

# A poem about India

## Secondary Lesson Plan

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### Source

[Same difference](#), Hyde, M. & Parr, H., ISBN 1 86366 260 X

### Learning area

English

### Level

Middle secondary

### Description

Students read and discuss the poem *Khwab* before writing poems of their own.

### Purpose

To provide students with the opportunity to explore impressionistic poetry about place.

### Duration

About 50 minutes

### Possible outcomes

In relation to *English — a curriculum profile for Australian schools*, this lesson can contribute to the achievement of outcomes in all strands.

### Materials required

A class set of the poem *Khwab*, Handout 1 (from below)

### Procedure

#### 1. Introduction

Introduce the lesson by explaining that the class is going to read a poem by an Australian poet, Michael Hyde. The poem is *Khwab*, a Hindi word meaning 'dream'. Give students the handout and read the poem aloud or ask a student to do so. Without discussion, ask students to write a few sentences or phrases about their first impressions of the poem.

## 2. Discussion

Clarify unfamiliar words. For example:

- the *Ganges* is a major river of India, sacred to Hindus
- *Garuda* is the name of a mythical bird;
- *Madras* and *Calcutta* are cities in India
- *Rajasthan* is a state

Use students' first impressions to begin a discussion of the poem. Possible areas of discussion include:

- the overall mood of the poem
- the point of view of the poet
- the contrast between 'old' and 'new' images of India
- the use of colour imagery
- the meaning of the final lines of the poem

## 3. Writing task

The poet has drawn on all five senses. Discuss particular parts of the poem that refer to each of the senses. Ask students to write (in poetry or prose) their own impressions of a place, drawing on all the senses. Share student work in the class.

### Extension activities

Students imagine flying above a familiar city and write a poem in the style of *Khwab* that captures the 'mirrored fragments' of the city.

Students write a prose account of their impressions of India after reading the poem.

### Acknowledgements

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### Related resources

- [Access Asia: Secondary Teaching and Learning Units](#)
- *Into India*

## Handout

### *Khwab*

In a dream  
I flew across the blue ink heavens,  
Through the air  
Passing Broome red underneath as  
Garuda crossing the Indian Ocean  
To India.  
As the sun rose  
And unsettled the grey mist on the Ganges  
I sat in a boat  
With rhythmic creaking oars  
To the slap thud of washing clothes  
On stony steps,  
To the ringing bell of funeral pyres  
Vultures flapping, rose petals following  
In the wake of burning dead  
And on into the fumed traffic  
Crimson-saried women flying in the air  
Scooter taxis with alto horns  
Rushing through crowds and sacred cows.  
Computers flashing  
In canyons of glass and stone  
White smoke curling, incense  
Floating like the women bathing,  
Combing jet black hair  
While the Ganges ran down their shoulders  
And in the dark of the fiery furnace  
Men and women slept where they worked  
Making black iron for bread.  
Sweet smells of Madras  
The rushing Calcutta streets  
Moon shadows on flute tunes  
In the temple  
The four-clap beat and the hum of the drum  
Dusty men sleeping on stone  
And balancing women with baskets of rubble.  
Rolling camels in Rajasthan  
Two-humped shadows in the slipping sand  
A thousand mirrored fragments  
Held in the palm of my hand,  
Like infinity  
'And eternity in an hour'