

Creative writing activities

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**National
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Dear Me,

A reflection on the younger or future version of yourself.

Creative Activity:

Write a letter, a poem or flow of thoughts, on a page to your younger and/or future self.

Think of scene of either version meeting your present self – What would they say to each other? Where would this happen? What emotion would be present?

Here are a few creative prompts to help:

Do you remember when,

I've often thought about this moment/memory,

If we were to meet,

Reflection Points:

What would you say to yourself five or ten years ago?

Have you changed?

What lessons have you learnt?

Around My Cell

Read this extract by Ahmet Atlan and create your own version – *A Voyage (journey) Around Your Cell*.

Ahmet Altan (born 1950) is a Turkish author. He is known for advocating for minority rights and freedom of speech, which led to him being imprisoned many times. He was sentenced to life after a coup attempt in 2016. He was later released in 2021.

When they arrested me and threw me in a cell, I thought about the voyage around a single room.

I, too, decided to go on a journey.

The cell around which I travel is quite a bit different from de Maistre's.

It has two iron doors; one opens onto the corridor, the other onto the courtyard. The door to the corridor is always locked, but they open the door to the courtyard at eight in the morning and close it at six in the evening every day.

In the middle of the door to the corridor, there is a hatch that is bolted from the other side. They serve our meals through that hatch and when they want to say something to us they speak through it. In order to answer, you have to bend halfway down.

The length of the cell is six steps, its width four.

When you enter from the courtyard, there is an antechamber with its own iron door. That is the toilet and shower, with a sink to wash your face and hands. The door doesn't have a lock.

Next to the bathroom a steel sink is mounted on the wall. Our plates, forks, glasses, and electric kettle sit there. There is a steel cupboard above. Tea, coffee, sugar, salt, olive oil, and the biscuits we buy from the commissary are in there.

Against the wall facing the steel sink is a small fridge, on top of which is a small television.

A stone staircase near the door to the corridor leads to the mezzanine, which has three iron beds secured to the ground by iron nails, and three steel wardrobes. There is no other furniture.

The empty space under the staircase is our storage area, housing a plastic bucket with bottles of detergent in it, a plastic tub in which we wash our laundry, rolls of toilet paper and paper towels, packets of napkins, a case of mineral water, the fan we use in the summer, and extra packages of tea and coffee.

Our small white plastic table is three feet in width and three feet in length, and our three plastic chairs are just to the left of the door to the courtyard.

We spend most of our time sitting in those plastic chairs.

We each bought a thin cushion from the commissary. We aren't allowed to buy a second, so we taped Scotch-Brite sponges together, placed them in a garbage bag and made ourselves extra cushions.

We eat our meals at our plastic table.

I write my defense statements and essays at that table with a ballpoint pen I bought from the commissary.

As I write, my cellmates sit near me and watch TV.

I can write anywhere—sound and movement don't distract me. In fact, once I start writing I stop noticing what's going on around me. I go into an invisible room all by myself and cut off my ties with the rest of the world.

I forget everything that is not part of what I'm writing about.

Forgetting is the greatest source of freedom a person can have. The prison, the cell, the walls, the doors, the locks, the problems, and the people—everything and everyone placing limits on my life and telling me “you cannot go beyond” is erased and gone.

The act of writing harbours a magical paradox—it is something that you can take refuge and hide in while at the same time you are opening yourself up to the world and spreading out with your words.

It enables you not only to forget but also to be remembered.

Like all writers, I want both to forget and to be remembered.

The desire to forget is innocent—everyone indulges in it and understands it, and you can easily speak of this desire.

The desire to be remembered isn't tolerated so readily—it's seen as greedy and arrogant, and it makes people angry. People see it as a mortal's claim on a divine right.

Dictionary:

Voyage – a journey

Antechamber – a small room leading to a main one

Commissary – a store in prison, like a canteen

Mezzanine – a small extra floor between one floor of a building and the next floor up

To harbour – keep a thought in your mind

Paradox – an idea or statement that seems to make no sense and holds opposite points of views. But when you think about it, it shows a deeper meaning

Tolerated – to allow something even if you're not 100% ok about it

Creative Activity:

Write your own journey around your cell, and surroundings.

Here are a few creative prompts to help:

If these walls could talk...

I, too, decided to go on a journey...

Reflection Points:

Think about how Altan draws on the reader's senses. He describes his surroundings in a lot of detail.

He writes in first person – I – how do you feel about this? Will you do the same?

Take someone on this journey with you, what would they not understand? What would they understand?

Let's talk about it

We're going to reflect on places and emotions, as if they were people we could talk to. This is called **personification**.

Creative Activity (1):

Location

Pick a location that means something to you, for example the park you played football in or the corner shop you got your basics from.

Reflect or write about this place.

Here are a few **creative prompts** to help:

The [insert location] always feels like...

The first time I visited...

Reflection points:

What does it look like?

What does it smell like?

What feelings come up when you think about this place?

Is there a memory you have of this place?

Creative Activity (2):

Your Hometown

Reflect or write about your hometown as if it is a person.

Here are a few **creative prompts** to help:

It [your hometown] is always quiet at night...

It doesn't really like visitors, I think it's because...

Reflection points:

How would it describe itself?

Does it think it's the best city ever?

What does it think of your place in activity one?

Is your hometown welcoming?

Does it have values/unwritten rules everyone follows?

Creative Activity (3):

The Emotion

Reflect or write about the feeling/s that come up in your location and hometown as if it were someone in your life.

For example, *to live in this city you had to be friends with Courage. Courage is what raised me, it was my mother and father.*

Reflection Points:

Why did you pick this emotion?

What did it teach you?

What does this emotion have to say when visiting your location and/or hometown?

What kind of person is it? Does it wear many masks?

Here are a few **creative prompts** to help:

[The emotion], sometimes seemed happy to see me...

You were never around but showed up when...

Object, Place, Emotion

Choose three and create a story.

Creative Activity (4):

On the next page, follow the dotted lines and tear the paper into pieces. Sort the pieces into three piles: **object, place and emotion**. Choose one word from each pile, then reflect or write a poem, short story, or sentence using all three words.

Reflection points:

How can you include all three to make the most random story?

The more unexpected the better – create something unexpected.

For example, reflect or write a story using the words glass, hospital and love.

Sitting in this hospital, surrounded by glass, and nurses, and medicine. It's overwhelming, and I feel like a child again. Waiting, and wanting. But then, I look to my right and again to my left, I am surrounded by the people I love. I'll be OK.

Object

Place

Emotion

SHOE

HOSPITAL

LOVE

WATCH

BUS STOP

JOY

CROWN

SCHOOL

GRIEF

GLASS

SHOP

ANGER

CANDLE

BEACH

TIRED

RADIO

BOAT

PEACE

BOOK

PARK

PAIN

Blackout

Blackout Poetry

Blackout Poetry is a way to make a poem using words that are already on the page. It is the art of creating something new out of something old. Making a piece of literature yours.

Creative Activity

How to make a blackout poem.

1. Choose your text

- a. This could be a short story, a poem, a leaflet – anything – there are pieces included in this booklet you can use.

2. Read the page

- a. You do not need to understand every word

3. Circle words that stand out to you.

- a. Words that you find interesting – emotional words or descriptive words.
- b. Are there words that repeat themselves?
- c. What words feel important or interesting?
- d. Try and find a word per line.

4. Read only the circled words back to yourself – in the order they appear on the page.

- a. How does this sound? Does it sound like a poem?
- b. Is there a theme?
- c. Do you need to add or remove words?
- d. Most black out poems are short.

5. Black out the other words

- a. Use a dark pen/marker to colour over all the words you did not choose.

6. Read your new poem or write it out again.

Remember:

There is no, one right way to write or create. If your piece makes sense to you, then you're on the right track.

It does not need to be perfect. Make this poem yours.

Not all poems need to rhyme.

You can use different types of literature to create a blackout poem.

Reflection Points:

What is your poem about?

What feeling does it show?

Why did you pick those words?

Are you surprised by what was left after you blacked out certain words?

Example:

An Extract from 'Still I Rise' by Maya Angelou

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Example:

An Extract from 'Still I Rise' by Maya Angelou

write history

bitter,

dirt

still, I'll rise.

upset

gloom?

I walk

my room.

moons and suns,

certainty tides,

high,

I'll rise.

broken?

lowered

falling down

soulful cries?

Example:

An Extract from 'Still I Rise' by Maya Angelou

Write history,

Bitter lies,

Dirt.

Still, I'll rise.

Upset,

Gloom,

I walk.

My room.

Moons and suns,

Certainty tides,

High.

I'll rise.

Broken?

Lowered?

Falling down.

Soulful cries?

Extracts to use for blackout poetry

Have a go at creating your own pieces using blackout poetry, we've included three different types of texts.

Remember you can also use old texts, letters or any piece of literature. Challenge yourself to use the most uncreative piece of writing and create something from it!

'Remember' by Joy Harjo

Remember the sky that you were born under,
know each of the star's stories.

Remember the moon, know who she is.

Remember the sun's birth at dawn, that is the
strongest point of time. Remember sundown
and the giving away to night.

Remember your birth, how your mother struggled
to give you form and breath. You are evidence of
her life, and her mother's, and hers.

Remember your father. He is your life, also.

Remember the earth whose skin you are:
red earth, black earth, yellow earth, white earth
brown earth, we are earth.

Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their
tribes, their families, their histories, too. Talk to them,
listen to them. They are alive poems.

Remember the wind. Remember her voice. She knows the
origin of this universe.

Remember you are all people and all people
are you.

Remember you are this universe and this
universe is you.

Remember all is in motion, is growing, is you.

Remember language comes from this.

Remember the dance language is, that life is.

Remember.

An extract from the speech 'The Hill We Climb' by Amanda Gorman

So we lift our gazes not to what stands between us, but what stands before us. We close the divide because we know to put our future first, we must first put our differences aside. We lay down our arms so we can reach out our arms to one another, we seek harm to none and harmony for all.

Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true: that even as we grieved, we grew, even as we hurt, we hoped, that even as we tired, we tried, that we'll forever be tied together victorious, not because we will never again know defeat but because we will never again sow division.

Scripture tells us to envision that everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree and no one should make them afraid. If we're to live up to our own time, then victory won't lie in the blade, but in in all of the bridges we've made.

'Passionfruit' by Drake – Lyrics

Listen

Seein' you got ritualistic

Cleansin' my soul of addiction for now

'Cause I'm fallin' apart, yeah

Tension

Between us just like picket fences

You got issues that I won't mention for now

'Cause we're fallin' apart

Passionate from miles away

Passive with the things you say

Passin' up on my old ways

I can't blame you, no, no

Passionate from miles away

Passive with the things you say

Passin' up on my old ways

I can't blame you, no, no

Listen

Harder buildin' trust from a distance

I think we should rule out commitment for now

'Cause we're fallin' apart

Leavin'

You're just doing that to get even

Don't pick up the pieces, just leave it for now

They keep fallin' apart

Tree of life

A reflection on your life.

Creative Activity:

Reflect or write about your life as if it were a tree – your tree of life.

Reflective Points:

The roots:

What you cannot see.

Where you're from.

Your influences, values, lessons from young.

The trunk:

What shapes you.

What experiences you have had.

What has strengthened and tested you.

The branches:

The lessons, decisions and choices you have made.

Leaves/fruit:

What you are proud of.

What you have created.

What you have learned from.

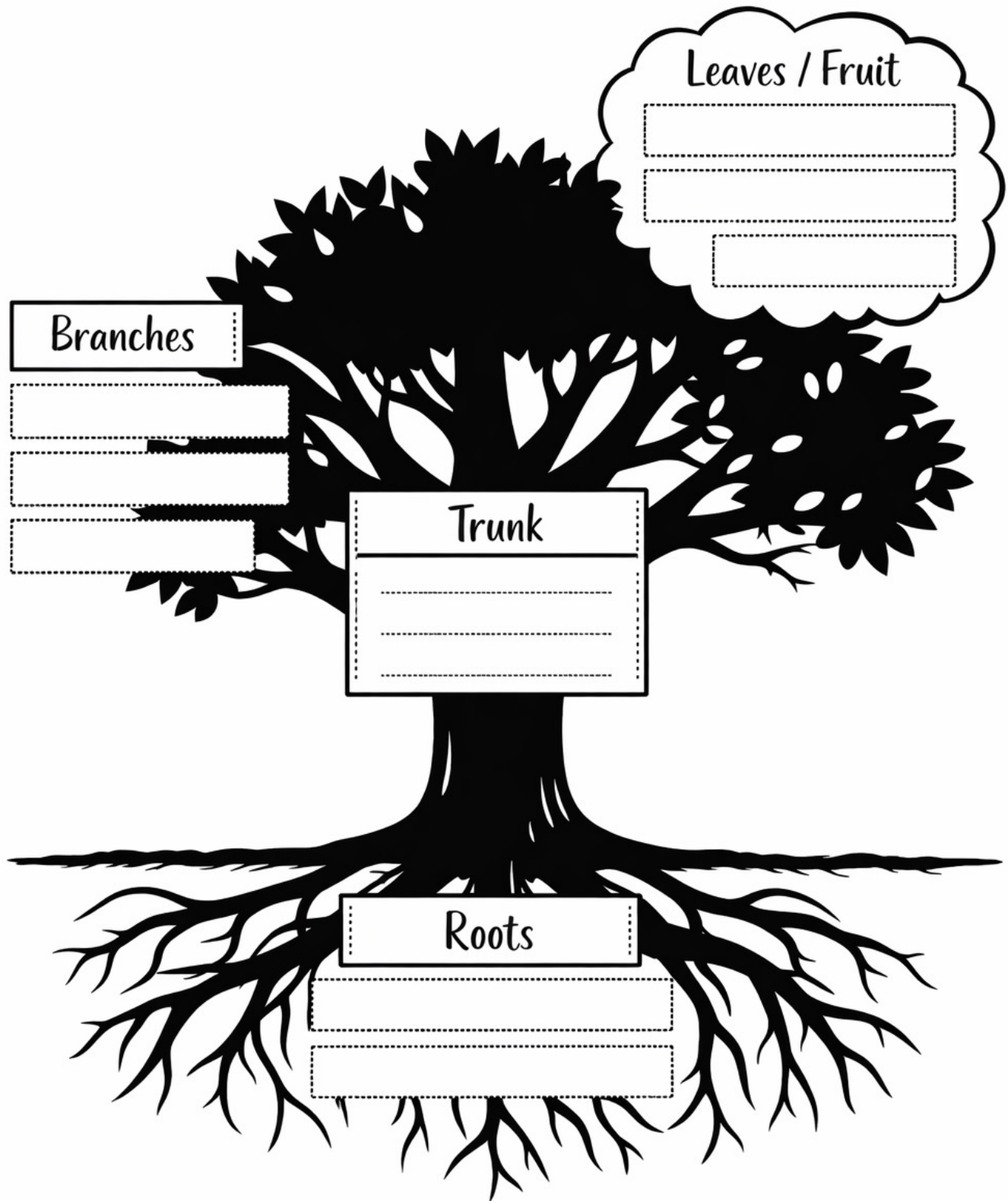
Here are a few **creative prompts** to help:

If my life were a tree,

My roots remind me of,

Use the next page to fill in what you have reflected on.

My Tree, My Story



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