

Exercise 3 - Writing a list poem

There are many different ways to tell a story. Simon Armitage is an amazing storyteller. Often in his poems he finds new and exciting ways to tell a story.

Look at the poem below. He uses a list of objects to tell a mysterious story. The list is a list of all the things found on a dead body. Look carefully at the poem. What can you deduce from the list?

About his person by Simon Armitage

Five pounds fifty in change, exactly,
a library card on its date of expiry.

A postcard stamped,
unwritten, but franked,

a pocket size diary slashed with a pencil
from March twenty-fourth to the first of April.

A brace of keys for a mortise lock,
an analogue watch, self winding, stopped.

A final demand
in his own hand,

a rolled up note of explanation

planted there like a spray carnation

but beheaded, in his fist.

A shopping list.

A giveaway photograph stashed in his wallet,

a keepsake banked in the heart of a locket.

Simon Armitage created a story out of a list of objects and now you will too! But instead of focussing on an individual we are going to focus on the place where we live.

1. Let's imagine the place where you live in 150 years. Imagine a house and in that house a purse or bag.
2. Let's imagine all the things that could be in that bag. Things that represent the place where we live, things that represent the time in which we live. e.g: A photo of the arts centre closed down, a wedding ring broken in two. Some of the objects could be completely abstract but still hold meaning to you and the time and place we are living in.
3. Keep adding ideas of things to your list, the more you have the better.
4. Pick the best things on your list and edit their wording, make sure they each have a story to tell in their own right.
3. Write a list poem out of those things.
4. Edit the list to the raw poetry gold. And there you have it!

Enjoy yourself!