

**LEDBURY POETRY FESTIVAL COMMUNITY PROGRAMME  
SEGMENTS POETRY WORKSHOP  
FEBRUARY 2021 : WINDOWS , OR “WIND-EYES”**

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**EXERCISE ONE: Warm-up writing exercise – Mystery Objects For Sale!**

Look at the two mystery objects from the Science Museum Group's collection in Blythe House, London.



Object 1: Image 1a shows the object intact; Image 1b shows it dismantled. Right: Object 2.

Pick one object and write an advertisement/article about it for a sales brochure. Decide what you think the object might be, describe it, what it was used for, who used it, its origins, who made it, where it was found, has it a colourful history, any stories attached to it, etc... Why would someone want to buy it? Be imaginative, be persuasive and do the hard sell!

After you've written your piece, you can follow these links to find out what the objects actually are!

Item 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FnPQM6-paew>

Item 2: <https://blog.sciencemuseum.org.uk/sante/>

**EXERCISE TWO: The theme for this exercise is WINDOWS**

As we are spending so much time indoors during lockdown, we are appreciating our windows a lot more and the views and light they give us. This workshop explores the history and design of windows.



Guide To The Slides,  
Clockwise from Top  
Left: 1 - Roman Glass, 2-  
Early timber window,  
Childswickham,  
Worcestershire (pre-  
16th century), 3 - Tudor  
window, 4 - French  
mullioned window, 5 -  
Crown glass, 6 - The  
Window Tax, 7 -  
Victorian window, 8 -  
Cross window, 9 -  
Eyebrow window

Right: Slide 8  
Below: Slide 9



Clockwise from Top Left: 10 - Sash window, Slide 11 - Casement window, 12 - Transom window, 13 - Louvered window, 14 - Skylight, 15 - Pavement light outside Burlington House, London; 16 - Picture window



Clockwise from Top Left: 17 - Lattice window, Hellens Manor, Much Marcle, Herefordshire, 18 -Message scratched on window pane in Hetty's Room, Hellens Manor, 19 - Sunlight through stained glass, Nasir al-Mulk Mosque, Shiraz, Iran, 20 - Hexagonal windows, The Eden Project, Cornwall, 21 - A Vermont or witch window, USA, 22 - Woven bamboo

window in a tea house, Japan

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Window>

<https://www.thenbs.com/knowledge/windows-glass-glazing-a-brief-history>

### Introduction

The English language-word 'window' originates from the Old Norse 'vindauga', from 'vindr' ('wind') and 'auga' ('eye'), i.e., 'wind eye'. 'Window' is first recorded in the early 13th century, and originally referred to an unglazed hole in a roof. 'Window' replaced the Old English 'eagþyril' which literally means 'eye-hole' and 'eagduru' 'eye-door'.

Many Germanic languages however adopted the Latin word 'fenestra' to describe a window with glass. The use of 'window' in English is probably because of the Scandinavian influence on the English language by means of loanwords during the Viking Age. In English the word 'fenester' was used as a parallel until the mid-18th century.

### History

What is a window? Simply, it's a hole in a wall to let light in (or an arrow out!). From our earliest times, the need for light has been central to our needs as humans. Letting light into a cave or crude structure allowed its inhabitants to better perform tasks and navigate their surroundings, alerting them to the day's cycle and keeping them in sync with it – something that we now understand is vital to human health and emotional health and wellbeing. The drawback with just a hole is that it does not just let light in, it lets heat out, lets the weather in and may let unwanted visitors in.

In the 13th century BC, the earliest windows were unglazed openings in a roof to admit light during the day. Early “windows” in the Bronze and Iron Ages used scraped and stretched animal hides (similar to drum skins) which were dipped in oils to make them translucent and waterproof. Over time, windows were built that both protected the inhabitants from the elements and transmitted light, using multiple small pieces of translucent material, such as flattened pieces of animal horn and thin slices of marble. In the Far East, China, Korea and Japan, paper was used to fill windows.

The Romans were the first people known to use glass for windows, a technology likely first produced in Roman Egypt, in Alexandria c100 AD. The Romans in England 43 to 409 AD used small pieces of glass in windows. But it would be over a millennium before a window glass became transparent enough to see through clearly, as we think of it now.

Over the centuries techniques were developed to shear through one side of a blown glass cylinder and produce thinner rectangular window panes from the same amount of glass material. This gave rise to tall narrow windows, usually separated by a vertical support called a mullion. Mullioned glass windows were the windows of choice among European well-to-do. In England, pre-16th century, most windows were of stone or timber construction with unglazed openings that could be covered in various ways: oiled cloth, paper, shutters, or even thin sheets of horn. Glazed windows were reserved for those buildings of the highest stature, and they were generally small panes of glass set in lead strip latticework.

With the 16th century came the Tudor dynasty and a greater degree of prosperity. Windows became larger, and more prosperous households used window size and extravagance as a means of displaying their wealth. While glazed windows were still rare in smaller, more humble homes, their use was definitely on the rise. Glass became common in the windows of ordinary homes in England only in the early 17th century.

In 17th century Europe, the Italian Renaissance had a strong influence on window shape; a trend that would soon make its way to England. Windows became taller than they were wide and were often divided into four by a mullion and transom.

The sash window was also introduced in the 17th century as a result of the introduction of crown glass (an early type of window glass; in this process, glass was blown into a ‘crown’ or hollow globe). However, because crown glass was so expensive to produce, the most popular type of window remained casement with leaded glazing.

In 1696, William III introduced a “window tax” in England and Wales. People were required to pay between two and eight shillings a year, depending upon the number of windows in their houses, and many bricked over their windows in order to avoid the charge. (William’s window tax is where the term “daylight robbery” originates from). The tax remained in place for 156 years and was finally repealed in 1851.

In the Georgian Period from 1714 – 1836 AD, the neo-Classical styles were continued. Larger clear panes in a timber lattice were used. Over the course of the 18th century, the sash design evolved. Advancements in glass making meant window size also began to grow during the 19th century. Victorian windows, from 1837-1901 AD, used even bigger panes. During both the Georgian and Victorian periods, dramatic increases in the numbers of domestic dwellings with windows occurred.

When, in 1834, a cylinder sheet process for glass-making was imported from Germany, Britain was able to produce higher quality glass in larger sheets far less expensively than previously-used methods. That combined with the withdrawal of the window tax meant that the price of glass was greatly reduced and more people could afford to have windows in their homes.

### Types of Window

Types include the eyebrow window, fixed windows, hexagonal windows, single-hung, and double-hung sash windows, horizontal sliding sash windows, casement windows, awning windows, hopper windows, tilt, and slide windows (often door-sized), tilt and turn windows, transom windows, sidelight windows, louvered windows, clerestory windows, lancet windows, skylights, roof windows, roof lanterns, bay windows, oriel windows, thermal windows, picture windows, Rose windows, emergency exit windows, stained glass windows, French windows, panel windows, double/triple-paned windows, and witch windows.

A cross-window is a rectangular window usually divided into four lights by a mullion (a vertical element that forms a division between units of a window or screen) and transom (a horizontal structural beam or bar) that form a Latin cross.

The term eyebrow window is used in two ways: a curved top window in a wall or an eyebrow dormer; and a row of small windows usually under the front eaves.

A sash window is the traditional style of window in the UK, and many other places that were formerly colonized by the UK, with two parts (sashes) that overlap slightly and slide up and down inside the frame.

A casement is a window that is attached to its frame by one or more hinges at the side and swings in or out like a door. A casement window may be left-handed, right-handed, or double. The casement window is the dominant type now found in modern buildings in the UK and many other parts of Europe.

A transom is a window above a door. A fan-shaped transom is known as a fanlight, especially in the British Isles. A famous example is the door to 10 Downing Street.

A louvered window consists of parallel slats of glass or acrylic that open and close like a Venetian blind, usually using a crank or a lever. They are used extensively in tropical architecture.

A skylight is a window built into a roof structure. This type of window allows for natural daylight and moonlight. Daylighting is the practice of placing windows, skylights, other openings, and reflective surfaces so that sunlight (direct or indirect) can provide effective internal lighting. Energy savings can be achieved from the reduced use of electric lighting or from passive solar heating.

A picture window is a large fixed window in a wall, typically without glazing bars. Picture windows provide an unimpeded view, as if framing a picture.

A lattice window is a window glazed with small panes of glass separated by wooden or lead glazing bars arranged in a decorative glazing pattern. Slide 18

shows a message scratched onto a pane of glass in Hetty's Room at Hellens Manor, Much Marcle, Herefordshire <https://hellensmanor.com>

Read about Hetty's unfortunate story here: <https://www.catherinecavendish.com/2013/10/hellens-heart-history-and-hauntings.html>

*Hetty Walwyn, daughter of the house at Hellens Manor, eloped with a local lad called John Piercel, but he abandoned her and, with nowhere else to go, she was forced to return home and throw herself on the mercy of her family. But there was little mercy for Hetty. Her mother marched her up to her bedroom and locked her in. Poor Hetty was to be denied human companionship for the next 30 years, until she died, still incarcerated in that one room. The only way she could communicate was by pulling a cord which rang a solitary bell. Visitors can still do this - and a more mournful, lonely sound you could hardly imagine. You can actually see a message she etched with a diamond ring into one of the window panes: "It is a part of virtue to abstain from what we love if that will prove our bane". Local tales insist that her ghost still haunts the room.*

A stained glass window is a window composed of pieces of coloured glass frequently portraying persons, scenes or symbols.

A hexagonal window is a hexagon-shaped window, resembling a bee cell. It can be a major architectural element to provide the natural lighting inside buildings, eg: The Eden Project

In American architecture, a witch window is a window placed in the gable-end wall of a house and rotated approximately 45 degrees from the vertical, leaving it diagonal, with its long edge parallel to the roof slope. Witch windows are found almost exclusively in the US state of Vermont. The name 'witch window' appears to come from a folk belief that witches cannot fly their broomsticks through the tilted windows. The windows are also known as 'coffin windows'; it is unclear if they really were used for removing a coffin from the second floor (avoiding a narrow staircase), or if the odd placement on the wall was reminiscent of a coffin. The windows are also known as 'sideways' or 'lazy windows' for their orientation.

Now look at the following poems:

*Hotel Room, 12th Floor* – Norman MacCaig

<https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poem/hotel-room-12th-floor/>

*Tree At My Window* – Robert Frost

<https://allpoetry.com/Tree-At-My-Window>

<https://interestingliterature.com/2020/05/robert-frost-tree-at-my-window-analysis/>

*Written with a Diamond on her Window at Woodstock* – Queen Elizabeth I

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44216/written-with-a-diamond-on-her-window-at-woodstock>

<http://poetry-fromthehart.blogspot.com/2018/04/written-with-diamond-on-her-window-at.html>

*This poem, as its title indicates, was indeed etched into a window while she was kept under house arrest by her half sister, Mary. Mary, a Catholic, sought to undo her father, Henry VIII's English Reformation. Suspicious of Protestant plots, she had her half sister, Elizabeth, placed under house arrest. While Elizabeth is not known to have taken part in any plots against her sister, Elizabeth was well aware of her tenuous position.*

*That is what this poem shows most clearly: Elizabeth's awareness of, and sly rebuttal of, her position. This ability to navigate life or death political situations is evident here, and indeed, the poem sounds almost triumphant in its self-declaration as being prison literature. The poem is essentially a big fat "You can't prove anything" directed at the world. In her state writings, Elizabeth masterfully plays off of her image, her decisions, and the motives of others to always place herself out of harm's way. From an early time, it's clear she had mastered this skill.*

*Little Stones At My Window* – Mario Benedetti  
<https://poets.org/poem/little-stones-my-window>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mario\\_Benedetti](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mario_Benedetti)

Mario Orlando Hardy Hamlet Brenno Benedetti Farrugia; 14 September 1920 – 17 May 2009), best known as Mario Benedetti, was a Uruguayan journalist, novelist, and poet. Despite publishing more than 80 books and being published in twenty languages he was not well known in the English-speaking world. In the Spanish-speaking world he is considered one of Latin America's most important writers of the latter half of the 20th century.

*January* – Sara-Jane Arbury (an example of Tanka - a poem comprising 5 lines of 31 syllables – 5 syllables in the first line, 7 in the second, 5 in the third, 7 in the fourth, 7 in the fifth)

**January**

windowless window  
angelic colours falling  
white grey blue black chill  
winter graces my warm room  
blackbird woodpigeon haloed  
*Sara-Jane Arbury*

**EXERCISE THREE: Poetry About Windows**

Write a poem/piece inspired by the theme and/or the history we've explored. Here are some suggestions for ways in to the writing:

Write a personification poem from the point of view of a window. Write your poem imagining the window is 'alive' and has the same attributes as a human being. What would it say? Think about the function it has, where it is situated, what it sees, smells, hears, touches etc. Memories? What does it think about/dream about?

Write a poem inspired by the theme that evokes a personal memory involving a window in some way.

Write an ode to a window – a poem in praise of a window; a thank-you poem to a window – taking into account its function, how it makes you feel, what it enables you to see. Praise details about it that you may have taken for granted.

Why not have a go at writing a poem made up of tanka verses? 5 lines of 31 syllables – 5, 7, 5, 7, 7 (look at *January* by Sara-Jane Arbury as an example).

And, of course, you may write a poem about the theme in your own way and in your own style!

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