 Resource 15 - William Street

Focus Questions to Address

1. How does this poem invite the responder to see the world differently, to challenge assumptions, ignite new ideas or reflect personally?
2. Does reading and understanding the poem provide a catalyst for students to make connections with their own landscapes and how they experience them?

Discussion Ideas

Slessor offers us a challenging idea- he loves William Street and he believes we don’t. He dares us to like it somehow, that by telling us we won’t like it we will dare to look deeper, to see what is loveable about it. Slessor is not a romantic poet showing us the beauty of nature, he wants his readers to see the anomalies of the world, to see through the darkness, the faded light, the lost hours and look for what we can connect with. This poem dares the responder to look at what he loves, his poetry-his storytelling form- reflects his life, his context and the issues that plagued him. The poem asks us not to discount something because it is ugly or from a darker side of town and this is admirable. His view of the city is non-judgemental but rather a realistic view and he dares us to see it that way.

* What do you love or admire that is not perfect, that is not beautiful and perfectly formed?
* Why do you think Slessor defends this street in this manner, why does he react so strongly to this dark, wet street of prostitutes and drunks with its unattractive smells and sights? Is it the reality of it, the in your face drama of it?
* How does he tell us this story of a now iconic street? What textual features allow the audience to experience the street as he does?
* What connections can you make to your world?

Thinking and Composing Tasks

Critical Composing

Do you find Slessor's representation of William St to be "ugly" or "lovely"? Students write a one minute persuasive speech, using evidence from the poem to support their point of view. In small groups students share their short speeches and discuss their responses to the poem.

Creative Composing – Descriptive Writing

‘You find this ugly, I think it’s lovely’.

* My suburb is:
* Complete the following table with words you would use to describe your suburb. They can describe both positive and negative aspects of your suburb.

| Questions | Answers |
| --- | --- |
| What can you see? |  |
| What can you touch? |  |
| What can you taste? |  |
| What can you smell? |  |
| What can you hear? |  |
| What colours do you see? |  |

Discuss

What emotional reactions do you have to your suburb and the words above?

Is there a place that others don’t like but you do? Describe it.

Creative Micro Writing –using the words and ideas gathered above write a 100-word micro story describing your suburb, or an element of it, and your connection to it. Your feelings toward it must be clear- try to use show not tell!

Extension writing task- Create a poem using Slessor’s beginning and ending lines. Using words from your brainstorm create a poem about your suburb. The poem will start and end with the line: You find this ugly, I think it's lovely from the Kenneth Slessor poem, “William Street”.

You find this ugly, I think it’s lovely

Alternatively, students may change/ adapt/ subvert the poem’s representation so that “ugly” is replaced with “lovely”, or vice versa.

Related material – Reaction to disasters and connections to place – How to reform a community devastated?

[Five years on: Fukushima residents share their stories](http://ideas.ted.com/five-years-on-fukushima-residents-share-their-stories/):

The effects of the Fukushima Nuclear station disaster and tsunami that devastated parts of Japan are still being felt, read the attached article and view the images and discuss the following questions:

1. Why do people want to return to their villages?
2. Discuss the connections two of the people have with their town and why returning seems important to them.
3. Would you return to such a place or would you find it too scary or ugly?
4. Why is community important and how does to affect an individual’s connection to place and how they experience their environment?
5. Why do you think the author feel it was important add photos to his story and use short quotes/interviews with people to tell this story (textual forms and features)? What effect does this form and style have?