



CONNECT

Using the brilliant work of one of First Story's young writers who addresses the theme of connection, this activity inspires young writers to think about people they don't know but see regularly and to connect with them through their imaginations and poetry.

FIRST STORY
CHANGING LIVES THROUGH WRITING

National
WRITING **Day** 2021

Ice breaker

Get into pairs and brainstorm all the people you regularly see, but who you do not know. Maybe it's someone on the bus? Maybe it's the person who works in a shop near where you live? Maybe it's your neighbour? Maybe it's an older person who you always see out and about in your area? Maybe it's someone in school who always catches your eye?

You have 5 minutes to come up with a list of 5 people each and make some rough notes about:

- What does that person look like? Think of the smallest details you can and don't worry if you need to add in some made-up things. It's a fictional piece!
- What is that person doing when you see them? If you don't know, speculate! What do you think they might be up to?
- What that person wear?
- How does that person walk or move?
- Have you heard what that person's voice is like? What do they say? Do they have an accent or a dialect?

'The Boy Next Door'

I saw you go to school, tired as always.
I saw you play chess, you should have done that move.
I saw you go home – you sat alone in your room
playing games you're not good at
but still trying to win.

You never speak with your family
You're not sure why you're so shy
When you leave, you don't even say bye.

Last night you looked at me and didn't say a word,
just watched and waited.

Baran Gigil
Play Our Song! (2021)
(Commerce House – Wood Green, London)

Main Writing Activity

You are going to write a short poem that conveys the micro-connections we all have with one another – the kinds of small connections that we rarely reflect on. Though we might not know people's names or really anything about them, they are part of the tapestry of our existence by virtue of regularly featuring in our lives, even if only in a small way.

Using the information you've already gathered, pick one person to focus your poem on. It is advisable to pick the person you have written the most information about and can picture the most vividly.

When you've chosen, work on your own for 15 minutes composing a poem that features you, the narrator, talking about this person using the direct second-person pronoun 'you' e.g. "I saw you..." and "You never speak..." You can use Baran's sentence starters as a guide, if that helps you. Here are a few more sentence starters to get you going:

- I wonder why you...
- You always...
- It's funny how you...
- You seem to be...
- I can tell that you're...

For now, just concentrate on writing freely. Don't worry too much about the order your sentences come out in! There will be time to tinker with the syntax and the sentence order later.

Extended writing activity

Now you'll spend 10 minutes editing and reordering your poems. Look at the sentences you have written about this person. Underline the two that are your favourites. Get into pairs and briefly discuss which of the two sentences you've each underlined would work best at the beginning of your poems, and which would work best at the end. Feel free to talk about what edits you might make to those sentences.

Now it's time to slot in the other sentences. Think about the flow of the poem. In Baran's poem, he's grouped together the sentences that start with the word 'I' and put those in the first stanza, and then grouped together the sentences that start with the word 'You' and put those together in the second stanza. Might you want to group sentences together in this way? How else could you choose to group sentences or ideas together?

Finally, go through and play with your wording and syntax (word order). The aim of poetry is to be descriptive with language, but also precise and efficient. Take out any words that you don't feel are working hard enough for you. You want your poem to have impact!



Baran Gigil