

## Arts – Creative Writing: “Place Name”

# Level 1-4

### Lesson Description

This lesson continues inquiry into the expression of place in literature commenced in the Level 4 English task with John Betjeman’s poem “Devonshire Street W.1”;

**Students write a short poem, in a form of their choosing, that describes place and uses place names** in the same way: the name of a place, or places, that are real and part of their life, whose significance will be understood by those who live in the same area that they do.



It is important that students do not write about imaginary or unknown places – the exercise is to encourage students to think about the *meaning* of their place, of places that are local to them and to classmates, to appreciate that place names acquire an important code, or shorthand, in all of our lives.

Poetry, as a form of expression that frequently relies of distilled or compressed language, is particularly hospitable to this use of place names.

Whilst free-form and blank verse, by imposing no structural parameters, are the poetry types most accommodating of “freedom of expression”, it may be found in some classes that this exercise has value in imposing structure so that the purpose extends to demanding precise and inventive use of language.

Betjeman’s poem, for example, follows a strict rhyming pattern and it, or some other, may be applied – as may be a verse type, whether sonnet or limerick!

### Lesson Aim and Objectives

The lesson’s principal aim is to set an exercise in creative writing – or, more accurately, creative expression through writing. The particular challenge – taking Betjeman’s poem as a model – will be to consider which local place names (whether in the town or on the school grounds) have a function, or reputation, or in some other way *meaning* that is communicated through simply naming them.

### Materials Needed

None – although offering further examples of the expression of, and reference to, place through verse may add stimulus to students, particularly if a formal verse type (metre, rhyme) is required.