

## Finding the Dove: Writing With English Language Learners

"One of our deepest human instincts is to tell our life stories,  
to figure out who we are...." Maura MacNeil

Here are poems, stories, novels, and works of nonfiction to inspire students to write themselves, see the importance of their own stories, and experience their telling and writing muscles. The works here are offered to use as jumping off places to experiment with writing about a memory, a story to tell to a child, a poem, and more.

Estes, Eleanor. *The Hundred Dresses*, Harcourt, reissue, 2004.

Cooney, Barbara. *Miss Rumphius*, Penguin, 1982.

Farish, Terry. *The Good Braider*, Skyscape, 2012.

Friedman, Ina. *How My Parents Learned to Eat*, illus. by Allen Say, Houghton Mifflin, c1984.

Hauser, Brooks. *The New Kids: Big Dreams and Brave Journeys at a High School for Immigrant Teens*, Atria, 2012.

Ho, Minfong. *Hush: A Thai Lullaby*, illus. by Holly Meade. Orchard, 2000.

Nye, Naomi Shihab, *The Tree is Older Than You Are*, Simon & Schuster, 1995.

Norman, Lisette. *My Feet Are Laughing*, illus. by Frank Morrison, Farrar Straus, 2006.

Say, Allen, *Grandfather's Journey*. Houghton Mifflin, c1993.

Sharafyar, Aqula, "The Faithful Doves of My Father" in *I Remember Warm Rain*, The Telling Room, Portland, Maine, 2007.

Testa, Maria. *Something About America*, Greenwillow, 2007.

Tiwari, Hari, *The Story of a Pumpkin*, a bilingual tale in Nepali and English, illus. by Dal Rai. New Hampshire Humanities Council, 2012.

"Life is made up of moments, small pieces of glittering mica in a long stretch of gray cement." Anna Quindlen

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Poems & Passages Presented in the Workshop:

"My father kept birds – about 15 beautiful white doves- behind our house in Kabul....He would go out to talk to them, making little dove calls as he encouraged them to eat. He also put small bangles around their ankles, which would jingle as they walked. That way we could hear the birds when we were inside the house, cooing and jingling outside while we ate our dinner, or sat and talked as a family in the evenings. "

by Aquila Sharafyar, an excerpt from "The Faithful Doves of My Father: An Unforgettable Story" in *I Remember Warm Rain*

Beauty is a Silk Shawl

Beauty is inside. It is in the heart.  
The face is very beautiful.  
Beauty is in the gardenia.  
In helping a friend learn English, there is beauty.  
Beauty is inside and outside;  
it is in the city, the country, a park, even our clothes.  
Beauty is a pink and purple silk shawl.  
Beauty is the earth created by God.  
My body is beautiful. When my children run track, I see beauty.  
What is beauty? My baby.  
Words are beautiful. They help me understand.  
Beauty brings forth feelings to make me feel good  
like the green of summer.  
When sadness comes, beauty brings a positive attitude.  
Beauty refreshes my mind.

A collaborative poem by *Jonny, Tanya, Habibe, Fozia, Shannaz, Tara, Noor, Elham, Sabina, Omar, Judy, and Terry* Manchester Adult Education, July, 2014

From " All the World's Sadness"

"All the world's sadness  
is in America," [my father says.]

I opened my eyes  
to look at him.

"I know," I said,  
because it was the truth.  
"We all bring our sadness  
to America with us."

"My sadness is here,"  
my father said,  
touching his chest....  
"Not here."  
Then he traced his finger  
along my jaw line  
along my arms  
along my scars.  
"Not here."

A memory. I am three.  
"Rusty cheeks," I said softly.  
"I remember rusty cheeks."  
I watched my father's face crash  
but he did not look away,  
and I loved him.

"You are young and beautiful  
and strong," my father said.  
"Ready for the world."

Maria Tests from *Something About America*  
(We have presented as a choral reading.)

November 18

Cloudy, dark and windy.

Walking by flashlight  
at six in the morning,  
my circle of light on the gravel  
swinging side to side,  
coyote, raccoon, field mouse, sparrow,  
each watching from darkness  
this man with the moon on a leash.

By Ted Kooser in *Winter Morning Walk*