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## Writing Sample

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From The Darling North

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Anne KENNEDY  
Two poems

From *The Darling North*

HELLO KITTY, GOODBYE PICCADILLY

Imagine you'd come to Hawai`iki early.  
I don't have Hawai`iki.  
Imagine you were in Heaven.  
I don't have Heaven.  
Imagine you were in Paradise  
but at first you don't recognise paradise,  
or smell it or touch it,  
because you miss earth too much,  
and being earthly.  
You miss the cold wind and you wish  
that instead of leaning into it  
reading it with your mouth  
and casting it aside like small-talk  
on all those occasions of cold wind  
you had gathered it up  
and kept it in a suitcase. Then you could  
carry it with you to the new place  
open it there  
and remember what cold wind feels like.  
You say to yourself  
if only I had done that  
cold wind would come rushing back  
but you didn't.  
In Paradise it is so hot your teeth  
loosen and creak in your gums  
and your hands hum.  
You notice dainty sandals, gold dresses  
shirts accumulating on a lawn  
red birds.  
You remember a coat, olive green,  
rough,  
sea-going you wore  
near the sea. The beach wall was scooped out by  
waves,  
and kelp rotted  
in your nostrils.  
You wore your coat to Mass where the squeak  
of new pine pews

rang out into the still air above the people  
 like modern bells  
 and you cricked your neck to engage with  
 the baleful mosaic stare of the Jesus.  
 There was a department store  
 where the air sprang with grey wool.  
 That was where you wore the coat  
 but can't recall the exact nature  
 of how you needed it.  
 Imagine you'd come to Hawai'i early.  
 I don't have Hawai'i.  
 Imagine you were in Heaven.  
 I don't have Heaven.  
 Imagine you were in Paradise  
 and one day in Paradise  
 when you haven't been there long  
 you look up and find streetlights swimming  
 and people talking at an aquarium  
 and the jellyfish are purple  
 and pulse like a heart.  
 After a day of hard light  
 dusk falls suddenly  
 as if the dark were heavy  
 and the stream that flows close to your apartment  
 becomes wetter and  
 shinier  
 in the moonlight.  
 You can't help recalling  
 that you once climbed aboard a bus  
 perfunctorily, like pecking  
 an old relative  
 but you threw it away.  
 You watch the news  
 on and off  
 and the accent of the newsreader bounces  
 in loping kilohertz  
 but over time dies down  
 until you lose it somewhere inside your ear.  
 You hear  
 your own accent,  
 which used to be beyond hearing, a dog's whistle.  
 Imagine you were in Paradise  
 and in that Paradise you notice  
 that the sea is cloudy with sunblock  
 and rushes up the beach tinkling with the gold rings  
 of newlyweds,  
 and the metal detectors of the homeless  
 are made very happy.  
 The hills thrust up sharply,

dark, and cars burrow through them  
like rabbits. You hear someone say  
on the warm air that if you take pork  
over the Pali road  
your car will break down  
and a woman in white will appear  
hitch-hiking and you vow  
never to do that.  
It is your first plan in Paradise  
if you can count plans  
in the place you didn't plan to go to  
which you think you can.  
If you look for a book  
in a certain section of the Hamilton library  
a hand will tap you on the shoulder  
and late at night in the carpark  
of the Walmart where they disturbed the bones  
the bones will pick you clean  
if you're not careful. You will be  
careful in Paradise.  
You notice that some days the air is mauve  
and thick and someone tells you, kindly,  
about vog from the volcanoes  
and it makes you dizzy, the information,  
the politeness.  
The island, the sea, the waterfalls are pretty.  
They close the schools on Fridays  
and it is hot. With a pang you remember  
the nose of a white cat.  
Imagine you were in Paradise but when you arrived  
you thought it wasn't Paradise.  
You remembered crisp air,  
cold as a cave. At home you knew someone  
who knew someone, a shadow,  
and you would say hello.  
All day in Paradise you shake hands  
with strangers, rabbit ears  
on a wall.  
You don't know. You don't know.  
In Paradise they sound  
the emergency siren all over the island  
every first of the month, 11.45 a.m. sharp.  
You jump out of your skin. It is hot anyway.  
You spare a thought for the indentured  
plantation workers in their sugarcane cages,  
whose great-grandchildren  
perform dental surgery at Ala Moana Tower.  
There was no shade.  
There is no shade.  
Rents are high and people say it is the price

and others say there should be an excise  
 of Paradise  
 tax so the children can go back to school on  
 Fridays  
 although they don't really need school.  
 In Paradise you don't need anything.  
 You read in the paper that depressed kids  
 are turning up at the Help  
 Program  
 with the red-haired gene they need help with  
 in Paradise.  
 For instance the word 'bong'  
 echoes through the university shuttle service,  
 and the campus is full of stray cats.  
 There's a certain peacefulness.  
 Off-ramps with banks of tires,  
 escape routes for runaway trucks.  
 You clean the bathroom mirror in Paradise  
 and on the shelf below it  
 a pink Post-it says 'Dialects of Seeing'  
 in the round writing of your opposite.  
 You don't clean it up.  
 You know this is like a dream, this found thing,  
 so ho-hum – no human  
 endeavour. You didn't make this up. You couldn't  
 make this stuff up, but you tell it anyway.  
 Bong bong.  
 Imagine you'd come to Hawai`iki early.  
 I don't have Hawai`iki.  
 Imagine you were in Heaven.  
 I don't have Heaven.  
 Imagine you were in Paradise  
 and on arrival  
 you remember what you had been told about Paradise  
 at the little old cold school:  
 In Paradise you will sit for a long time  
 looking at everything as if for the first time  
 and you will understand.  
 You realise you that you like  
 the sing-song of  
 Pidgin,  
 an exhibition of empty rooms with carved wooden  
 weeds growing out of the skirting boards,  
 a variety of friendliness.  
 Kim chee, mandoo, spicy ahu maki, manapoua buns,  
 handbags.  
 (In Paradise you don't need money.  
 A handbag is pure  
 luxury.)  
 You think you see a sign saying Occidental Rugs

but you're mistaken: your eyesight  
 which you thought would be fixed  
 in Paradise.

It is dazzling and you are dazzled. The sea.  
 You walk about. You drive about  
 learning the avenues of Paradise.

In the Chinese cemetery on the hill  
 the names of the immigrants  
 under the colonies of lichen  
 look out over the bunched handful of city, mini Hong Kong.  
 You wonder in passing  
 about your body, its whereabouts.

Eventually in Paradise you discover a shopping mall.  
 This development is a long time coming  
 because before you came to Paradise  
 you bought meat, Brussel sprouts, rough socks.  
 In the shopping mall goldfish swim in blue ponds  
 and perfume coils out of stores to engulf  
 you  
 and the song composed by the Queen  
 when she was incarcerated in the Palace  
 'Aloha 'Oe'  
 deposits its snippets in the warm air.

You stop at certain shops,  
 and you learn them, and you like them  
 for their sound and smell  
 and their meaning gathers  
 like clouds which when heavy  
 fall on to the carpark, and gather again.

And again you process along the upper level of the mall  
 and warm air bathes your feet  
 and you incline your head towards price tags  
 and you fall in love with a cat-face  
 and stroke a purse in its likeness  
 to have and to hold.

Imagine you were in Paradise  
 and in Paradise a funny expression  
 sometimes pops out of your mouth  
 and your children laugh because  
 nobody says that  
 here. (And here  
 you need to add that for your children  
 this is not Paradise because for them  
 there is only childhood.)

You realise with a jolt that your children's DNA  
 does not contain the expressions your parents used,  
 that you use,  
 and if they took a sample of tissue from your children  
 they would not be able to prove relationship  
 through *work cut out, mind you,*

*time being.*

On the way to the supermarket you see a film crew  
 shooting *Lost* out of a white trailer.  
 By the side of the road you see papery leaves  
 a layer of chlorophyll.  
 You try to remember the shape of the hills  
 that you looked at every day for twenty years,  
 their greenness, blackness, orangeness  
 but the only things that come are words  
 and so you put them down  
 and they will have to do.  
 But the hills were always going to go anyway.  
 And the words.  
 You try to remember the theme music to the news you watched  
 before Paradise,  
 the trumpets important like Yeomen,  
 but it falls through your fingers,  
 which doesn't matter because it was always  
 going to become unimportant anyway.  
 In Paradise you try to remember  
 a tune your father used to sing while shaving.  
*I dream of Jeanie with the light brown hair,*  
 but it is lost. You find  
 that in order to remember *It's a long way to Tipperary*  
 you need seagulls to be cawing overhead,  
 bells to be ringing out the Angelus,  
 your breath to be white on the air  
 as you run down the passage to your parents'  
 room,  
 school uniform bundled in your arms,  
 you need to be doing up the rubber buttons on your woollen vest  
 while the gas fire snorts.  
 The song would never have lasted anyway.  
 In Paradise you walk  
 down McCarthy Mall  
 between the acacia trees and their geisha  
 sprinklers,  
 and you swing your briefcase because you have a job  
 in a place and you think  
 western capitalism meets eastern cat  
 and discard it immediately  
 because thoughts are like that  
 and this is Paradise.  
 Warmth rises through your body  
 and you realise that  
 you are cool  
 and the balconies of apartment blocks downtown  
 look like box seats for the Pacific Ocean  
 and for the Sun King, and you want  
 to wave from one, your fan, your beauty spot

and that the creaky wooden villa with light  
coming through the floorboards  
that you had lived in on earth  
has fallen away, and you smile  
at the thought of the bright new friends you've made.  
The school you went to  
topples into the cold gully below it, and magpies rise oodle-ardling  
until they are full stops  
and the extinct varieties of Hawai'i  
fill your bookshelves.  
A cat you knew once  
who slept in your bed on cold nights with its face poking out  
becomes mythical,  
but you were always going to outlive it anyway,  
and a cousin on your mother's side falls away  
but she was always elusive.  
There is no brother  
but a digital camera, no aunt  
but a pair of shoes,  
there are no grandparents but a hair straightener,  
but they were always  
going. There is no coat,  
but you were always going to lose it,  
there is no cold wind,  
but it was always going to be forgotten anyway  
because of the nature of cold and of wind.  
When you travel on the bus you are  
a little chilly in the air conditioning,  
and you listen to the voice announcing each stop  
in well-articulated Hawaiian.  
You know whose voice it is and you feel like turning  
to the old Japanese woman next to you and saying,  
I've met that man! You know people.  
in Paradise. You remember the voice  
from all the previous occasions of going on the bus  
of which there are many now because you have been  
quite a long time in Paradise,  
and the voice is familiar  
and comforting,  
and when you get off the bus  
warmth rises through your body  
and it rises through your body and it rises  
through your body, and you see  
and you feel  
that you had to go some time  
and that this is Paradise.



## FLOOD MONOLOGUE

1.

You never discussed the stream  
and no doubt the stream didn't want

your discourse (its own merry way)  
but now that you live by the stream

a mosquito has come up the bank  
and bitten you, and the stream

is in your bloodstream. You buff  
the site of entry like a trophy.

Your chuckling new acquaintance  
takes your cells out to the sea.

2.

It goes all night, you tell your friends  
drinking wine to warm the house  
(already warm), and laugh of course  
like a drain. Later in your roomy

queen you listen to its monologue –  
ascending plane that never reaches

altitude. Your fingers stretch  
from coast to coast to try it out,

this solitude, while water thumps  
through the riverbed.

3.

You're not exactly on your own.  
Teenagers come and go, the screen-door

clacks, Cardinals mob a little temple  
hanging in a tree. A neighbour with a bag

of seeds asks you if you mind  
the birds. There is that film, and the flu,

but no. In the mornings earlyish  
you slide the rippling trees across

(Burnham Wood) and watch  
six parrots lift like anti-gravity.

4.

At sunset a rant about the dishes –  
you’ve worked all day, unlike

some people! The tap runs. The sun,  
tumbling over Waikiki, shoots through

the trees, gilds the stream (unnecessary),  
stuns you in the empty room. Every day

for ten years (you realize, standing there)  
you’ve crossed the bridge etched Mānoa

Stream, 1972, back and forth,  
Except the day the river rose.

5.

Some facts: Mongooses (sic) (introduced)  
pee into the current, plus rats and mice,

The stream is sick. All the streams.  
Mosquitoes -your messenger and those

that bit the teenagers whose young blood  
is festive like the Honolulu marathon –

could carry West Nile virus. Often fatal.  
Probably don’t, are probably winging it

like you, and you will go your whole life  
and only die at the end of it.

6.

The stream doesn’t *look* sick. It takes  
a pretty kink near your apartment.

The trees are lush and spreading  
like a shade house you once walked in  
in a gallery (mixed media). The water  
masks its illness like a European noble  
with the plague – a patina, and ringlets.  
You're pissed about the health issues  
of the stream, and healthcare, because  
it has your blood, you have its H2O.

7.

You think it's peaceful by the stream?  
Ducks rage, waking you at 2am,  
or thereabouts. Mongooses hunt  
the duck eggs, says your son. Ah, you say.  
That night the quacks are noisy, but  
you fret in peace. Sometimes homeless  
people sleep down by the river bank.  
Harmless. One time one guy had a knife.  
They still talk about it and you see him  
ghostly like an app against the trees.

8.

All your things are near the stream,  
beds, plates, lamps – you're camping  
apart from walls and taps and electricity.  
Your laptop angles like a spade,  
and clods of English warm the room  
(already warm). They warm your heart.  
Overall you have much less, because  
of course – divided up. But you're lucky  
or would be if the stream was squeaky  
clean, and talked to you.

9.

The stream had caused a little trouble  
in the past, i.e., the flood. Not it's fault.

900, 000 people pave a lot, they plumb  
a lot. Then rain like weights. From a safe

distance (your old apt) you watched  
your little water course inflate and thunder

down the valley taking cars, chairs, trees.  
You saw a mother and her baby rescued

from a van – a swimming coach, with ropes –  
the van then bumbled out to sea.

10.

One apartment in your complex  
took in water in the flood. And mud. It was

this apartment. You've known it all along,  
of course, because you watched.

They fixed it up. Lifted carpets, blasted  
fans for a week. Repainted.

It's pretty good. The odd door  
needs a shoulder still. In certain lights

though, on the wall, a watermark,  
the stream's dappled monogram.

11.

You're talking clichés – water under  
the bridge, love letter from a lawyer,

serious harm, sunk without you.  
The stream has been into your bedroom,

and you in its. Remember reeds, coolness,  
summer afternoons. You loved

the stream. Its stinging waters send  
a last message in lemon juice:

If I'm fucked, you're coming with me.  
sincerely, the stream.

—