

**LEDBURY POETRY FESTIVAL COMMUNITY PROGRAMME
POETRY AND PICTURES POETRY WORKSHOP
JULY 2020 : THE ART OF L S LOWRY**

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EXERCISE ONE: This is a warm-up writing exercise called Lines About Headlines

Choose a headline from the list (Appendix 1 below) and write a poem/piece inspired by it. This may be stream-of-consciousness thoughts, a newspaper item, a diary entry, a piece from the point of view of a character involved in the story, an interview...etc.

The headlines have been collected from newspapers since March 2020. They can be used as prompts to write lockdown poems from different angles.

EXERCISE TWO: The theme of this exercise is THE ART OF L S LOWRY

This part is about looking closely at Lowry's artworks and considering example poems.

Let's begin with some quotes by Lowry on art:

"You don't need brains to be a painter, just feelings."

"I am not an artist. I am a man who paints."

"If people call me a Sunday painter, I'm a Sunday painter who paints every day the week."

"My ambition was to put the industrial scene on the map, because nobody had done it, nobody had done it seriously."

"I wanted to paint myself into what absorbed me ... Natural figures would have broken the spell of it, so I made my figures half unreal. Some critics have said that I turned my figures into puppets, as if my aim were to hint at the hard economic necessities that drove them. To say the truth, I was not thinking very much about the people. I did not care for them in the way a social reformer does. They are part of a private beauty that haunted me. I loved them and the houses in the same way: as part of a vision."

"I am a simple man, and I use simple materials: ivory black, vermilion, Prussian blue, yellow ochre, flake white and no medium. That's all I've ever used in my paintings. I like oils ... I like a medium you can work into over a period of time." While Lowry often claimed to only use these five colours, he also used titanium white and zinc white. This use of other paints became helpful when determining that works were genuine and not forgeries.

Lowry on painting his *Seascapes*:

"It's the battle of life – the turbulence of the sea ... I have been fond of the sea all my life, how wonderful it is, yet how terrible it is. But I often think ... what if it suddenly changed its mind and didn't turn the tide? And came straight on? If it didn't stay and came on and on and on and on ... That would be the end of it all."

There is a lot of information about the life and work of L S Lowry here:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L. S. Lowry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L._S._Lowry)

For more information about Lowry, visit: <https://thelowry.com/>

Information about Lowry's work can also be found here: <https://www.christies.com/features/10-things-to-know-about-LS-Lowry-8657-1.aspx>

Take a close look at the following artworks by Lowry. Consider how they work as art, how and why were they created, how the artworks make you feel, etc...



Pictures from L to R clockwise:

L.S. Lowry: Going To Work (1943)

LS Lowry's iconic painting 'Going to Work,' was commissioned in 1943 at the height of the Second World War by the War Artists Advisory Committee (WAAC). Heavy industry was playing a crucial role in the war effort and the WAAC wanted to reflect that in their art collection. Filled with all the signature features that have made Lowry such a much-loved artist, 'Going to Work,' is set in front of the Mather & Platt engineering works in Manchester as the crowd of matchstick workers flow into the factory. The white sky and ground, originally thought to be snow, is in fact an evocation of industrial haze. At the time, Lowry was paid 25 guineas for the commission and finished 'Going to Work' in three months. Once complete, it went on display at home and abroad as the WAAC attempted to promote Britain's Second World War effort.

L.S. Lowry: The Rush Hour (1964)

L.S. Lowry: Seascape (1945)

L.S. Lowry: Girl With Red Shoes (1960)

L.S. Lowry: Two People (1962)

Now look at these poems:

Matchstalk Men and Matchstalk Cats and Dogs by Brian Burke & Michael Coleman:

For a film of the song, visit here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kmopSVOMSsU>

For the lyrics, visit here:

<https://lyricsplayground.com/alpha/songs/m/matchstalkmenandmatchstalkcatsanddogs.html>

Notice the rhyme scheme used in the lyrics of this song (*aa b cc b* in the verses) and the use of a chorus.

L S Lowry by Howard Chapman:

<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/l-s-lowry/>

(Notes from the author: *Common to most urban landscape paintings of L. S. Lowry is a curious pale yellow hue, reminiscent of the snow scenes by Dutch masters but peopled by the peasantry of Salford. The background was borne of a practical technique, layering white paint on the bare canvas or wood and then scraped smooth. This provided a clear base for the composites of industrial buildings and strange isolated folk who so fascinated Lowry. Growing up in Old Trafford in the 50's I remember that yellowed light, later banished by 'smokeless zones' and the 'Clean Air Act'. Lowry evokes that light for me: dank November nights carrying 'Pink' paraffin home, the can cutting into cold hands, the menacing smog filling me with dark imaginings of bogey men and murders. I remember, too, when I first started work in Trafford Park, once the largest industrial estate in Europe. The AEI Metrovic factory I travelled to features in a number of Lowry's paintings. The early morning bus filled up with workmen coughing up phlegm. The gloom seemed to be outside and inside and within, like a thorough shroud for body and soul)*

Notice the descriptions, the sounds of the words and the 'word music' in this poem.

Haikus by John Kitching:

https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=ZV7JITpXeAQC&pg=PA209&lpg=PA209&dq=the+pen+in+my+hand+kitching&source=bl&ots=4NFmflkgn3&sig=ACfU3U0yS_WTzosn2ZjBPapNoakg1QfYdg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiXy5zojqzqAhVIRRUlHbBpD0kQ6AEwAXoECAsQAQ#v=onepage&q=the%20pen%20in%20my%20hand%20kitching&f=false

An example of a poem called a renga - linked haikus on a common theme. Haikus fit well with Lowry's artwork as they are also seemingly simple forms that say so much more than the sum of their parts. A haiku is a short poem of three lines with a syllable structure of 5 syllables in the first line, 7 syllables in the second and 5 syllables in the third line. You can link haikus about a common theme together like beads on a string to create a longer poem called a renga.

Think about the form, patterns and repetitions in the poems, the 'word music', what each poem is saying to the reader, how you feel when you read them, etc.

EXERCISE THREE: Write a poem inspired by the theme of The Art Of L S Lowry

This part is about writing your poem.

Choose an image to work with. Make notes about it. What does it make you think about? What do you notice about it? How does it make you feel? What do you think about when you look at it?

Next, write a detailed description of the work of art. Include words that indicate size, shape, colour, light/shade, objects, figures, positions etc. You may notice details in the painting that you hadn't before.

Finally, write a poem in response to your work of art. If you need inspiration, look back at the notes you have made. Remember, there are many different ways to go about this.

Some suggested approaches:

- Write about the scene or subject being depicted in the artwork.
- Relate the work of art to something else it makes you think of or a memory.
- Write about the experience of looking at the art.
- Speculate about how or why the artist created this work.
- Imagine a story behind what you see presented in the work of art.
- Imagine what was happening while the artist was creating this work.

- Speak to or directly address the artist or the subject(s) of the painting, in your own voice.
- Write in the voice of the artist.
- Write in the voice of a person or object depicted in the artwork.

Your poem could be written in the form and/or style of one of the example poems - eg: using the particular rhyme scheme of the *Matchstalk* song; including lots of details and description of a lived experience as in Howard Chapman's poem; adopting a form such as a renga...

And, of course, you are perfectly free to do your own thing!
Enjoy!

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The Festival is grateful to Arts Council England the Garfield Weston Foundation Poetry and Pictures is a joint partnership with Herefordshire Mind.



Appendix 1

Headlines (Collected March 2020)

15 THINGS WE NEVER KNEW BEFORE CORONAVIRUS
 ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY TO LEAD WORSHIP FROM KITCHEN
 LOCKDOWN CLEARS SKY IN WORLD'S POLLUTION HOTSPOTS
 FINDING HOPE IN A VIRUS-BEATING MERMAID
 LONG SHOES, BIG HATS: FASHION DOES DISTANCING
 MILKMEN: DOORSTEP DEMAND GOES 'BESERK' DUE TO PANDEMIC
 UNSOLD FRENCH WINES TO BE TURNED INTO SANITISER GEL
 HOW COVID-19 HAS TRANSFORMED NEIGHBOURS INTO COMMUNITIES
 SPINACH AND BLUE CHEESE 'CURB COVID-19'
 HOW A MAN DOING SUDOKU AT HOME BECAME A GLOBAL SPECTATOR SPORT
 A USER'S GUIDE TO WEARING – AND WASHING – A FACE MASK
 BIRDSONG HAS BROUGHT SMALL JOYS TO A STILL AND SILENCED WORLD
 FEMALE STAFF STRUGGLE WITH PPE CUSTOM-MADE FOR MEN
 BACK TO THE FUTURE AS ROAD TRAFFIC DROPS TO 1955 LEVELS
 SPACE STATION CREW RETURN TO A STRANGELY ALTERED EARTH
 DON'T BRING YOUR DOG FOR A WALK IN CUMBRIA, IT'S CLOSED
 LIFE'S NOT SO SWEET NOW THE WALLAHS HAVE GONE
 FRENCH PRIME MINISTER'S BEARD BECOMES SYMBOL OF COVID-19 CRISIS
 MISSING THE SOLSTICE? MAKE A STONE CIRCLE OUT OF CUSTARD CREAMS