

Name:

# MEMORY RIVER



# StoryFACTORY

## Memory River - Teacher Notes Writing Activity - Poetry

### Project Overview

*Memory River* is a project which combines Indigenous history, stories and art with local history and the voices of young people from Western Sydney. The project allows students to explore Darug and Burramattagal knowledge, engage with the work of young writers who contributed to the project, and consider their personal responses to the Parramatta Female Factory site. In these activities students create two poems which engage with the key ideas of the Memory River project. The poems will use two different forms: the mirror poem and a haibun.

**Aim:** To create a prose poem and a visual poem responding to pre existing work (written and visual) work created by students who completed the program during 2023.

**Students:** Stage 4-5

**Duration:** 90-120mins

**Text Type/Publication Outcome:** Mirror Poem poster; Haibun.

### Key Resources

[Student workbook - Mirror Poem](#)

[Mirror Poem Template](#)

[Video - Memory River](#)

[Student workbook - Haibun](#)



## **Part One: Introduction**

Guide students through the information in the opening pages of the student resources booklet. These pages provide students with some information about the Darug and Burramattagal history of the area.

Resource: [Student workbook - Haibun pages 1-5](#)

### **Additional Information**

#### **Female Factory / Parramatta Girls Home**

Located on the traditional lands of the Burramattagal clan of the Darug, Parramatta Female Factory Precinct is Australia's foremost historical site of institutional confinement.

Dating back to 1821, this national heritage precinct covers an area of 7.3 hectares where the adjacent historic institutions of the Roman Catholic Orphan School and later Parramatta Girls Home and the convict built Parramatta Female Factory and later Parramatta Invalid & Lunatic Asylum are situated.

Over time the hidden histories of these institutions have been revealed. Most recently by the Royal commission into child sexual abuse and in 2022, the NSW government dedicated a [memorial](#) to recognise and pay tribute to children who were abused at Parramatta Girls Home.

Today the child welfare institutions of this precinct are recognised as foundational in the history and narrative of Australia for those who experienced institutional care as children, or who were forcibly removed from their families known as the Stolen Generation and the Forgotten Australians.

As many of these people have had a family it is highly likely that every Australian either was, is related to, works with or knows someone who experienced childhood in an institution or out-of-home care environment.

(extracted from: <https://www.parragirls.org.au/>)



## **Part Two - Mirror Poem**

In this activity students will create a Mirror Poem built from the work created by students who completed the program during 2023.

Resource: [Student workbook - Mirror Poem](#)

Note: the student resources contain two different versions of the source material.

### **Text: Mirror Poem**

A mirror poem is a poem composed of 9 lines, the word count for each line is mirrored in the matching line in the second half of the poem.

### **Methodology**

The mirror poem works in a way that is opposite to erasure poems; students will select and remove words from an existing text. The sources text will be used to create a new original poem.

The students will create and arrange a poem which has a similar structure to the example below.

eg.

Word Word Word Word Word

Word Word Word Word

Word Word Word

Word Word

Word

Word Word

Word Word Word

Word Word Word Word

Word Word Word Word Word

### **Additional Points**

Students will create a poem which loosely explores an idea they have identified in the text.

The key idea students are exploring in the text will be the centre, single word line.

### **Student Instructions**

- 1) Select words or a combination of lines from the source text



- 2) Yes, students can create additional words by collaging together letters from the existing words!
- 3) Arrange words on the [Mirror Poem template](#)
- 4) Share
- 5) Decorate with additional collage elements as needed



## **Part Two - Haibun**

During this activity students will create a poem using the haibun form. The poem will be a response to a video created by students who have completed the program previously.

Resource: [Student workbook - Haibun](#)

### **Haibun - How to**

The form being used by students during the writing activities is the haibun. Haibun is a poetry form that combines a prose poem with a haiku. The prose section of a haibun is usually descriptive, it uses sparse, poetic imagery to evoke a sensory impression in the reader. The section of prose is followed by a haiku that serves to deepen the meaning of the prose, either by intensifying its themes or serving as a juxtaposition to the prose's content.

### **What Are the Characteristics of Haibun Poetry?**

The subject matter of a haibun can vary widely, though the prose sections commonly describe an unfolding scene, a slice of life, a character sketch or a special moment. These sections typically consist of a few paragraphs written in a sparse, imagistic haiku style that attempt to portray the scene in an impartial or objective manner. Haibun prose can be written in first-person singular, first-person plural, or third person.

The accompanying haiku usually appears at the end of the haibun composition, though in some cases it may appear in the middle or at the very beginning. The haiku is meant to be in conversation with the prose section, serving as a thematic accompaniment, juxtaposition, or grace note that deepens the meaning of the piece as a whole.

### **Reminder of the Haiku Form**

The most common structure for haiku written in English is the 5-7-5 structure, where the first line is five syllables, the second is seven syllables and the third is five syllables.

The haiku element at the conclusion of the haibun serves as a thematic accompaniment, juxtaposition, that deepens the meaning of the piece as a whole.

### **Text Structure: Haibun**

Students will aim for 2-3 brief image rich sentences for each of the parts of the prose poem. Followed by a haiku conclusion. To guide the writing students will use the See, Think, Wonder structure detailed below.

Use the model text (at the end of this plan) to clarify this for students if necessary.

### **Introduction - Thinking Routines and Writing**

Students will consider their 'thinking routines' - that is, the process they use to understand, analyse and create. The use of thinking routines helps students to consciously understand and apply a process of thought. There are lots of different thinking routines, but students will use the one below.

*See, Think, Wonder - Thinking Routine*

There are three steps in this thinking routine:

*See* - What did you notice?

*Think* - What do you think is going on?

*Wonder* - What does it make you wonder about?

*Let's look at it in a little more detail.*

*See* - What did you notice?

*Think* - What do you think is going on? What is being revealed? How is it being revealed?

*Wonder* - What does it make you wonder about?

If we look at this thinking routine we'll notice that it follows a familiar thought path: noticing something (seeing); considering its use in the world - how it might be used, or what it might be used for (thinking); then speculating about things associated with the object.

Eg.

I see a car drive past, I notice the colour, the make, the condition. Let's say it's a '69 Mustang Fastback, black with a red racing stripe. I *think*, wow someone is taking really good care of that car, the paint job is great, engine sounds perfect. I start to *wonder* what that person might be like, are they young or old? Why are they so careful with this car? What's so important about it to them. Then the wondering might extend into ideas that relate specifically to personal experiences and memories eg. I might recall how my Dad really liked Mustangs...etc, etc

### **Additional Activity**

Invite students to practice the See, Think, Wonder thinking routine on random objects around the room.

Keep this playful and low risk. Could be run as a small group activity where students work in groups of three and each take on one of the modes (eg. student one is See, student two is Think, student three is Wonder). Small groups can have time to discuss, then return and share with the whole group.

### **Video - Viewing 1**

Discussion: Talk through the structure of the haibun and how it is going to relate to the way students will respond to the video. Relate this to the idea of the thinking routine - See, Think, Wonder

*Discussion Prompts*

What did students notice in the video? (eg. repeated visual elements)

Does the video make students think about anything in particular?

Do students wonder about anything in the video? Do they have any questions?

### **Video - Viewing 2**

#### **Student Activity**

As students view the video for the second time they will collect ideas under the categories of See, Think, Wonder.

Students work individually, gathering ideas on their worksheet for each of the categories.

These can be points, thoughts, even (for the think and wonder sections) imagined ideas.

This is an example of focused ideation - students are starting to dig more deeply into their initial ideas. Encourage students to 'build a world' around their initial ideas.

### **Student Activity: Create a Haibun**

#### **Instructions**

- Using their individual brainstorm as source material, students will create their own haibun responding to the video.
- Use the model text as an example for how the ideas that have been gathered could be turned into a haibun.



- Remind students that the prose portion of the model text is broken into three sections corresponding to See, Think and Wonder.
- Complete writing in booklet.
- Share and discuss.

## ***Haibun: Model Text***

### ***Night falls on the Female Factory***

Footsteps, trees moving, branches scratching the sky, leaves blowing across the ground. People smile and share thoughts, tell us about their hopes. The sun glows in the background, falling on leaves and flowers, creating shadows.

I think about how the land has changed, the buildings, the trees, the experiences of people who live here. But the river still flows, there are some parts that remain, the earth, water and dreams continue. Buildings seem to breathe under the trees, I can imagine the river and earth speaking to us. The memories of people remain all around us, like they're ghosts telling us to remember what has happened in the past.

I wonder about the people who have been here, all the futures that could be. I wonder about my own future, where I would like to go, who I would like to be. The names that might have been between these walls, next to this river, they're all silhouettes and shadows. Now their language is weather, they talk in sunshine, rain, lightning. I listen to all the things they promised to say.

Footsteps across grass  
the bats spread wings and fly  
the river flows past



# MIRROR POEMS

## Collage/Mirror Poem

In this activity you will create a Mirror Poem built from the work created by T3 students. A mirror poem is a poem composed of 9 lines, the word count for each line is mirrored in the matching line in the second half of the poem.

eg.

Word Word Word Word Word

Word Word Word Word

Word Word Word

Word Word

Word

Word Word

Word Word Word

Word Word Word Word

Word Word Word Word Word

EXAMPLE

## Instructions

- \* Select lines or a combination of lines from the video text
- \* Arrange words on the page
- \* Yes, you can create additional words by collaging together letters from the existing words!
- \* Share
- \* Decorate with additional collage elements as needed

**TUMBLE GLIDE OVER ROCKS**

**RIVER**

**BATS FLYING, THE WIND**

**IN MY HEART**

**THE BEAUTIFUL**

**GHOSTS**



**TO FLOW OUT AND OUT AND BE REIMAGINED AS RAIN.  
TRIBES TOGETHER ON THE SAND AT THE ANCIENT BIRTHING**

**PLACE.**

**TUMBLE GLIDE OVER ROCKS. A RIVER  
CAN LEAVE IT ALL AND STILL MUST FLOW. I SAY TO THE BATS  
REMEMBER THE LIVES YOU USED TO PROTECT. THERE IS A BEND**

**ALONG THE RIVER**

**WHERE THE FISH SLOW IN SHALLOW WATER.  
DOWN BY THE RIVER, BY THE ANCIENT TREE. I HEAR NOTHING,  
EVERYONE IS DEAD, BUT THEN I HEAR THE DUCKS DOWN BY THE**

**RIVER.**

**I SAY TO THE PLANTS YOUR BEAUTY FOREVER CHANGES.**

**RATS FLYING, THE WIND BLOWING. BETHEL MEANS THE HOUSE OF**

**GOD, A PLACE OF SECURE REFUGE**

**THIS IS NOT THE FEELING I FEEL IN BETHEL.**

**I SAID TO THE GRASS, REMEMBER ALL THE PAST LIVES BURIED IN  
YOU.**

**I ASK THE SPIRITS TO GUIDE ME**

**WE'LL REMEMBER THOSE WHO FOUND THIS PLACE. FUNNY, THE**

**SPIRIT WALKING**

**PAST ME IS MORE LIKE WALKING THROUGH A RIVER.**

**I SAY TO THE BATS,**

**THANK YOU FOR SHOWING US THAT YOU DON'T ALWAYS HAVE  
TO BE IN THE LIGHT TO BE SEEN. I SAY TO THE FALLEN TREES,  
YOU HAVE STOOD IN THE GROUND FOR AS LONG AS YOU COULD**

**AND WE THANK YOU.**

WHAT BECAME OF THE RIVER WHO ROSE UP, TUMBLE GLIDE  
OVER ROCKS, A RIVER  
CAN SEE IT ALL AND MUST FLOW ON AND ON. DOWN THE RIVER BY  
THE ANCIENT TREE.

I FEEL SHIVERS DOWN MY SPINE. I CAN'T BRING MYSELF TO  
LOOK THROUGH THE WINDOW,  
I CAN IMAGINE THE PAIN THE GIRLS WERE GOING THROUGH.  
I STAND WITH MY PEOPLE AND WITH MY PEOPLE I FEEL STRONG.

FISH SWIM UNDER MY SKIN. THERE ARE MANY GHOSTS,  
I HEAR THEIR VOICES, SCREAMING AT ME, WARNING ME,  
SHOWING ME THEIR HISTORY, THEIR LOVE, THEIR HATRED.  
LOVE, WHEN SPIRIT SPEAKS NO HUMAN VOICE, THEY SEND  
SIGNALS, SIGNS.



**I FEEL THEM, SEE THEM. THEY ARE WITH ME, IN MY HEART,  
EVERYWHERE.**

**MY BASKET IS HEAVY WITH HISTORY. WEIGHING ME DOWN,  
FILLING ME UP.**

**THEY TELL ME EVERYTHING AND LEAVE ME WITH A FULL HEART.**

**WHEN I ENTER THE JAIL  
CELL I BEGIN TO HEAR NOISES TAPPING, SCREAMING AND  
SUFFERING.**

**MY BODY BEGAN TO FREEZE, RIPPING MY LUNGS.  
MY NECK FEELS LIKE I'VE BEEN CHOKED BY AN EMPTY TREE.**

**I SAY TO THE GIRLS WE'LL TRY TO MAKE THE FUTURE  
BETTER THAN THE PAST.**



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- \* Select lines or a combination of lines from the video text
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**TUMBLE GLIDE OVER ROCKS**

**RIVER**

**BATS FLYING, THE WIND**

**IN MY HEART**

**THE BEAUTIFUL**

**GHOSTS**



BETWEEN RED BANKS OVERGROWN AND WEEDS.  
WHAT BECAME OF THE RIVER WHO FOLLOWED THE BEAUTIFUL  
FLOWING RIVER,  
THE WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE RIPPLES OVER MY MEMORY NOW.

### THE BEST DAY

I ACHIEVED SOMETHING THAT MADE ME HAPPY, BUT THEIR  
INVASION OF THE WATERS CHOKED THE RIVER.  
I SMELL THE FRESH AIR SURROUNDING ME, SO FRESH THAT I  
COULD STAY OUTSIDE FOREVER.

I HEAR BATS SQUIRMING AS THEY RESTLESSLY TRY TO FALL  
ASLEEP.

I CAN HEAR THE WIND BLOWING THROUGH ONE EAR AS WELL  
AS I CAN HEAR AN AEROPLANE FLYING OVER ME.

**I FEEL SAFE LIKE I'M HOME WHEN I THINK OF IT.**

**THE GIGGLES AND CHATTER OF YOUNG CHILDREN. A MEMORIAL**

**WHERE STORIES**

**STAND STILL, ROUGH SCRATCHES ENGRAVED TO TELL STORIES**

**THAT**

**HOLD MEMORIES AND EXPRESS DEEP EMOTION. A SAFE WAY TO  
COMMUNICATE WITH ONE ANOTHER.**

**I SAY TO THE BATS, KEEP FLYING. THE RIVER RUNS AS IF IT'S**

**TRYING TO TELL US THE STORY**

**THAT SHE HAS MIRRORED. WE TRY TO FOCUS ON THE MESSAGE**

**BEING TOLD. I SAY TO THE FALLEN TREES**

**DON'T FORGET HOW IT FELT STANDING UP TALL.**

**THEY ARE MUFFLED  
SO NO ONE CAN HEAR THEM. I CAN HEAR A BELL AND A WHIP.  
I HEAR THE GIRLS SCARED BECAUSE THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT**

**THEY ARE DOING WRONG.**

**ALL OF THIS IS CARVED INTO THE SAND. I SAY TO THE LAND,  
THANK YOU FOR MY CULTURE. I SAY TO MY CULTURE  
THANK YOU FOR THE CONNECTION TO SPIRIT, WHICH I CAN**

**HEAR. I SAY TO THE SPIRITS  
THANK YOU FOR YOUR STORIES. WHILE SMELLING THE NATURE  
OF A FRESH START, ALTHOUGH  
WE COULD NEVER FORGET THE PAST.**

**WE COULD ILWD, I LOVE  
WORSHIP, ADORE. SITTING UNDERNEATH THE TREE WHERE I**

**FEEL MOST SAFE.**

**IT'S WHERE MY HEART DOESN'T RACE. THE NOISE OF LEAVES**

**GIVES ME PEACE, AS IF IT'S WHERE I'M MEANT TO BE.**

**I SAY TO THE FEELS KEEP GOING. DON'T STOP. I SAY TO THE**

**GRAVEL THANKS TO THE PATHS YOU HAVE MADE FOR US.**

**I SAY TO THE GIRLS, NEVER FORGET THE HISTORY OF OUR  
PEOPLE AND YOUR FAMILY.**

**I SAY TO THE OCEAN, YOUR WAVES MAY SCARE SOME PEOPLE  
BUT YOUR BEAUTY ISN'T MISSED BY**

**ME. THE WATER UNDER MY BOAT RIPPLES OVER MY MEMORY**

**NOW,**

**IT FLOWS UNDER AND MAKES THE SOUND OF A RIVER. A RIVER  
CAN LEARN IT ALL AND STILL MUST FLOW**

**ON AND ON. I SAY TO THE FRIENDS WHO ARE MY HEROES, YOU  
ARE MY SAVIOURS.**

**I SAY IN PARTICULAR,  
YOU REVIVED THE LIGHT IN ME.**



OUT AND OUT AND BE REIMAGINED AS

I SAY TO THE GIRLS, NEVER FORGET THE HISTORY OF

THE WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE RIPPLES OVER MY MEMORY NO

BY TELL ME EVERYTHING AND LEAVE ME W



# MEMORY RIVER: INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

Memory River is a project which will combine Indigenous history, stories and art with the voices of young people. The project will take place at The Parramatta Female Factory, a location with a long and complex history; at various times it has been an orphanage, prison, asylum and school. Drawing on the area's Indigenous history, and working collaboratively with Indigenous knowledge holders and female contemporary Indigenous artists, students will write stories and poems that explore First Nations history, recent history, their personal memories, and their hopes for the future.

Assisting and sharing knowledge during this project will be Cathy Craigie, Bonney Djuric, Janson Hews and Maddison Gibbs.

## CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL INFORMATION COMPILED BY AUNTY RAY

### **BURRAMATTAGAL PEOPLE: Ceremony Place**

Aboriginal people have had a close connection with the Parramatta River for thousands of years. The river provided a rich source of food and transport and was the location for many significant cultural and social practices.

According to information obtained from council websites listed below, there are approximately 30 clan groups of the Sydney region, referred to collectively as Darug. Several clans lived along the Parramatta River and into Western Sydney. They include, but are not limited to:

- Darug people who lived in the Greater Western Sydney area
- Burramattagal people, a clan of the Darug, who first settled in what is known today as Parramatta
- Cadigal and Wangal people who occupied Sydney's inner west area
- Toongagal who lived in the vicinity of Toongabbie
- Wallumdegal who occupied what is now the Ryde and Hunters Hill areas
- Wategora people who lived near Duck River.

The Parramatta River continues to be a place of cultural significance for Aboriginal people. There are many sites and objects along the river that people have a connection to, both physically and spiritually.

# CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## BURRAMATTAGAL and EELS

"I am a Burramattagal woman from the Darug Nation. We, as Burramattagal people, have a Totem, and we honour our Totem, the Eel. In Dharug language, our name Burramattagal is broken down to mean, Burra = eel, matta = place, gal = the people of. Therefore, "the place where the eel sets down" is the true meaning of the word Burramatta. Some would say, clear as mud! In fact, by nature the eel is not seen as a show-off, rather it is known for hiding in dark waters, making it hard to spot. Some fish like to stay close to the water surface, but the mysterious eel prefers darker, murkier places. The eel is also known for its strange, but intelligent and versatile survival instinct: its genetic memory gives it the ability to swim in freshwater then transition with ease into the saltwater of the ocean. The eel's ability to work its way out of the water onto grassy land areas, climb over and go under concrete barriers, stands in contrast to fish that are either just fresh-water, or salt-water variety, and definitely cannot live without water.

What I find amazing is the eel's ability to survive the long treacherous journey from the Coral Sea when so young, only to complete their end-life cycle and return as an adult to where they first set off. Once they reach their destination on Australia's east coast, they find their way to "set down". Hidden in the fresh waters of Sydney, the female eel decides, when the time is right, for her to begin her journey through to the Coral Sea, back to where she was born, so that she can spawn, and die. One mysterious feature of eels is their endurance to overcome many barriers. They survive swimming from one environmental condition into another, facing varied changes in water currents and temperatures, entering ocean pathways, they travel through their life cycle to return to the Coral Sea."

Jules Christian

<https://garlandmag.com/article/burra/>

# CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## **The Importance of Water**

To Aboriginal peoples, water is life. The water in rivers sustains important plants on riverbanks, and sustains wetlands where fish and turtles breed. Aboriginal peoples in the past used water from rivers for all their water needs - drinking, fishing, and washing. As well as using the water, spending time on rivers and billabongs is central to intergenerational knowledge and cultural transfer, and family time. There are thousands of years of memories in these water places.

## **Sustainable Water Use**

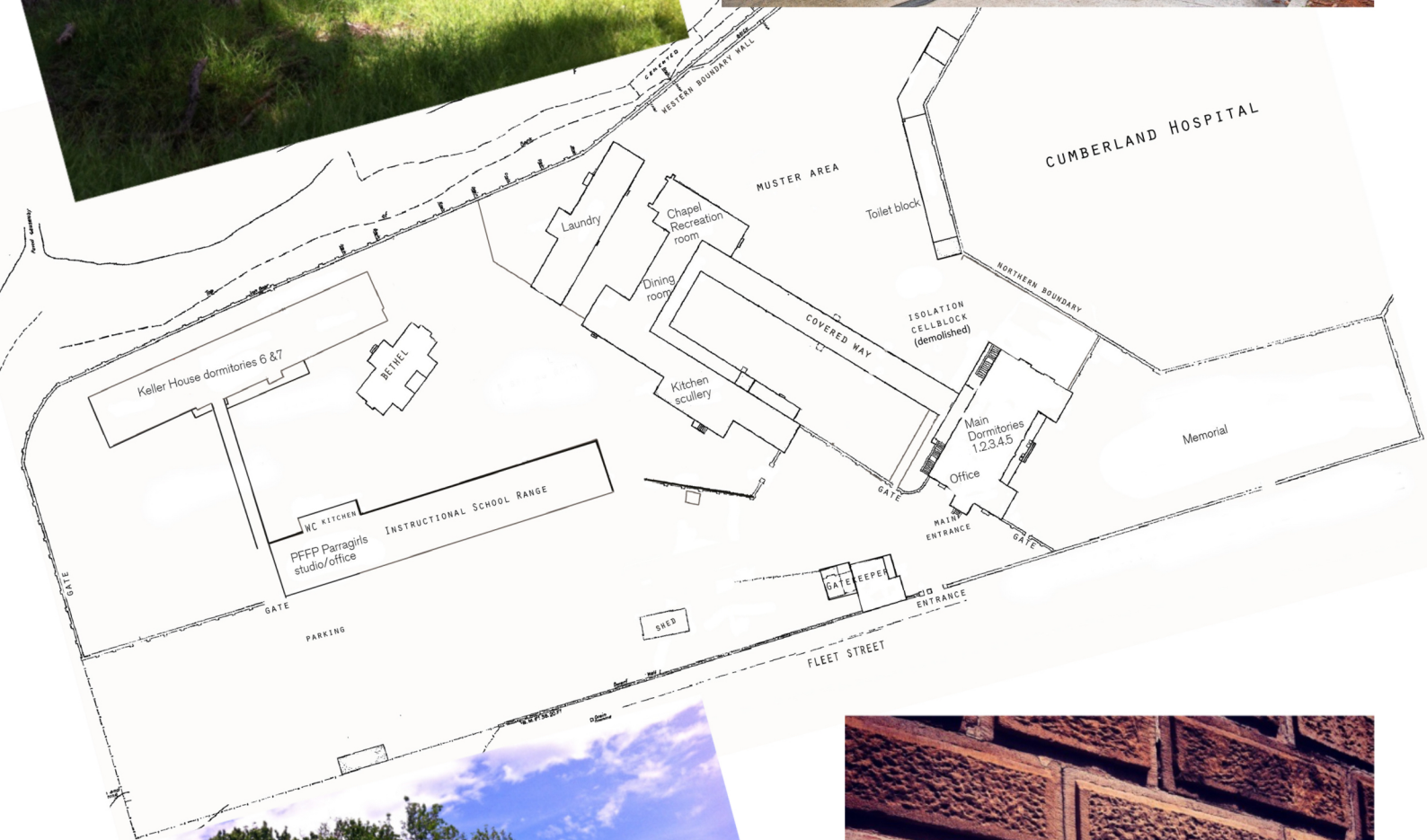
The traditional way of life was centred around ensuring use of all resources was sustainable, and water is a significant part of that balance. In traditional ways of managing the health of country, there is no strict separation of water, land, air, plants and animals, as all are perceived as interconnected. They are managed as a whole to keep country healthy. In recent decades, water has been managed by the government separately from the way the land is managed, and as a resource or commodity that can be bought and sold, no longer belonging to the river itself. What this means is water is sold to those who have the most money to pay for it and often stored out of the river, rather than seeing it distributed to where it is needed in rivers and wetlands to sustain plants and animals. Aboriginal people today are very concerned that the rivers are sick.

<https://indigenousknowledge.unimelb.edu.au/curriculum/resources/indigenous-voices-in-water>



# PARRAMATTA GIRLS HOME

WHAT COULD THIS  
PLACE BECOME?





# HAIBUN - How To...

Haibun is a poetry form that combines a haiku with a prose poem. Haibun prose is usually descriptive. It uses sparse, poetic imagery to evoke a sensory impression in the reader. The section of prose is followed by a haiku that serves to deepen the meaning of the prose, either by intensifying its themes or serving as a juxtaposition to the prose's content.

*The opening of your Haibun will consist of Prose*

See - Two/Three sentences

Think - Two/Three sentences

Wonder - Two/Three sentences

SEE

Footsteps, trees moving, branches scratching the sky, leaves blowing across the ground. People smile and share thoughts, tell us about their hopes. The sun glows in the background, falling on leaves and flowers, creating shadows.

THINK

I think about how the land has changed, the buildings, the trees, the experiences of people who live here. But the river still flows, there are some parts that remain, the earth, water and dreams continue. Buildings seem to breathe under the trees, I can imagine the river and earth speaking to us. The memories of people remain all around us, like they're ghosts telling us to remember what has happened in the past.

WONDER

I wonder about the people who have been here, all the futures that could be. I wonder about my own future, where I would like to go, who I would like to be. Each day here would be like a capsule of yesterdays remembered, futures suggested. The names that might have been between these walls, next to this river, they're all silhouettes and shadows. Now their language is weather, they talk in sunshine, rain, lightning. I listen to all the things they promised to say.

## Haiku Conclusion

The haiku element at the conclusion of the haibun serves as a thematic accompaniment that deepens the meaning of the piece as a whole. What does that mean?? It means you'll try to capture the essence of the prose section of your work.

5 syllables

7 syllables

5 syllables

*Footsteps across grass  
the bats spread wings and fly  
the river flows past*



# SEE, THINK, WONDER

THINKING  
ROUTINE

WATCH THE VIDEO... WHAT DO YOU NOTICE...

WHAT DO YOU THINK... WHAT DO YOU WONDER??

SEE

THINK

WONDER



A hand-drawn map of Parramatta, Australia, with a red arrow pointing to the 'PARRAMATTA GIRLS HOME' location.

6-9 SENTENCES

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is a margin at the top, and the paper is framed by a dark border.

5/7/5 SYLLABLES

# PARTNER