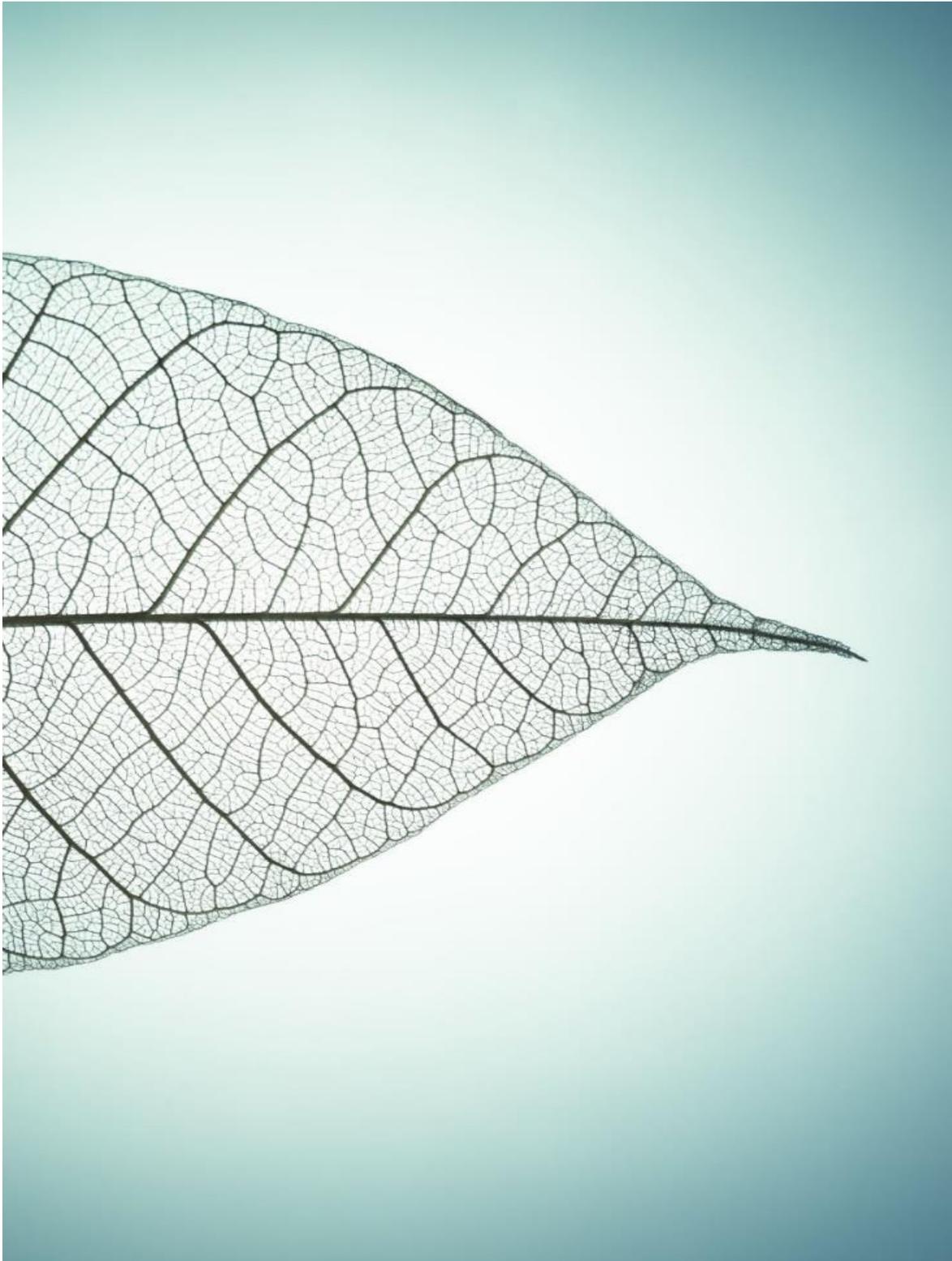


**THE ARTS  
DEVELOPMENT  
COMPANY**

# **Nature Writing for Wellbeing**

## Writing Pack

With Louisa Adjoa Parker



# INTRODUCTION

## Who is Louisa?



I'm Louisa, a west country writer who lived in Dorset for over 25 years. I write poetry and fiction, as well as non-fiction. I have published three poetry collections, most recently [How to wear a skin](#), and my work has been published and performed widely. Find out more about my work here: [www.louisaadjoaparker.com](http://www.louisaadjoaparker.com)

## Who is this pack for?

This pack is for Dorset residents who are interested in writing in relation to nature. It can be used along with this film: <https://youtu.be/zxjm8bovqpY>. You don't need to have any experience of writing, and it's fine if you're not confident about writing or spelling!

## How do I use this pack and what do I need?

This writing pack is designed to support Dorset people (aged 10+) who would like to try nature writing during the summer of 2020. The aim is to support beginners to develop confidence in telling their story in relation to the natural environment.

The pack can be used individually, or with friends/family. Young people and those who need support can work through it with a parent, guardian, or carer. It includes:

- ❖ Simple warm-up writing exercises
- ❖ Reading activities
- ❖ Questions to think about or discuss with others
- ❖ Hints and tips
- ❖ A choice of main writing activities.

All you will need as well as this pack is a notebook and pen! You can also watch the Nature Writing for Wellbeing film, in which I talk about nature writing and some of the activities included here. You can work through this pack at your own pace during the summer of 2020. I'd suggest doing no more than one section at a time, and taking plenty of breaks.

## What happens next?

Participants who complete this pack are invited to submit their main written piece to be considered for publication on The Arts Development Company website. Or you can simply enjoy writing for yourself! The deadline for submissions is 8am on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> August 2020; details are included at the end of this pack.

Tip: Keep everything you write – you may like to refer back to it when you're writing your main piece.

## What is nature writing, and how does it help my wellbeing?

Recently there has been an increased interest in nature writing (sometimes known as wild writing). With current events such as concerns about climate change and the coronavirus pandemic, people have been thinking about nature, perhaps more than ever before. Nature writing can take many forms including essays, articles, stories, and poems. It can be interpreted in different ways; often it is about humans and our relationship to the natural world. We all know being in nature is good for our emotional wellbeing, and immersing ourselves in it and writing about it will also help us emotionally.

### Activity 1: Questions to think about or discuss with others

What comes to mind when you see or hear the word 'nature'? Jot down your thoughts on this and the following:

- ❖ Why is the natural environment important to you?
- ❖ Can you think of any favourite pieces of writing that have included nature?
- ❖ Think of a favourite place in the natural environment. Where is it and why is it important to you?

### Activity 2: Paying attention

We are lucky in Dorset to be surrounded by beautiful land- and seascapes which we can connect with. Often, we use our time in nature to reflect on things that are happening in our lives. Writing is about these moments of reflection, connection, and paying attention to the little things. If you have access to the countryside or garden, go for a walk with a pen and notebook and try the following:

- ❖ Jot down what you see, smell, and hear.
- ❖ Describe anything you touch
- ❖ Describe how you feel
- ❖ List any memories that come up for you.



Alternative options: If you don't have access to an outside space, try one (or more) of the activities below. (You can also do these as well!)

- ❖ Open a window. Write down what you can hear, smell, and see. Is anyone outside? What are they doing? What do they look like?

- ❖ Find some nature sounds on YouTube or download a Nature Sounds app. Sit and listen, then write anything that comes to mind.
- ❖ Find an object from nature in your home – a plant, shell, or stone perhaps. Pay close attention to it describing its detail – colour, texture, smell. Does it hold any memories for you? Where did it come from? (this exercise is included in the film – no need to do it twice!)
- ❖ Find some photos of you/others in the countryside. Describe the picture and what you/they are doing.

### Activity 3: Reflection

- ❖ How was that exercise?
- ❖ Do you like what you've written?
- ❖ Did you find it easy or challenging to pay close attention?
- ❖ Might you want to develop what you have written into a longer piece?

### Activity 4: Freewriting about place

Freewriting is a great way to get the creative juices flowing! There's no pressure; you don't have to show anyone. Aim to write non-stop and don't overthink – just see what words come out!

Now press play on the Nature Writing for Wellbeing Film, found here <https://youtu.be/zxjm8bovqpY>, up until I read my piece on place (the second activity).

Extract from my piece:

It is a place where land meets sea, a place of history, of fiction, where a grey stone wall curls around the harbour like an ammonite. Where dinosaurs come back to life, lift themselves up from the rock and roar. Where cliffs fall. Where boats are half-buried in wet sand when the tide is out, where the sea is bright and glittery as glass.

Then press pause.

Think of a favourite place in nature, and free-write for 5 minutes beginning with the words 'It is a place where...'

### Activity 5: Reflection

- ❖ Read what you've written
- ❖ Share with others (if you're working with a group)
- ❖ How did it *feel* to write this? Did anything surprise you?
- ❖ Do you like what you've written?

- ❖ Might it be something you can develop later on?

## WRITING NATURE-INSPIRED POETRY



People often think poetry is hard to write, or that it needs to be complicated. Yet often, the poetry which is considered 'the best,' is very simple. Free-verse is widely used by poets today, although there are many different forms of poetry.

### Activity 6: Questions to think about or discuss

Watch the rest of the Nature Writing for Wellbeing film then consider the following:

- ❖ What is a poem?
- ❖ How is it different to prose or a story?
- ❖ Does it have to rhyme?
- ❖ What might a poem include?

### Activity 7: Reading and questions exercise

Read one or more of these poems:

Rabindranath Tagore: <http://www.cinnamonyoga.com/2013/01/too-long-ive-wandered.html>

Seamus Heaney: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/50981/blackberry-picking>

Jackie Wills: <http://jackiewillspoetry.blogspot.com/p/selected-poems.html>

Two poems by John Siddique (*Rose* is best for younger readers):

<https://andotherpoems.com/2016/05/06/two-poems-by-john-siddique/>

### Questions to think about or discuss (for each poem)

- ❖ What was your favourite line?
- ❖ Did anything remind you of your own experiences?
- ❖ How did the poet weave nature and their own experience together?
- ❖ How did the poem make you feel?
- ❖ Favourite imagery?

### My thoughts on reading & writing poetry

- ❖ Poems help us make sense of the world and what it means to be human
- ❖ It's important to read LOTS by contemporary poets. Readers make the best writers!

- ❖ Poets can create something beautiful, even when the subject matter is challenging
- ❖ A poem usually focuses on a snapshot of the poet's life
- ❖ Poems often focus on feelings, and can have an emotional impact on the reader
- ❖ Poems don't have to rhyme – it's up to you!
- ❖ Poems use lots of imagery, including similes and metaphors, and visual descriptions
- ❖ Meter (stressed and unstressed syllabic pattern) and rhythm are also important – try reading poems out loud to explore these.

### **Hints & tips for writing poetry:**

- ❖ No need to plan – when you have an idea, start writing!
- ❖ Line breaks are important– the last word on a line needs to be strong
- ❖ Be prepared to redraft/edit
- ❖ Leave your work and go back to it with a fresh eye
- ❖ Read it aloud
- ❖ Think about emotional impact. How might your poem make readers feel?
- ❖ Think about similes and metaphors and do some research. What is the difference?

### **Activity 8: Reading and questions about rivers**

Older writers can read Louisa's river poem:

[https://issuu.com/literatureworks/docs/let\\_the\\_river\\_sing\\_-\\_a\\_narrative\\_poem\\_by\\_louisa\\_ad](https://issuu.com/literatureworks/docs/let_the_river_sing_-_a_narrative_poem_by_louisa_ad)

And this by Elizabeth-Jane Burnett: <https://www.littletoller.co.uk/the-clearing/from-swims-by-elizabeth-jane-burnett/>

Option for younger writers: <http://www.primarypoems.com/2017/07/03/river-runs-free/>

### **Activity 9: Questions to think about or discuss**

- ❖ Can you think of times you spent by a river?
- ❖ What did you do there? Walk, swim, sit, eat?
- ❖ What did you see, hear or touch?
- ❖ Did you go in the water? If so, what was that like?
- ❖ What wildlife did you see there?
- ❖ Did any of the above pieces you read remind you of your own experiences?

## Activity 10: Freewriting about water

Think of a time you were walking by water. Write for 5 minutes, beginning with the words 'Walk with me ...' as though you are taking the reader on a journey.

Read what you have written. How does it sound? How did it feel to write it? Did anything surprise you?

## Activity 11: Write your own nature Haiku!

A Haiku is a poem that contains 17 syllables, in lines of 5, 7, and 5 syllables. The form is Japanese in origin, and Haikus often focus on nature.

Write your own nature Haiku! It simply needs to follow the rules: 5 syllables for the first line, 7 for the second, and 5 for the last. Sometimes poets use several Haikus together to create one longer poem – each verse (stanza) has 3 lines which follow the syllable rules.

How was that? Do you like your Haiku?

# LIFE WRITING & NATURE

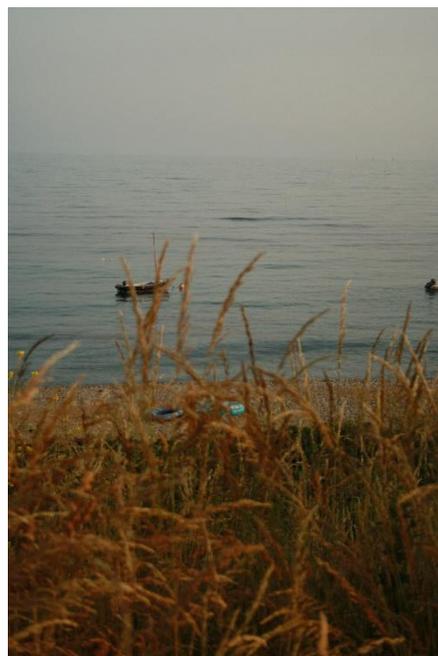
## What is life writing?

Life writing comes in many forms – journalistic-style articles, essays and blog posts; memoir; and more. Fiction can be considered life writing, if it's based on the author's experiences.

## Life writing hints and tips

Prose pieces need a little planning – think about the structure of your piece. It needs to have a beginning, middle and an end, and something needs to happen – whether it's a moment of reflection, or change.

As with poetry, you can add imagery to your writing. See what type of nature writing you prefer to read and try this style yourself. Telling your story might seem boring to you, but it doesn't have to be! Adding in little details creates interest and helps the reader connect with you. What themes or specific experiences might you like to write about?



## Writing activity 12: Freewriting

Write for 5 minutes beginning with the words 'I come from ...'

Read what you have written. How was that?

## Activity 13: Reading and questions

Older writers can read one of these essays: <https://www.littletoller.co.uk/the-clearing/magic-places-by-sara-hudston/>

<https://www.littletoller.co.uk/the-clearing/lost-in-time-by-martin-maudsley/>

Young people (aged 12+) can read:

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/may/16/diary-of-a-young-naturalist-extract-dara-mcanulty>

Poetry option for younger children:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43197/who-has-seen-the-wind>

Questions to think about or discuss

- ❖ What was the writer writing about?
- ❖ Was there anything that reminded you of your own life?
- ❖ What did you like most about the piece?

## Activity 14: Writing about an experience in nature

Think about a time you spent in nature. Jot down some notes before you start writing.

What happened? Where were you? Who were you with? What did you see, hear, smell or touch? How did you feel? What did your surroundings look like? What plants or wildlife did you notice?

Begin writing your piece. Write for 15 minutes then stop.

Look at what you've written. If you're working with others, share with each other and offer feedback on each piece.

Is there anything you can add? Can you shape it into something even better?

Leave it for now – perhaps you can go back to it later on!

# MAIN WRITING ACTIVITY

## What might I need to think about?



If you've made it this far, you're ready to write your main piece! Choose whether you'd like to write a poem or a short non-fiction piece. Perhaps you'd like to develop some of the earlier activities? Would you like to write generally about your life/experiences of nature, or about a specific experience? As you start writing your piece you may like to consider the following:

- ❖ Are you writing for yourself or for an audience? If for an audience, decide what you feel comfortable sharing
- ❖ Subject matter – as long as it's related to nature in some way – isn't so important as writers can write about very ordinary things very well
- ❖ What are your favourite aspects of nature? Do you prefer walking along the coast, or in wide open spaces, or in woods? When is your favourite time of year to be outside? What time of day? Do you like spending time in nature alone, or with others?

## What are the options for the main writing activity?

Choose one of the following:

- ❖ Use the *Telling your nature story* template on the next page
- ❖ Write your own short article/essay – this can be about your life in general, one experience, or one theme e.g. living by the sea
- ❖ Write a poem – you could choose a poem to model yours on, or try writing your own
- ❖ Examples of models include poems shared previously, and here's a simple one by Christina Rossetti: <https://hellopoetry.com/poem/16217/what-are-heavy/>  
Or you can research nature poems online, and find one you can model yours on.  
Or you could write another nature Haiku.  
Or you could write a simple memory and senses poem, like the one on the next page.

I remember

I remember seeing the red earth and cliffs

I remember the smell of salt in the air

I remember the feel of sand under my bare feet

I remember the sound of seagulls crying

I remember the taste of clotted cream

I remember thinking, this is my home.

## **Life writing template: telling your nature story**

- ❖ Describe the experience relating to nature you'd like to write about
- ❖ Is it about a specific event or place?
- ❖ Or is it about an aspect of the natural environment, such as rivers, trees, the sea, or wildlife?
- ❖ What happened?
- ❖ Where were you?
- ❖ Who was there?
- ❖ Describe your surroundings in detail. What colours did you see? What did you see, hear, touch?
- ❖ How did you feel?
- ❖ What does the natural environment mean to you?
- ❖ Conclude your piece with a final paragraph, summarising or reflecting – what is a good point to leave on?
- ❖ Title of your piece (some writers prefer to choose this when they've finished writing)

- ❖ Read what you've written – is everything in a clear order? Anything you want to change?
- ❖ Take a break, and then come back to your piece and re-draft!

## What else might I need to consider?

When planning to re-draft/edit your work, try the following:

- ❖ Do some research to find examples of 'Before' and 'After' redrafting or editing. What are the main differences?
- ❖ Decide whether you prefer to write then redraft, or write and redraft as you go
- ❖ Leave your work and read it later with fresh eyes
- ❖ Be strict – every word needs to deserve its place!
- ❖ Get feedback from a family member/friend on your first draft. Ask them to be constructive – to say what they like/what could be improved. Do you agree with them?

## Performing/reading your work

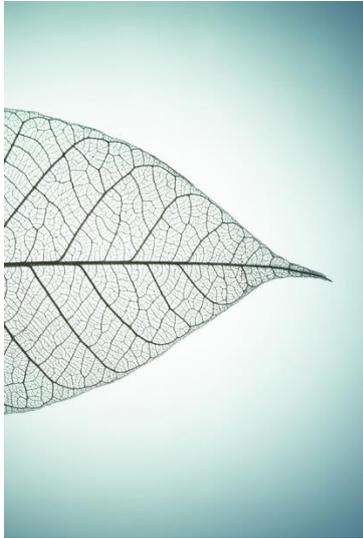
- ❖ Find some poets online reading/performing their work. Whose performance did you like most? What did you like about it?
- ❖ Try reading your finished piece aloud. Practice reading to a family member or friend, and ask for feedback – what did they like about your performance, and what could be improved?

## How do I submit my nature writing piece?



If you would like to submit your work to be considered for publication on the Arts Development Company website, please email either a **poem of no more than 40 lines**, or a piece of **prose up to 750 words**, as a Word document, to [louisaparker3@hotmail.com](mailto:louisaparker3@hotmail.com) Please write 'Nature Writing for Wellbeing Submission' in the subject line. The deadline for sending your work is Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2020 at 8am.

Thank you for taking part in this nature writing for wellbeing course. I hope you enjoyed it, and I'm looking forward to seeing some of your writing!



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