



POET'S WORKSHOP

Gerard Manley Hopkins rarely began with an abstract idea first.

He did not sit down and think:

"Today I will write a poem about identity."

Instead, he paid attention to sound and words, or a kingfisher in the sun.

And by following those observations, he connected them to something he found that was larger.

This exercise invites you to do the same.

Begin with something real and trust that you will find your own meaning.

SOUND HUNT

Choose a sound you enjoy saying and write as many words as you can think of starting with that sound. ex: fl. cr. gl. wh. st. br.

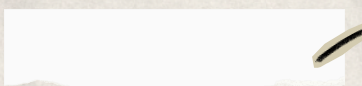
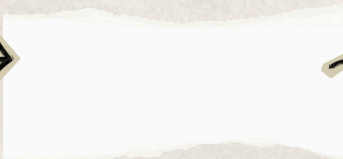
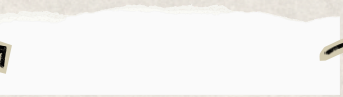
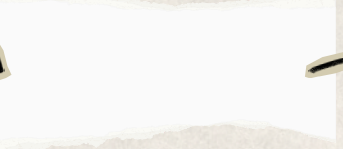
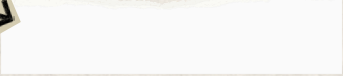
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BUILD A CONNECTED CHAIN

Start with some of your favorite words from SOUND HUNT and let one lead to other connected words.

Example:

glimmer → glass → glow → gold → galaxy



COLLECT WORDS THAT MATCH EACH CATEGORY

WORDS THAT CRACKLE

Sharp, quick, bright

WORDS THAT RIPPLE

Soft, flowing, moving

WORDS THAT RING

Clear, bell-like, echoing

WORDS THAT GLIDE

Smooth, slow, drifting

CHOOSING A SUBJECT

Or maybe let the subject choose you.

STEP ONE: CHECK IN

*Circle any feelings that have
been visiting you lately*

COURAGE

CONFUSION

GRIEF

CURIOSITY

JOY

LONGING

WONDER

UNCERTAINTY

HOPE

RESTLESSNESS

LONELINESS

CHANGE

STEP TWO: FOLLOW THE FEELING

If that feeling were something in nature, what would it be?

Take a few emotions and explore them.

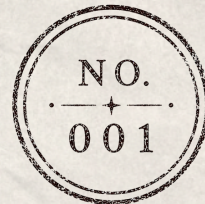
Examples:

Wonder → stars

Restlessness → wind

Courage → a river

Belonging → a bird's nest



STEP THREE: CHOOSE YOUR SUBJECT

				EMOTION			
				SYMBOL			

Now write, what about this thing brought it to your mind in connection to this emotion? Is it the color? The movement? The sound? The season? The memory attached to it?

Write without overthinking:

Now write, if your subject could give you one piece of advice, what would it say?



STEP FOUR: GATHER A COLLECTION

COLORS

*What colors do you
connect with it?*

SOUNDS

*What sounds do you
connect with it?*

MOVEMENTS

*What movements do you
think of?*

FEELINGS

What emotions does it stir?

WORDS

*What words connect to
your subject?*

CONNECT

*What unexpected
connections does it
remind you of?*



THE SHAPE OF A POEM

Every poem begins somewhere.

You now have a collection of observations, sounds, words, feelings, and connections.

The next step is simple:

Start with what is physically true. Hopkins often began with something he could see or hear. These are observations. From there, he began adding comparisons, connections, and meaning.

Try this pattern:

1. Start with the thing itself. What does it do? What does it sound like? What does it look like?

Example: The river bends around the stones.

2. Add a comparison. What does it remind you of?

Example: The river bends around the stones like a traveler avoiding an argument.

3. Follow the meaning. What larger idea does that suggest?

Example: The river bends around the stones like a traveler avoiding an argument, finding a way forward without breaking itself.

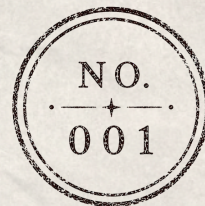
Simply keep following the thread.

Observation → Comparison → Meaning

WHAT I NOTICE:

IT REMINDS ME OF:

WHICH MAKES ME THINK ABOUT:



WRITE YOUR OWN
HOPKINS POEM

