

Inspired by...

Under Milk Wood



MINISTRY
OF STORIES

BBC

For Key Stages 3 & 4

- Poetry
- Descriptive Writing
- Writing about Places
- Creating Characters

Inspired by... **Under Milk Wood**

INTRODUCTION

This writing pack is brought to you by Ministry of Stories and BBC History to celebrate the 65th anniversary of Dylan Thomas' poetic radio play, *Under Milk Wood*.

Dylan Thomas was already working on ideas for the play when he was 17 and still at school. At 19, he won a BBC poetry competition. He would later work as a BBC radio broadcaster.

Our young writers (aged 10-13) wrote their own version of *Under Milk Wood*, based between Bethnal Green and Mile End in London. They called it *Round About Candle Street*.

This pack is for teachers and youth workers, to help you use *Under Milk Wood* and *Round About Candle Street* to inspire poems and character pieces that explore your local neighbourhood. By writing imaginatively about a place, we bring that place into literature and gain a personal experience of how writers explore the places around them.

How to write your own Under Milk Wood poem

ACTIVITY 1 MAKE A MAP

- Think of a local neighbourhood you know.
- Think of a part of that neighbourhood where you go often. It could be a street, a park, an area around your school.
- Draw a map of that place. A very rough map. Look at the example on the next page.
- Now add some names of places to your map. They can be made-up names.

Here are two examples by our writers:

The Depression Bench

The Corner of Life

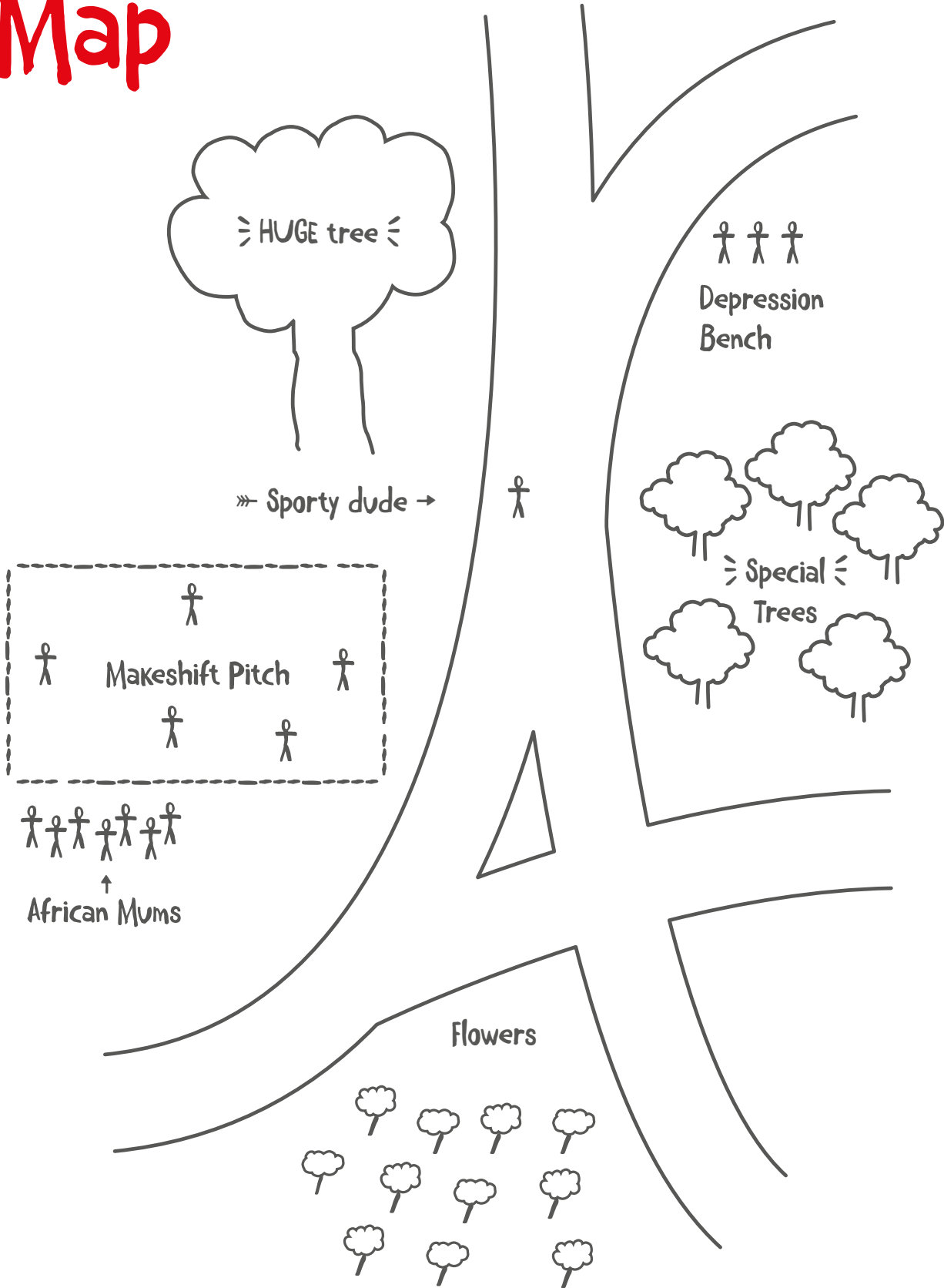
- Now add some people to your map. Who do you usually see there? It doesn't matter if you don't know their names.

Here are two examples by our writers:

The Caretaker

The Buttercup Man

Map



Based on a map by Samiul, Ministry of Stories writer

ACTIVITY 2
DESCRIPTIVE
WRITING

- Listen to the first 1 minute 15 seconds of *Under Milk Wood* a few times. On the second listen, write down phrases that stand out to you. For example:

**fishingboat-
bobbing
sea**

- Now do the same with the 'Night' section of *Round About Candle Street*.
- Pick an object, building or location on your map.
- Write one line describing that location at night. Make it strange. For example:

**The quiet
patter of paw**

by Rowan

**The school
near my house
isn't breathing**

by Nowshin

- Do this a few times and combine your lines to create a short poem of place.

ACTIVITY 3

CHARACTER WRITING

- Listen (and, if you like, look at) some character passages from *Under Milk Wood*. We recommend **this performance by Ryan Davies** of early versions of some of the characters. Mr and Mrs Pugh are also good ones to listen to or read.
- Listen to this excerpt from **Round About Candle Street** to hear some of the characters our writers created. There are descriptions, monologues and conversations.
- Return to your map and pick a person from it.
- Write down: who the person is, what they are doing, how they feel.
- ‘Freewrite’ for 10 minutes about that character. This means letting your ideas flow freely, without worrying about spelling, grammar or whether it is ‘good’. You can edit it later.
- You can write it in first person as a monologue, in third person as a description, or as a conversation (dialogue) between two characters.
- Read your work back and underline your favourite parts.
- Read the poem on the next page and then write your piece into a poem or short piece of a similar length, starting with your favourite line.

EXCERPTS FROM POEMS BY OUR WRITERS (AGED 10-13)

Night but never dark, this is what peace feels like.
Take a deep breath and just one small step
into this mesmerising, heaven-like walk.
You'll soon see a shop full of these chocolate
or scrumptious mouthfuls. A finished dessert,
empty glass, nearly clean plate...

By Amreen

Can you hear my footsteps?
I am a student in Old Ben Jonson Primary.
I'm Ibrahim but everyone calls me Ibbby,
my purple rucksack rattles in the wind.
Wanting to play Fortnite every day,
curious and silly,
I tend to always get into trouble,
but I really do not care.
I tend to stare at the black gates
Hoping to spy a friend...

By Riyad

ACTIVITY 4

SHARE YOUR WORK

With your group:

- Working in pairs, read out your work and take turns to give feedback – one thing you liked, one thing you think could make it even better.
- Working in groups of 3-4 people, combine your favourite sections to make a longer piece that includes a variety of places and characters from your wider neighbourhood.
- Perform or record this piece together. For tips on how to record and edit your work, visit the [**Get Writing page**](#) on the Ministry of Stories website.
- Take photos of your neighbourhood to go with the recording.

With the world:

- Share your performance or recording in an assembly or other school event.
- Post on your school website.
- Contact your [**BBC Young Reporter**](#) if you have one in your school.
- Get in touch with your [**BBC Local Radio**](#) which is always keen to promote community stories like this.

ABOUT US

Ministry of Stories champions the writer in every child. We were founded by Lucy Macnab, Ben Payne and best-selling author Nick Hornby, who wanted to create a space for young people in East London to become authors.

Through innovative writing clubs, small-group mentoring and fun writing resources, we help young people discover and realise their own creative potential.

Ministry of Stories centre was inspired by San Francisco's 826 Valencia and resides behind its own fantastical shop, Hoxton Street Monster Supplies, which has been selling goods such as *Cubed Earwax* and *Thickest Human Snot* to London monsters since 1818. All proceeds from the shop go back into the Ministry.

BBC History is the part of the BBC responsible for telling the Corporation's story: past, present and future. 'What most motivates us,' says Robert Seatter, Head of BBC History, 'is to show why the BBC matters, and how it has touched people's lives and made a difference.' Key activities include orchestration of major anniversary seasons; cultural partnerships with museums and other agencies; commissioning of in-depth written and oral histories; and wider interpretation of BBC History in our BBC buildings. Projects such as *Inspired by Under Milk Wood* take great past programming moments and reinvent them for current and future generations.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

[Guide to *Under Milk Wood* with poet Owen Sheers](#)

[Free Download of the E-book *The Road to Milk Wood*](#)

[Get Writing with the Ministry of Stories](#)

To book a writing workshop with Ministry of Stories, visit www.ministryofstories.org

SPECIAL THANKS

Robert Seatter Head of BBC History

Kate Poland Radio Producer

Jonathan Kempster Audio Producer

Morpeth Secondary School

Ben Jonson Primary School

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Katherine McMahon Writing Mentor

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