

Walking A Way / Walking Away

POETRY AND FLASH FICTION WORKSHOP

16 April 2023 for

walk · listen · create

with Tony Horitz (Poetry) and Cheryl Markosky (Flash Fiction)

NOTE

The workshop is divided into two halves – the first Poetry and the second Flash Fiction, reflecting the two elements of the walk.listen.create competition 2023. The stimulus activities for the poetry section can apply just as easily to flash fiction writing, and vice-versa. It is up to you whether you wish to use the stimulus activities to write a poem or story. Either is fine.

1. Poetry as a means of charting our own journey

INTRODUCTION

Reference to AR Amons' essay 'A Poem is a Walk'

<https://www.keble.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/TPE-Seminar-1.pdf>

"...the motion occurs only in the body of the walker or in the body of the words...

There is only one way to know it and that is to enter into it." (p. 8)

WARM UP

Robert Frost first three lines of poem '*The Wood-Pile*'

"Out walking in the frozen swamp one gray day,

I paused and said, 'I will turn back from here.

No, I will go on farther – and we shall see.'"

Walking Poetry as exploration of the inner and outer self

GROUP ACROSTIC POEMS

Inspired by Frost's third line – "*and we shall see....*"

W
A
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K

- Using the CHAT space, suggest short lines beginning with each letter.
- Choose one you like (could be yours or not, then re-write the line you have chosen, adding a line of your own beginning with the next letter, etc.
- Try and respond to what you read- and set up challenges!
- Read some aloud at the end.

Poetry as Philosophy – Exploring Our Life Journey

SELECTED POEM:

Caminante No Hay Camino / Wanderer, There Is No Road

A section of a long poem by Spanish modernist philosopher and poet, Antonio Machado, from his book '*Campos de Castilla*' 'Castillian Fields' (1912)

Caminante, son tus huellas
el camino y nada más;
Caminante, no hay camino,
se hace camino al andar.
Al andar se hace el camino,
y al volver la vista atrás
se ve la senda que nunca
se ha de volver a pisar.
Caminante no hay camino
sino estelas en la mar.

Wanderer, your footsteps are
the road, and nothing more;
wanderer, there is no road,
the road is made by walking.
By walking one makes the road,
and upon glancing behind
one sees the path
that never will be trod again.
Wanderer, there is no road
Just your wake on the sea

ACTIVITY 1

Remembering previous footsteps in your life-journey / way based on Machado's lines:
"and on glancing behind // one sees..."

Make a list of 5 different memorable events that come to your mind from your own life's journey – could be from childhood or maturity.

e.g.

- a trip somewhere – special or ordinary
- a birthday
- a public event – e.g. coronation
- an exam
- a new job
- a decision you made

NB could be sad or happy – or both

Does one stand out – for whatever reason (not rational or logical; the significance may be obviously big or apparently small). In what sense could this be an example of you 'walking a way/your way'?

Choose one of the memorable events.

Write down 5 more lines

Try and include:

- One reference to weather
- One smell or taste
- One simile or metaphor
- One short line – maximum 5 words
- One inner thought you had

Be particular not general – avoid words like “picturesque”

PART 2 FLASH FICTION

1. The rhythm of walking reflected in the rhythm of writing

When Walking Away Becomes Walking Toward by Noémi Scheiring-Olah (National Flash Fiction Day’s FlashFlood 2022)

Walk. Walk through the door, through the cracks cutting open the asphalt like wounds, through the dogs, leashed in chaotic barking, already smelling something savage on you.

Walk. Walk. Don’t stop at the red light to consider its offer for a U-turn. Walk and feel the world moving with you: the ginger breeze, the crunch of the gravel by the road, the tickling stroke of the shrubs against your jeans. Walk and spot a deer among the trees lifting her ballerina head, scanning you up and down, and bowing back to graze. You’re not a threat. You’re welcome here.

Keep walking when the groan of an engine behind you makes you realize cars still exist – and with a silent whisk of leaves the deer, like a dream, disappears.

Keep walking when the car moans right next to you and the window winds down and a red baseball cap says, “You alright?”

Keep walking and say, “Never better.”

“Ain’t safe out here,” The cap insists, but you just listen to your feet beating on the earth to an ancient rhythm.

“Okay ma’am, I warned ya.” The window winds back up and shows you a woman you don’t know: first of all, she’s smiling. There’s no second of all.

Walk. Walk after the deer who saw the woman in the car window too and recognized her as her kin. Walk through the thick ground, alive with growth, and walk toward the face of the moon already smiling on the peach sky, like your Pop-pop in a brown picture: you’re as tall as his knee and just refused to hold his hand on your first steps, choosing to cling to your own, wild hay-hair instead.

ACTIVITY 1

“you just listen to your feet beating on the earth to an ancient rhythm”

What does the author do to create a sense of rhythm?

Begin writing a flash story that displays or mimics the rhythm/beat of walking.

Begin your story with one of these three openings:

Walk. Walk.

Keep walking when...

Walk through the...

2. When writing about walking isn’t really about walking

Always Down a Dirt Road, I’m Walking

by Sara Hills (Commended, Bath Flash Fiction, Feb 2021)

my two daughters with me. There are trees to the right of us and a field on our left. The field is cropped, oven-crisped at midday. It’s hot. Bright.

Then it isn’t.

A car whizzes past in a pall of dust, and I pull my youngest daughter out of the road. She’s twelve—lanky, absent-minded, unafraid. The other one is quiet, pebble small.

Our dusty sandals slap the loose surface as we continue down the road. Other cars whiz past, but one doesn’t. It doesn’t.

It rolls to a stop. The window winds down—the sound and intention clear.

“What do we have here?”

In this version, I have daughters. In other versions, sons. In every version, a dirt road, a farm road. There are trees to the right and a field to the left. The trees are straggled juniper. The cropped field, brown and stubble sharp. Further in the distance is our destination—the main road. Blacktop.

The black car window winds down. The dusted door opens to silver-tipped boots, jeans, the smell of sun-baked leather. I pull my daughters close, but they drift apart. Sun flashes on metal. Trees sway. A wax of midday dust settles on my daughters, on me. The grit on my tongue, stubble sharp.

In one version my sons stand tall as trees, juniper jawed, while cars whiz past. My sons spit into the road, chew stalks until they're shorn and soft. In another, my daughters grow straggly and sharp; they remain unafraid. In one version, I cannot hear my heartbeat. In one version, no one is screaming. In one version, we walk through the field. The blacktop before us, trees to our right, and the dark car whizzes past.

It doesn't stop.

ACTIVITY 2

Adding layers to a story to give it depth, poignancy and universality

There are different versions of the story offered to the reader. What do you think the story is about? And digging down a layer, what is it *really* about?

Look at the flash story you started in the previous activity.

Identify the story you are *really* trying to tell. Dig deep and add actions, dialogue or more words that convey atmosphere to help layer your story.