

Creative Writing for Wellbeing: a Short Exercise

First, find something to write with (pen or pencil on paper is best). You will also need a timer. If you use your phone, set it to Do Not Disturb.

Next, read aloud this poem, by the Czech poet and immunologist Miroslav Holub:

The door¹

by Miroslav Holub

Go and open the door.

Maybe outside there's
a tree, or a wood,
a garden,
or a magic city.

Go and open the door.

Maybe a dog's rummaging.
Maybe you'll see a face,
or an eye,
or the picture

of a picture.

Go and open the door.

If there's a fog
it will clear.

Go and open the door.

Even if there's only
the darkness ticking,
even if there's only
the hollow wind,
even if

nothing

is there,

go and open the door.

At least

there'll be
a draught.

Now, sit quietly, close your eyes, and take 5 slow, deep breaths, giving yourself the time to fully inhale and silently counting to 5 as you exhale.

Opening your eyes, take in the space around you; what can you see, hear, smell, and touch. Think about Holub's poem, [The Door](#). **What word or image from the poem has stayed with you?**



Next, write that **word** or **image** at the top of a clean sheet of paper.



Set your timer and write for 10 minutes, freely and associatively using the word or image that has stayed with you as your starting place.

If you find it hard to get going, begin by describing what you can see hear, smell and touch. Ground yourself in your surroundings. Describe the door to the room you're sitting in, or a door that you remember. But hopefully the **word** or **image** will act as *the door*, and by starting to write you will pass through it and into another place or world...

Write fast and follow your thoughts without attempting to control or make sense of them. Try to write without stopping to edit your writing, or to make corrections. Without stopping to think!

Be playful, and enjoy yourself. *You can't do this exercise wrong.* Maybe you're writing a poem, or a story, or something else. Maybe you are writing about a memory, or from a dream, or something you overheard on the bus, or that your imagination has created.

Embark on your writing with curiosity, explore your inner world for a few minutes, and trust yourself. Let your pen or pencil act as your guide!

When the timer goes off, take a minute or two to read back over what you've written. Try reading it outloud to yourself.

**Congratulations, you've completed
a piece of creative writing!**

How do you feel? Maybe you could try writing for another 10 minutes tomorrow? Like most things, it will get easier with practice.

[> link to AUDIO version of the Short Exercise](#)

¹ Miroslav Holub, *Poems Before and After: Collected English translations*, trans. Ian Milner et al (Bloodaxe Books, 2007) www.bloodaxebooks.com

Contact and further assistance

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Rebecca Hurst is a writer, opera-maker, illustrator, and researcher. She is the author of a poetry collection, *The Iron Bridge*, and a poetry pamphlet, *The Fox's Wedding*. Her music theatre work in collaboration with composers has been widely performed in the UK and Europe. Rebecca has a PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Manchester, and in 2022-23 was a Creative Manchester post-doctoral fellow researching the potential of creative writing for well-being. In partnership with Lime Arts she works with staff and patients at Wythenshawe and North Manchester General Hospitals.



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