



**Laurie Lee** (1914-1997) was brought up in the small, typically English village Slad in Gloucestershire. In his youth he travelled to several countries. He visited Spain in the 1930s, a journey which formed the basis for *As I Walked Out on Midsummer Morning*, the second volume of his autobiographical trilogy. During the war he worked for the Ministry of Information. When he retired, he moved back to Slad where he lived until he died.

Laurie Lee

## Home From Abroad (1944)

Far-fetched with tales of other worlds and ways,  
My skin well-oiled with wines of the Levant,  
I set my face into a filial smile  
To greet the pale, domestic kiss of Kent.

5

But shall I never learn? That gawky girl,  
Recalled so primly in my foreign thoughts,  
Becomes again the green-haired queen of love  
Whose wanton form dilates as it delights.

10

Her rolling tidal landscape floods the eye  
And drowns Chianti in a dusky stream;  
The flower-flecked grasses swim with simple horses,  
The hedges choke with roses fat as cream.

15

So do I breathe the hayblown airs of home,  
And watch the sea-green elms drip birds and shadows,  
And as the twilight nets the plunging sun  
My heart's keel slides to rest among the meadows.

*far-fetched* *adj* her: hentet  
fra langt borte  
*tales* *sb* fortælling  
*the Le'vant* Levanten,  
landene i det østlige Mid-  
delhav  
*filial* *adj* sønlig  
*do'mestic* *adj* hjemlig  
*gawky* *adj* kejtet  
*primly* *adv* ærbart  
*wanton* *adj* letlevende  
*form* = shape  
*dil'late* *vb* udvide sig  
*de'light* *vb* bringe glæde  
*tidal* *adj* tidevands-  
*Chi'anti* *sb* italiensk vin  
*dusky* *adj* mørk  
*flower-flecked* *adj* blom-  
sterbestreuet  
*twilight* *sb* tusmørke  
*net* *vb* indfange  
*plunge* *vb* falde  
*keel* *sb* (skibs-)keel  
*meadow* *sb* eng

## Pre-reading

Speed-write for 5 minutes on the topics "home-sickness" and "nostalgia". Use your notes as a basis for a poem or for a 200-word essay.

## Analysis and Interpretation

1. Take turns in reading the poem aloud.
2. Explain difficult words and phrases to each other.
3. Write a couple of lines about each stanza in prose so that you make clear what each stanza is about.
4. Make a description of the poet's country – list the descriptive words and phrases, what symbols and metaphors does he use?
5. Is he consistent in his description, or is there a development in the course of the poem?
6. Is the country described positively or negatively?
7. What is the poet's attitude to England before returning?
8. Does it change? And if so, what makes him change his attitude?
9. What is the poet's position at the end of the poem?
10. Could the poet be a poetess?
11. What is the message of the poem?

## Post-reading

Compare Lee's poem with the Eliot quote below and discuss the importance of travel in relation to our perception of home.

*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time*  
T.S.Eliot, from *Little Gidding*, 1942

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### Texts

John Milton, from *Paradise Lost*: "The Banishment", Samuel Simmons, 1667

Wawick: John Gillespie Magee: "High Flight".  
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Eric Leed: from *The Mind of the Traveler*: "For a History of Travel" Basic Books 1991. © Copyright Eric Leed/Basic Books. Reproduced by agreement with The Perseus Books Group, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Rudyard Kipling "Mandalay", from *Barrack-Room Ballads*, 1892.

R.F. Scott, from *Scott's Last Expedition*, 1913: "The Last Entries" & "Message to the Public". Original publisher unknown.

Paul Theroux: from *Sunrise and Seamonsters*: "Mapping the World" Hamish Hamilton 1981. © Paul Theroux/Hamish Hamilton.

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Henry Cholmondeley Pennell: "The Night Mail North" (Euston Square 1840), 1877. Original publisher unknown.

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