



Essential Words: LTAB Online 2020

Lesson plans and writing prompts for teens



Moving Towards Home

by Christiana Castillo

DURATION: 1.5 hours
GRADE LEVEL: High School
WRITING LEVEL: All levels
FOCUS: Writing about home

EXAMPLE TEXTS

If Your Family Is Forced Here
by Kay Ulanday Barrett

Salvadoran Heart
by Yesika Salgado

Interview by José Olivarez

Check in | 15 minutes

What food reminds you of home or your childhood? When you answer please say your name and pronouns.

Resource Building | 15 minutes

EXERCISE | **Make two lists:**

- 5-10 items that are unique to your childhood or remind you of growing up.
- 5 experiences that remind you of your family.

Close Reading | 20 minutes

If Your Family Is Forced Here by [Kay Ulanday Barrett](#)
Salvadoran Heart by [Yesika Salgado](#)
Interview by [José Olivarez](#)

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Where is *home* to Kay Ulanday Barrett? (Please note this author's pronouns: They/Them)
- Where does Salgado say she is from?
- Who else does Salgado talk about in this poem besides herself? Why?
- How do all these poems relate to each other?

Writing Prompt | 20 minutes

Write about where you are from and the ways you release home into the world. OR How do you repair home? Experiment with form by splitting your poem into sections (see Salgado and Barrett) or writing it as an interview (see Olivarez).

Share Out | 15 minutes



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If Your Family Is Forced Here

by Kay Ulanday Barrett

1.

You will have to manage cities and scraps on the same tongue.
Whole continents are rapture and fantasy
as your languages, every one of them, turn their backs on you.

2.

To crave dirt on land that you cannot even touch.
On the best of days, miles are suspended in disbelief,
you fester on smells that can't be places
but have home in your bones nonetheless.

3.

You can text message fast from years of phone card dialing
in panic. Because you miss the ocean. Because your lola
fell once again. Because money.

4.

You watch people march on TV in a city that is vague
or your mama's misbehavior 20 years ago.

5. Something about
hindrance.
repair.
authenticity.

6.

Just because you eat the food doesn't make it yours.
Just because you eat the food makes it all that you've god.

7.

Anywhere you enter renders a heartbeat as sharp as a catheter.
You wait for signs of home, wait in small drips,
pangs into your blood that are always too hungry.
About your blood, it's always everything and never all at once.



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A Salvadoran Heart

by Yesika Salgado

I.

I come from women of corn and cotton fields / of machete
and fire / of water and stone / I am the daughter of a river
and mango tree / my tongue came to me through the
jocote seed / my heart belonged to the ocean / before it
found my body

II.

every man I have loved does not know my country / has
not been awakened by the roosters' crow / does not know
the swell of grass and dirt beneath June thunderstorms /
does not smell burning wood and think of home

III.

I learned to forgive before I learned to speak / to turn
palms upward to God and my lover / to let a man ruin
me with his love / to call the ruins sacred / to uproot
everything and call the new place mine / to name the
nostalgia something sweet / a ripened fruit growing out of
a dying tree

IV.

my father died and my mother remained alone/ I am
thirtythree and unmarried / I am asked if I want a
husband / asked if I will return to my country / they are
the same question / I do not want to answer



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Interview

by José Olivarez

After Safia Elhillo

where is your home?

in my parent's new house
there is a room for everyone
except me.

Where is your home?

i went to México & no one recognized me.

where is your home?

i went to México & everyone was my cousin.
the radio played José José straight from
my mom's mixtapes. where you from, my
cousins ask,
& i point at the radio.

where is your home?

it took me three years to hang art
in my Bronx apartment. soon after,
i started getting tattoos. there, i said,
i'm all moved in now.

where is your home?

riding down Lake Shore Drive
listening to GCI.
all the songs i was given
slap through the car
like the lake slaps the shore.

where is your home?

it took me three days to take down my art
& move out of the Bronx. is leaving
always easier than arriving?
where is your home?

the house i grew up in was foreclosed.
there is a small note taped to the door.
i still have the key, but the key opens nothing.