- What is the “flat earth” in l.2?
- Why is it being unfolded?
- What is missing “here”?
- What is found “here”?
- Why are these things not marked on the map?
- What does “nowhere” mean, in the context of the poem?
- What is the impact of the last line of the poem?
- Is the poem written in the first, second or third person? Singular or plural?
- Why do you think the poet has chosen to write in this person, rather than otherwise?
- Is this a poem about being lost? Why?

Discussion

- Look at different kinds of maps – a world atlas, a road map, an Ordnance Survey map, a city streetmap, a map for hikers, a map for cyclists, and so on. Discuss the main features of each, and how they differ one from another.
- Talk about places you've visited, or passed through, where there were few facilities, and which felt like "nowhere". Did you like being there, or not? Why?
- When we talk about remote places, we sometimes say they are "in the middle of nowhere", or "in the back of beyond". Can you think of other ways of describing remote places?

Research Activity

Look at the Ordnance Survey map of the area your school is in.

What are the main man-made features of the landscape shown on the map? Think about

- residential areas
- important individual buildings (schools, churches, hotels, sporting facilities, etc)
- historical places
- roads and paths

What are the main natural features of the landscape? Think about

- streams, rivers and lochs
- hills and mountains
- forests and moorland
- coastal features such as cliffs and beaches

Where is the nearest "nowhere" – a part of the map with none of the sort of places mentioned in stanza 3 of the poem?

Creative Activity

Write a poem called 'Somewhere' about where you live. Before you start, find a map of the area, such as Ordnance Survey map.

Notes

Before you write the poem, make two lists:

- for the *first*, look at the map and write down, say, five or six features shown on the map. (See 'Research Activity').
- for the *second*, write down other local features which you know about, but which are not on the map, such as:
 - the garden of a friend or relative
 - a short cut
 - a particular tree
 - a place where you have seen certain creatures (birds, insects, mammals or fish)
 - somewhere there are lots of people
 - somewhere you can be alone
 - a place where something funny happened

Choose two or three items from each list, and write down what you would *hear* if you were there.

Creative Activity

(continued)

Writing

Write in the second person – in other words, you are speaking to someone else. Assume they don't know this area at all.

- In verse one, describe the area according to the map;

When you read the map, it shows you...

- In verse two, invite the reader to come to the area, and tell them what they'd see that's not mentioned on the map;

But if you were here, you'd also see...

- And in verse three, extend this to the people and creatures they might encounter;

And if you were here, you'd meet...

- Finish the poem with a short verse about what they might hear;

Listen! Can you hear that? It's...

Further Reading & Weblinks

The poem 'Nowhere', representing New Zealand, is part of The Written World – a collaboration between the Scottish Poetry Library and BBC radio to broadcast a poem from every single nation competing in London 2012.

www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poems/nowhere

'Nowhere' on the SPL website

www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/about/projects-partners/written-world

Other poems selected for The Written World

www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-15357770

New Zealand country profile

www.guardian.co.uk/world/newzealand

Recent news articles about New Zealand

www.radionz.co.nz/

Radio New Zealand

This is one of twelve resources, written by Ken Cockburn for the Scottish Poetry Library's project The Written World, May 2012.

www.kencockburn.co.uk

www.spl.org.uk