

## VISION AS DREAM



A guide to using  
your dreams to  
write a poem  
by Rachel Long.

Key stage  
3/4/5

### Night

is a short film you commissioned.  
A red net curtain billowing in slow-mo.  
At 1:22 a girl's face appears behind it.  
Two brown hands – the camera's? – reach out,  
find only fabric.

\*

They're with us in this room.  
Mum taught me how to feel them  
on my back. How to plead The Blood,  
thumb seven crosses between my blades,  
in the centre of my forehead.  
She didn't teach me how to lose them  
on my way home from the shops.  
If you can't find a tree,  
walk three times around a parked car.  
Don't look in the windows. Don't run.  
They are attracted to sadness.

\*

I can still only tell if Mum is laughing  
or crying by her breasts  
— up-down for laughing, up-down  
then into a heavy sway for crying.

\*

Remember why you'd eat two dinners  
then as many broken biscuits as it took to taste metal  
on the roof of your mouth. You knew, somehow,  
that to die was to be hungry.

\*

Ha! You once thought heaven was a shack on a cloud,  
Mary smiling serene, walking between the rows  
of scythed corn-people  
laid out on the bare floorboards.  
You kept trying to get up  
like the only live crab in a box.  
Each night she squeezes your shoulder,  
says, *Stay down*.  
She has the voice of a social worker.

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from *My Darling from the Lions* (Picador)

Shortlisted for the 2020 Forward Prize for Best First Collection

# NATIONAL POETRY DAY 2020



## See It Like a Poet



Share your Vision poem  
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# APPLES AND SNAKES



## 1st OCTOBER 2020

#nationalpoetryday

[www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk](http://www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk)



I grew up instilled with a belief in 'other-worldliness': God, the Devil, witches, wizards, spirits, and in the power of dreams as warnings/prophecies.

It took me a long time to realise that this belief system is a blessing for writing, for creating exciting images, unusual plot twists and endings that only really happen in dreams. Where else can the sky be purple with green polka dots? Or your house be your house but also entirely different somehow – filled with strangers and with more floors after the roof that lead to...

I began using the people and things I saw at night in my poems. As writers we're missing a trick if we don't use our dreams as inspiration and material. Think about it: each night our brains create multiple mini stories in pure image (poems), and then we just wake up and shrug them off. No! Hold onto them (this will be like carrying water in your hands and trying to cross the road but try). Remember that everyone dreams. Everyone! It's just that you may not remember them, but if you get into a good habit of writing down whatever you do – even if it's just one word, a number, a sound, then each night it'll get easier. Keep a dream diary by your bed. Use those wonderful narratives and images then watch your writing pop with surrealism and surprise.

- Read 'Night', then read it again (because poems can be tricky to grasp the first time – like dreams). On your second read underline any words/phrases/lines that you feel use dreamlike imagery.
- Now, turn to the person next to you and discuss what you underlined and why. Do any of the images remind you of a dream you have had recently? Or an unusual story someone once told you?
- Make a list of three significant dreams you've had in your life. And all you supposed 'non-dreamers', write down three unusual or dreamlike stories you've heard or witnessed.

- Now choose one from your list of three.
- Now section your page into five equal parts.

1.

In the first, write a definition (or a creative re-definition) of what night is – to you.

2.

In the second, write an account of what you have been told by someone about spirits or the supernatural. Try not to give your opinion on what they said, just what you were told.

3.

Give a short description of the person who told you these things. Can you describe something about them through their actions/behaviour?

4.

Remember a belief you had once about something otherworldly. Write this down. Begin this one with 'Remember...'

5.

In this last section, zoom in on a significant person from your dream. What do they do and say?

Read your sections through. What strange-wonderful dream poem have you written?

