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**Teaching Chapter 2 – Your Stories**

**Intro**

At this stage of the programme, now that your students are aware what spoken word is and the objectives of the programme, they might start to pull away from the idea of writing personal pieces of creative writing, as they are not confident in their ability to tell interesting stories about themselves.

Poetry can feel like such an out of reach art-form, reserved for academics and ‘artsy people’, but this couldn’t be further from the truth. This chapter is about getting the students to acknowledge the things they know to be true about themselves and to engage with the things about them that will be the starting point for their poems.

**Suggested Mini Exercise**

**‘Story Grid’**

This is a mind mapping exercise to get the students to acknowledge their own voices and experiences that can be used in their writing. One of the most common things a young person will say when asked to write poetry about themselves is “I am not interesting” or “I have nothing to write about” or “I have nothing to say”. This exercise will show them that is not true.

* Get the students to take a new page and divide it into four boxes
* Label the top left box “I am” (example, *a big sister, tall, a musician*)
* Label the top right box “I like” (example, *visits to my grandmas, sunny days, activism, music festivals*)
* Label the bottom left box “I dislike” (example, *rude people, poverty, house music, cats*)
* Label the bottom right box “Things that have happened to me” (example, *been to the beach, became an older sibling, learned to ride a bike, moved school*)
* Get the students to spend some time filling out these boxes to the fullest they can. There should be at least 20 things in each box. Emphasise to the students that the examples can be big or small, every day or extraordinary.
* Get the students to look at their grids. Let them know that all the things there are the starting points for their stories. Their “I am” section represents their unique point of view. Their “likes” and “dislikes” represent what they have to say and what is important enough for them to talk about. Their “Things that have happened tome” is their frame of reference and settings for their stories. It’s how they communicate what they have to say by grounding it in experience. You can get the students to refer back to their story grid at any point in the programme.

**Poem and Learning Objectives**

**“Grandmother Glasgow” – Theme (history and place), Learning/Growing and Metaphor**

**Link - https://youtu.be/k42JKS7cqcY**

**Grandmother Glasgow**

I don’t remember my earlier memories

but she’s the tiny shoes and blankets and the *sing-songs*

my Grandmother never needed a fireside and an armchair

to keep us listening intently at her feet

my Grandmother kept stories stored

in the fold of her skirts

strapped to fragile ankles

grasped in her silk-worm hands

when she can’t sleep

my Grandmother thinks of every street

from Anderston Cross to Finneston

*Anthony Street, McIntyre Street,*

*Hyde Park, Guest, Oak, Lancefield, Port, Elliot and Grey*

my Grandmother sings the old songs

the crooning ones

the ones like *ali-bali-bee* and *Daisy, Daisy*

I’m in primary three

and the teacher asks if anyone knows the words

my hand shoots up

desperate to impress

it took me 20 years to figure out

she taught me the wrong words

my version went;

*“Daisy, Daisy, what dae ye make o’ that*

*upset the table and nearly killed the cat*

*the cat began tae bubble*

*so I hit it wae a shovel*

*it went tae bed wae a broken head*

*and a face like a kangaroo”*

my Grandmother tucks a wicked sense of humour

up her sleeve with her handkerchief

she’s got all the time in the world for you to get the joke

she’s laughing still

*if you don’t laugh you’ll greet*, she says

and somedays all we’ve been left with is lost

she lost

a home to a war

brother to illness

sister and breast to cancer,

husband to a heart attack

teeth

weight

the protective tissue in the soles of her feet

but she dances three times a week

she’s laughing still

she used to walk us everywhere

summer holidays smell like the streets of my city

the galleries and museums

swimming pools and libraries

my Grandmother taught me how to be a library

without ever opening a book

if I could I would spend every second with her

untying the histories from her throat

photographing the maps worn into

the soles of her feet

I wish I could make a library of all that she is

because my Grandmother is the City of Glasgow

she is laundry steam breath and close tile artistry

she is the subway and the seagulls

after your newspaper wrapped poke of chips

she is the number 6 bus,

Buchanan Street buskers,

ship yards and The Shed,

spirit of the Clyde

whiskey and water

she is the pub

she is the old songs

and I,

I am the legacy of Grandmother and City

with giant shoes to fill

so

if you never get the chance to meet my Grandmother

that’s okay

set your feet lose on the streets of Glasgow

you will find her on every corner

people make it and it makes people

from her to my father to me

stop to listen

in between the awful birdsong

of screaming people,

rumbling traffic off the kerbs,

the symphony of Sauchiehall Street

you’ll start to hear the old songs

there, you will always find her

*Anthony Street, McIntyre Street, Hyde Park, Guest,*

*Oak, Lancefield, Port, Elliot and Grey.*

**Context – What’s the Poem About**

This poem is almost an extension of the Introduction poem, as it talks about where I come from, both in literal and the metaphorical. I was born and raised in Glasgow, and my Grandmother had a huge part in bringing me up. When I sat down to write about where I come from and my background, the only thing I wanted to write about was stories about my Grandmother. So, I am using one story to tell another. You learn a lot about me and my formative years because of the stories I remember and, more specifically, how I chose to tell those stories about my Grandmother.

**Group Discussion – Things to Ask the Class**

* “A lot of poetry is using one story to tell another”. What do you think that means?
* What can you tell about the writer from this poem?
* What can you tell about the City of Glasgow from this poem?
* How much of the poem was extraordinary and how much of it was about everyday occurrences?
* Can you remember three things from summer holidays when you were much younger? Why do you think they stick out in your mind?

**Suggested Main Exercise**

**‘7 Minutes of Free Writing’**

This exercise is to let students shake off any writing anxiety they have before undertaking a creative task. By taking their brains off the hook and just writing the first thing that comes into their head it clears away any cobwebs and wakes up the creative part of their brain, as well as showing just how strange and weird and wonderful a place the subconscious mind is.

* Put 7 minutes on the clock
* Instruct the students to write at the top of their page ‘Outside these walls I am…’
* Tell the students that when the clock starts, they cannot stop writing, even if their mind comes to a natural stop their pens must keep moving. If the student does come to a pause or a stop, they must write the phrase ‘I am writing’ over and over again until they are ready to move on and continue the thread.
* Start the clock

**Some things to think about**

Your students might feel that they don’t have enough life experience or interesting stories that would lend themselves to poetry, spoken word or any sort of creative writing. Remind them that everything they are and everything they have experienced means that their own personal stories are unique; no one else has them. Remind them that no one else in the world will have the same Story Grid and no one can tell the stories they can.