

English Lesson

"..by any other name" Level 04

Naming places can be a form of short-hand. Not just a simple way of identifying a spot on a map but, with the events of time or the development of some special characteristic, of capturing colour and meaning. "Scotland Yard" means police, "Kokoda Track" means Second World War battleground and so on.

An example is given in the work sheet of a poet using place names to convey meaning. The example is John Betjeman's poem "Devonshire Street W.1"; the important fact that Devonshire Street is known for a concentration of medical specialists, along with other necessary explanation, is given.

Lesson Description

The work sheet has questions about how the poet uses place, and description of place, to convey mood and meaning in his work. Students are then asked to write a piece of work, from any genre (not necessarily literature), that has communicated a sense of place (whether real or imagined) that has effected them, and to explain the effect.

Lesson Aim and Objectives

Betjeman succeeds in compressing meaning and emotion in his poem through reliance of the effect of place names (Devonshire Street, Kensington, Piccadilly) as code, shared by his readers and standing for not just places, but places *in which things happen*. Students will understand that through reading, and answering questions arising from, the poem and will be challenged to analyse the way(s) in which writers have conditioned their feelings towards a place they have never seen.

Materials Needed

Work sheet

NOTE ON THE POEM

A related exercise, to compose a poem in which students use the names of places significant to themselves, is included in the Arts section of this site, as an exercise in creative writing.