

WANTED:

Poems for “HomeWords”

CALLING: All Poets & Poets-to-Be with Kansas Roots

a weekly poetry column to be published in newspapers across this great state

edited by Kansas Poet Laureate Wyatt Townley

sponsored by the Kansas Humanities Council

You are invited to Come Home.

The concept of “home” is a resonant one, and a Kansas value. From our state song, “Home on the Range,” to the *Wizard of Oz* mantra, “There’s no place like home,” it’s bigger than a location. And smaller.

Home may be invisible. “It’s really a piece of soul rather than a piece of soil,” said author Pico Iyer. It may be portable. As Emily Dickinson put it, “Where Thou art—that—is Home—.”

Home is especially relevant at this time of change—with soldiers coming and going to war, Americans moving every five years, and workers losing longheld jobs. The shift from rural to urban has left Kansas with 6,000 ghost towns. Home—leaving home and coming home—may be a daily journey, but it is also a mythic one.

Naturally, home depends on point of view—as diverse as the nearly 2.9 million Kansans who live here. We’ll be exploring home from micro to macro: from the mobile home of the **body**, to the room or **house** we live in, to the **land** that anchors us, to the **sky** that envelops it all.

What is Home? Where is It?

Home is our subject—in four contexts.

1. **Home as body**—the mobile home that has gone everywhere we go, the place we’ve lived in all our life and maybe ignored until it hurt, or maybe worked from sunup to sundown, or maybe built and beautified, or all or none of the above.

2. **Home as house**—or room, or apartment. The building that holds us and to which we return, no matter what else is going on in our lives. Where we sleep, eat, and refuel for the next adventure...and where the adventure continues.

3. **Home as land**—the earth that anchors us. What’s underfoot, and what we see, hear, smell when we walk out the door. The trees that bend over us, the gravel that crunches below. Our block, our farm, our woods, our yard, our fields, our landscape—small, big, rural, urban, or otherwise.

4. **Home as sky**—the sky that contains us, and that we contain. We think of it as overhead, but it’s right here under our noses. We’re breathing it, we’re spinning in it as we head to work or school. It holds everything we can point to and name. On an elemental level, we are the stars we gaze at, our bodies deriving from the explosion of supernovae.

[over]



“Pastoral Dreamer” by David Phelps
(For scale, note Roderick’s hat by armpit)

Apply the Seat of the Pants to the Seat of the Chair.

The theme is big, but the form we'll be exploring is small: **the American Cinquain**. Invented by Adelaide Crapsey in the early 1900s, it's just five lines long. The first line has two syllables, the second four, the third six, the fourth eight, and the last drops back to two.

In other words, the lines comprise, in order, 2, 4, 6, 8, and 2 syllables. Here are a few samples:

BODY	LAND	SKY
<i>Which breath is the last this one or the one after all you have undergone what's not to love</i>	<i>One eighth of an acre of Kansas is enough to love a woman in, make art, keep faith.</i>	<i>What is the color of moon yellow white or ice blue well you have to close your eyes and smell</i>

Follow these Submission Guidelines.

- **Submit 1 to 4 cinquains (total, together in one submission).** Feel free to pick from any/all of the four contexts—body, house, land, sky—as you like. If you would like to submit more than once, please wait 4 months between submissions.
- **Email your cinquains in the body of your email,** along with a *one-sentence bio that includes your hometown*, to HomeWordsKS@gmail.com.
No attachments, please. Emails with attachments will not be read.
- **Surprise us.** We're looking for originality of approach and grace of execution. The cinquains do not have to hook together into one larger piece. Or they might. Submit your best work.
- **Your submission is your permission to be published.** Your poem(s) may be selected to appear online and in newspapers across Kansas.
- **Payment.** No money is changing hands in this project. Your payment is in the creation of your work, and, if published, in spreading the love of poetry across the state.
- **Notification.** Please do not write to ask about the status of your poem(s). Wyatt will get back to you. She is slow—this may be her most redeeming quality. She may notify some folks slowly, some less slowly. She may need to wait to make choices until more poems come in, or she may be swamped. The speed of her response has no bearing on the quality of your work.
- **Acceptance/Rejection.** Acceptance and rejection are two sides of the same coin that can land either way for writers. Rejection isn't personal. It's a part of the process we undergo in getting the word out. As the wise one said, put the "yes" or "no" in your pocket and keep walking (or in our case, writing).
- **Eligibility: Kansas residents and folks with Kansas roots, all ages.** Translation: if you have lived or set foot in Kansas, or have ancestors from this great state, you qualify for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!