



Chapter Two – Your Stories - Transcript

I remember, um, growing up I was told to respect my elders and I agree with that - elders do rease, do deserve respect. Um, but quite often I found that I was told this, like, kind of reprimanded as 'Sarah respect your elders!' not when I was being disrespectful but when I was questioning what an elder (which could have been any family member, friend of the family or authoritative figure that was like an adult when I was a young adult) um, questioning them or disagreeing with them or providing, um, saying 'I don't agree with that this is what I think instead.' Not in any way that was disrespectful more conversational and I was told, I was kind of silenced with 'respect your elders.' I understand where it comes fro, where it comes from this kind of adult assumption that young people's don't really know what they're talking about because they haven't had the o, the opportunity to have the same amount of life experience that an adult has. But that does not give them the right to silence a young voice because of that lack of life experience; because what life experience they have (even if it is more limited than an adults) is still valid. Is still a voice. Is still something that should be learned, that should be heard and listened to. I am here to tell you, if you are a young person, that you still have stories that are worthy of telling.

WRITING EXERCISE – THE STORY GRID

This is a writing exercise that I love to do and I don't just do it when I'm teaching poetry. I, um, do it when I'm talking about film or monologue because it works for everyone it doesn't, it doesn't stick to form this is about finding your stories. Not about finding your poems or finding your films or finding your scripts this is finding your stories - stories that you have to tell that are unique to you, that sound like you, that are reflected of your experience or what it is that you have to say. It's called your story grid and it's extremely simple. So grab your notebook or open your document and, um, this is what we're going to do - I'm going to use two pages because I'm using a really chunky marker right now but I want you to turn it into a grid of four. So a line straight down the middle and a line across. So you see that I cannot draw straight lines. In the top left-hand corner, I want you to write 'I am' and underline it, that's it 'I am'. In the top right-hand corner, I want you to put 'Likes' or underneath 'Things I care about enough to talk about' whatever one. In the bottom left-hand corner 'Dislikes' or 'Things that bother me enough to talk about.' And in, uh, the last, in the last square, I want you to write, um, 'Things that have happened' or 'Scenarios'. Scen... S C E N A R ios. Oh, writing in front of people I'm dyslexic, this is like my worst nightmare, so if you spot any spelling mistakes I'm going to apologise straight off the bat. This is the best thing about spoken word poetry - nobody sees your writing so your stuff can be full of spelling mistakes and grammatical errors and no one will ever know. Oh, it's my favourite thing about it. Okay so going straight into this exercise what I want you to do is to populate your grid and, again, we're still at the stages that we just want to be getting things

down. We just want to get into the practice of actually writing things about ourselves so we're not going to think too hard and/or try to think of philosophical things that make us look good we're not going to be sharing our grids, the grids are for you and you're going to use them as a, as a building block for the work that comes later on. So what we're going to do, before we go any further, is we're going to take five minutes and you're going to populate your own grid. I bet a good way to go about this is that there's always going to be more to add and, again, you don't really need to think about it just the first things that come to mind just whap them in the squares that you made .

FIVE MINUTE TIMER

LESSON CONTINUES

When I go about writing a poem I start with mind mapping. So, um, writing down just as many things as I can think of, um, in terms of images and influences and, just, lines and words and things that come to mind that I know are going to help me going forward writing a poem. Your story grid is a great example of mind mapping; it's a piece of information where you have written down a lot of things that you, uh, know to be true and you're going to be able to use them over and over again in your experience. Sometimes just having all those things written out in front of you - like you do in your story grid - makes you feel in a more secure and settled position about your voice and your experiences and what you have to say. And that is so useful; knowing that you can write from a place of your own experience because you have it written already. You now have an incredible building block for all your stories. If you take some of the things that you are, the things that you care about or, or dislike, and put them in scenarios that you have been in - that's a story. These are things that have happened to you. Feel free to, after this chapter, just go back and really hone your lists, take out things that you don't want and expand upon things that you do want because what you're going to discover is already looking at your grid you're going to start piecing little bits together and being like: 'Oh yeah I do want to talk about that, this is something that I like, that I want to talk about that. And me, as something that I am, I can talk about it from this specific angle and I can put it in this scenario I can put it in the context of this thing that's happened to me that I can talk about because I know, I've experienced it I've been there.'

TRANSCRIPT FOR 'GRANDMOTHER GLASGOW'

I don't remember my earlier memories but she is the blankets and the sing-songs and the tiny shoes all at the same time my Grandmother never needed a fireside and an armchair to keep us listening intently at her feet my Grandmother keeps stories stored in the folds of her skirt strapped to her tiny heeled shoes grasped in her silkworm hands when she can't sleep my Grandmother thinks of every street from Anderston Cross to Finnieston and the people that she used to know their Anthony Street, McIntyre Street, Hydepark, Guest, Oak, Lancefield, Port, Elliott and Gray.

My Grandmother sings the old songs the crooning ones ones like 'Ally Bally Bee' and 'Daisy Daisy' I'm in primary three and the teacher asks does anyone know the words and my hand shoots up desperate to impress to let out all my Grandmother instilled in me it took me 20 years to figure out she taught me the wrong words instead of a romantic verse about marriage a bicycle and a carriage my version goes

'Daisy Daisy what do you make of that upset the table and nearly killed the cat the cat began to bubble so I hit it with a shovel it went to bed with a broken head and a face like a kangaroo'

My Grandmother tucks a wicked sense of humour up her sleeve with her handkerchief hides a wicked smile behind her hands she has all the time in the world for you to get the joke and she's laughing still if you don't laugh we'll greet she says and there have been days where we were left with nothing but the loss she lost a home to a war that crept into her classrooms lost a brother to illness lost a sister and breast to cancer lost a husband to heart attack lost teeth lost weight lost the protective tissue in the soles of her feet but she still dances three times a week and she's laughing still she used to walk us everywhere summer holidays smell like the streets of my cities the museums and the galleries the swimming pools and the libraries my Grandmother taught me how to be a library without ever opening a book if I could I'd spend all my time untying the histories from her throat photographing the maps worn into the soles of her feet I wish I could make library of all that she is because my Grandmother is the City of Glasgow she is laundry steam breath and close style artistry she is the subway and the seagulls after your newspaper poke wrapped chips she is the number six bus and Buchanan Street buskers she is the shipyards and the shed she is spirit of the clyde she is whiskey and water she is the pub she is the old songs the ones you apparently make up all the words too and I I am the legacy of both Grandmother and city with giant shoes to fill people make it and it makes the people from her to my Father to me so if you never get the chance to meet my Grandmother that's okay set your feet loose on the City of Glasgow and in-between the awful bird song of screaming people traffic rumbling off curbs the symphonies of Sauchiehall Street you'll start to hear the old songs

and that is where you'll always find her stop to listen start on Anderston Cross work your way to Finnieston see who you meet along the way. Anthony, McIntyre, Hydepark, Guest, Oak, Lancefield, Port, Elliott, and Gray

CHAPTER 2 – USE YOUR STORIES IN YOUR WRITING

When I was writing 'Grandmother Glasgow' I sat down to, I knew that this was going to be the first poem that came after the 'Introduction Poem', so kind of the first poem as we got into the context of the show. I knew that I wanted to write about where I come from. For me, um, that, my city is really, really tied to my experiences of growing up; being, like, looked after by my Gran because my parents both worked full time. So when summer holidays rolled around my parents would still be working so my Granny would have myself, my sister, and my cousin, um, all the time and we were all of, kind of, similar ages so we were an absolute handful. So she would just take us these long walks around the city but it meant that I got to see the museums and the galleries and I knew lots of things about my city, I knew a lot about Glasgow's history because my Gran took me to those places. So when I'm trying to explain things about my city and things about me growing up in that city they're all tied into my Gran. So that poem, I wanted to write about Glasgow but I used stories from my life. I used stories of things that actually happened to me to tell this story about Glasgow. So this is probably a good time to come back to, and think about, 'Ground Rule Number Five - Don't tell anyone else's stories.' What I mean by that is try to write entirely from your own experience. Now 'Grandmother Glasgow' might seem like a story about my Granny so, me telling someone else's story but it's actually a poem about Glasgow but the way I tell it is by talking about my experiences with summer holidays with my Gran. So

there's a difference. There's a difference between me telling a story with a person in it versus me telling someone else's stories. Basically what I don't want to happen is, in your poetry, you talk about an experience that, um, is between you and a friend or you and a family member or you and another person that that other person might think is private. If you use other people in your poetry and you want to share it, that's absolutely fine but you just need to get their permission first.

WRITING EXERCISE – 7 MINUTES

The hardest part is sitting down in front of a blank sheet of paper. That is always going to be the most intimidating part of the process, is sitting down and knowing that you have to put something down there, you have to turn this blank sheet of paper into something that is art. And that can be, that can feel like a huge piece of pressure. So we're going to try and tackle that straight away with this really simple exercise that has nothing to do with writing poetry but everything to do with getting you out of your head and practicing down which is just seven minutes of pure writing. What's gonna happen now is I'm gonna put seven minutes on the clock and, I promise there is ones that you can, like, pause and skip ahead but it's not this one you're not allowed to do anything to this one, seven minutes on the clock and you're just going to put pen to paper or start typing and you're not allowed to stop that is the only rule. You're going to come to a natural point and your brain goes blank and that's when you just keep going 'I am writing, I am writing, I am writing.' Just keep your, your hands and your, and your fingers are not allowed to stop all you're going to do is to start by writing 'Outside these walls, I am' and once you start you're not allowed to stop. This is just you getting onto paper the playground that your brain is.

SEVEN MINUTE TIMER

CHAPTER 2 - CONCLUSION

This is the end of chapter two and I hope that, by now, you have learned two very important things. One - Anyone can write spoken word. It is not this big scary art form that is up on some sort of creative ivory tower. It is accessible, anyone can do it, you can do it, you should be doing it. And Two - Your experience is going to be the starting point for some amazing poems and I can't wait for us to carry on and get to writing them.

TOP TIP – FIGURING THINGS OUT

Poetry isn't just about writing what you know, it's about writing what you don't understand but what you're trying to figure out. Your stories are a wonderful starting point for many poems but it's not just about telling stories in a poetic way. It's about using those stories to talk about things that you don't quite know, you haven't quite figured out yet. The, think, these things that you want to understand, things you want to engage with and you're using your experience as a starting point. Um, and you're explaining that journey. Don't feel that you have to have all the answers and don't feel that you have to know how to write poems like some of the people on the reading list or like myself. Don't feel that you have to be there yet because you don't. You don't have to have all the answers no one does and that's exciting.

UP NEXT – CHAPTER 3 – ODES