

## **Could you be a poet?**

### **Focus on what you see**

*Benjamin Zephaniah:*

Sitting in front of a blank piece of paper can feel really daunting for any writer regardless of your experience. The poet Rhian Edwards worked with me in Swansea and led a workshop to encourage the team to write a piece of poetry about an everyday journey.

*Actuality of workshop.*

*Rhian Edwards:*

I've used an example here of one of my own poems, which describes a journey from my front door to work basically, and I'm going to then get you to do a similar thing. So from your front door to a certain destination. All the things that go past. I just want that sense of all these different images. It's almost like a flick book of images that occur during your journey.

So I'll just quickly read through this, and then we'll knuckle down to it. Does that sound cool?

So this is called The City Tore Past

Past the yawn of the house  
Past the wrinkle-skin brick  
Past the cataract window with their drape-lined eyelids  
Past the past, past the present, past the pregnant day's future  
Past a city tearing past to a wheel's revolution

But you get that sense of pace. You get the sense of actually that pedalling in the journey.

So basically you just start every line 'past'. That's pretty much all it is. So write as much as you can basically. Just give sort of like five minutes. Don't think too hard about it. Just think of all these images that kind of usually whip past you on the journey from say your front door to the Phoenix Centre, or to the Social Club, or whatever.

*Participant:*

Past the chalk written 'Darren loves Lou for ever and ever'  
Past the gang road sign covered in Spider-Man stickers  
Past the chip shop smell which lingers and lingers...

*Participant:*

Past the hedges and nesting birds  
Past the strewn street light  
Past the glowing paint to the top of Heaven's View...

*Participant:*

Past myself and my lover, hand-linked in the dark  
Past a hope I once had for a city long past

*Rhian Edwards:*

Ooh lovely. [Applause.]

*Benjamin Zephaniah:*

I really love the template she uses. Using the repetition of words is a great way to give a poem form, and it's also a great way of giving a new writer a head start.