

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THIS TASK

The following sheets are examples of drawings from windows around the world. Whilst we are stuck at home, make your own drawing from your window and write a paragraph telling everyone about the place you can see from your window.

When I was young my mum used to complain that I spent too much time daydreaming. That was because I liked to stare at the sky. She thought that while I was dreaming I could be doing something useful as well, like knitting. Now that I am a writer, I have the privilege of daydreaming as part of my job. And I still love to gaze at the sky. The view from my workroom in my North London house has a lot of sky, and I couldn't work without it. There are never any structured thoughts in my head when I look up. They just come and go and change shape like the clouds.

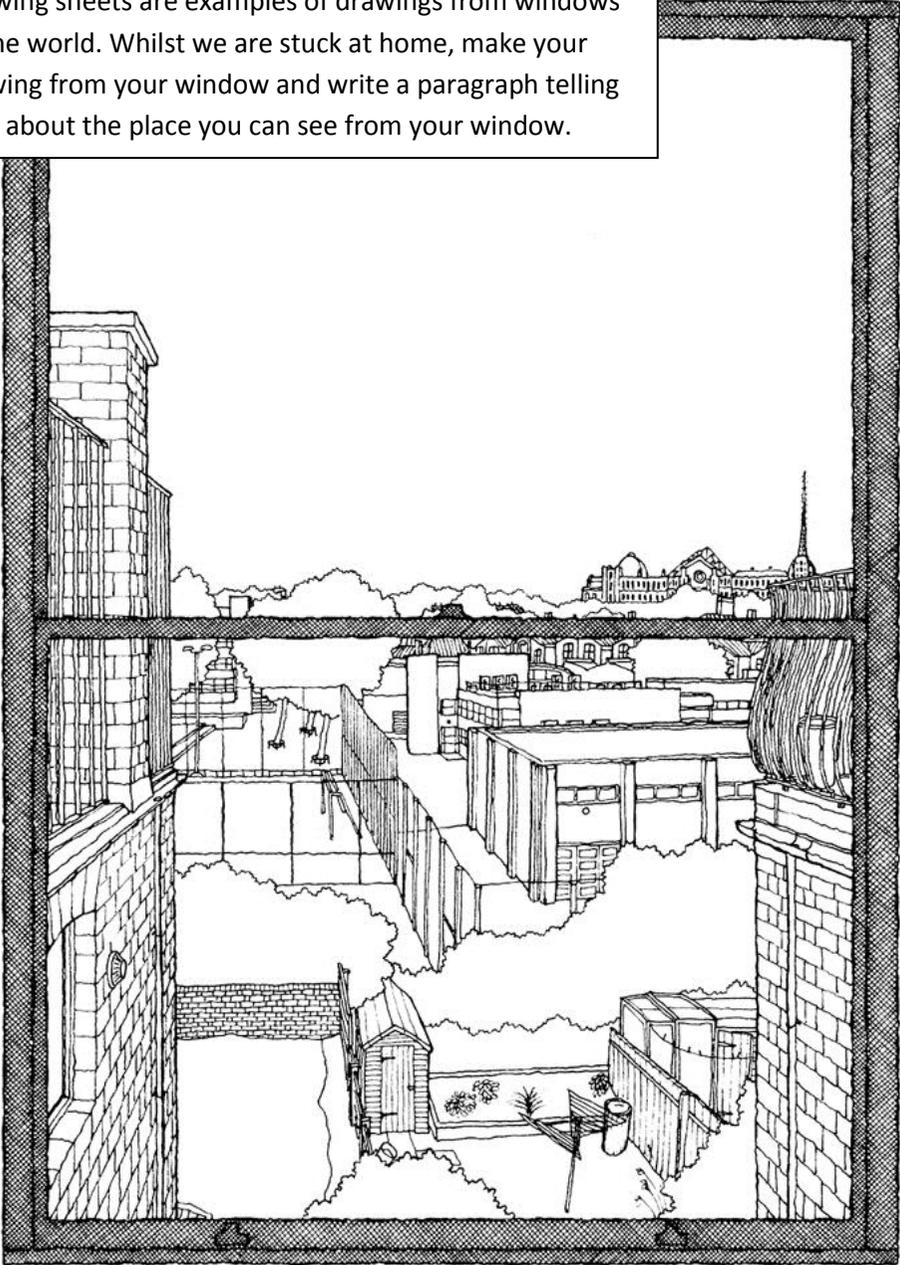
I have a wonderful view of Alexandra Palace. This is not a royal palace but a 19th-century leisure center for exhibitions and events — a people's palace, known locally as "Ally Pally." It was the place from which the world's first regularly scheduled television transmissions were broadcast, in the 1930s, and the famous antenna is still there. Below it I can see the doors of the studios where modern television began, and I find that thrilling. The palace is still a venue for the occasional exhibition, but mostly it just sits there on the hill, waiting for someone to find a good use for it in this information age.

In the foreground, close to my house, is a school. I have come to know the sounds of that school so well that it has become my clock. As early as 7:30 the first children arrive, twittering into the playground like the first birds of the morning. During the din of their playtimes I always stop working to have a cup of tea.

The school sits among Victorian row houses just like mine, with their jumbled chimney pots and television aerials. When I see them under my mass of sky, with Ally Pally up on the hill, then I know I am home.

— Andrea Levy

Look out of the window in this room and make a line drawing of what you see. When you finish the drawing write a short paragraph describing your thoughts and feelings about what you can see from the window. OR Make up a short story about what you have drawn.



I open my window and this is the house, in the depths of central Cairo, that looks back at me.

The people who live in the city's working-class neighbourhoods are not ashamed of being poor. Instead, in this house I look at from my window, I see heroic efforts in the fight against poverty. For the most part the residents are tradesmen or public employees. There was a time when they earned enough to enjoy a comfortable life, but the waves of hardship rose suddenly and they drowned.

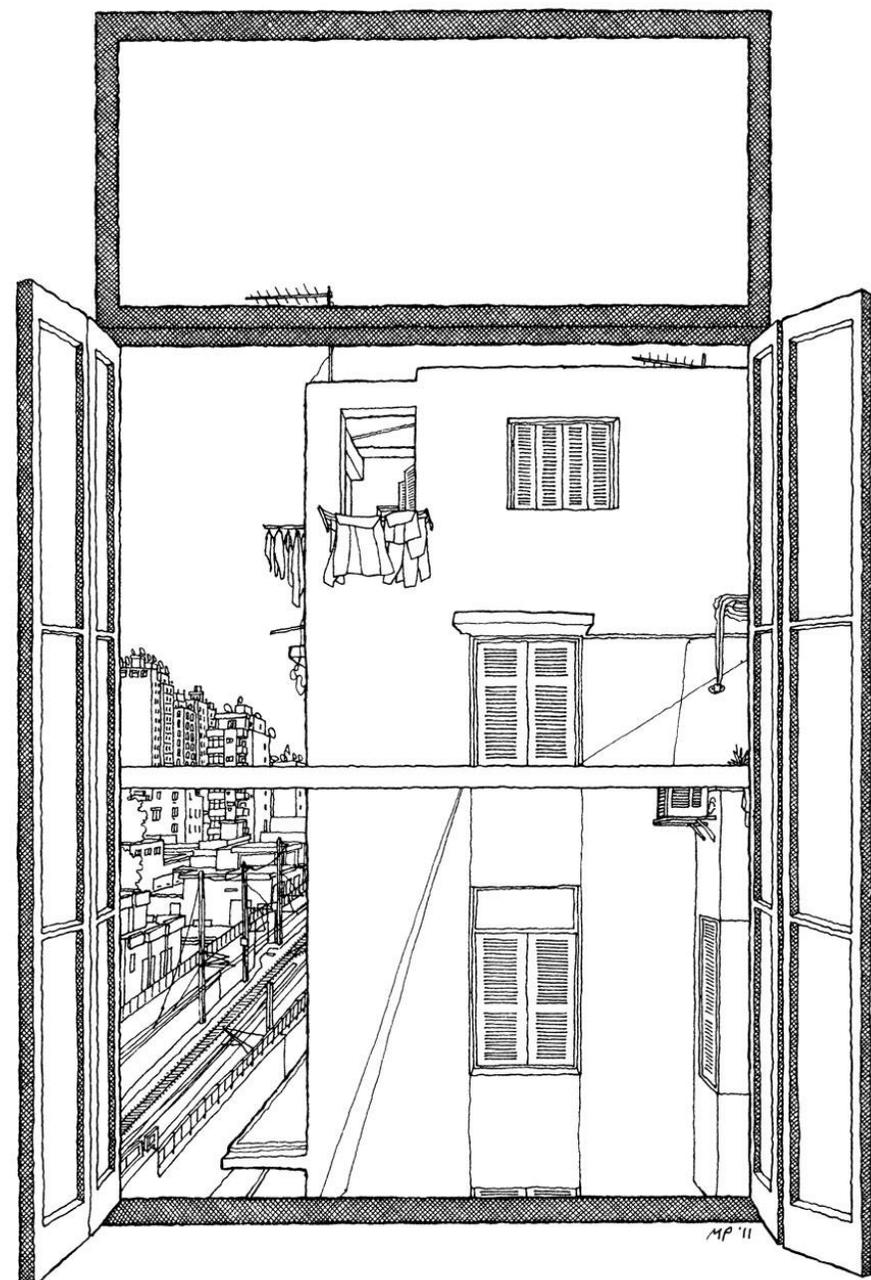
In prosperous times the members of the family would pass pleasant evenings in the open air in the house's entryway, relaxing on fine wicker chairs. The chairs broke and the father did not have the money for a new set, but he kept the shattered ones along the walls inside the entrance nevertheless. Another dream postponed, never to be realized. Just nearby is an opening in the wall for an air-conditioner. The house's owner sealed it up and painted it over because he knows that he will never be able to buy an air-conditioner.

The most beautiful thing in this scene are the housedresses hanging on the second-floor clothesline. The cloth is plain and humble, but their owner did not give in. She put simple designs on their bodice and sleeves ... they certainly seem more beautiful ... and this is something I admire about resistance in the face of poverty. Poverty is wretched, but resistance to it brings forth a certain nobility. I have only to open the window and see this house to be overcome with a fierce compassion.

Despite the poverty creeping without pause or pardon, I see dozens of instances of humanity. A teenager writes his first love letter and hides it in a chemistry textbook so his mother won't see it. A baby's startled scream upon entering life and a haggard old man's voice shuddering a final time before he dies.

— Alaa Al Aswany

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My study window looks out over an incongruous jungle located in the heart of Bangkok. As the rest of the neighborhood is dominated by high-rises and townhouses that have sacrificed yards for concrete parking spaces, all remaining wildlife seems to gravitate to our garden. Myopic fantail birds tap against the windowpanes, squirrels chew on the frayed corners of the shutters, and neon-green tree snakes sunbath silently in the rain gutters. (I keep the number of a local snake catcher in my phone, as the lack of rats suggests the presence of a well-fed python somewhere in the vicinity.)

There is another type of wildness here, too. The ficus tree on the right-hand side of this drawing is where the house spirits now reside. At the advice of a fortune-teller, a tricolored band of cloth was tied around its trunk not long after we moved in. In accordance with Thai custom, regular offerings of food and flower garlands are laid out for the spirits so that they might be enticed to exist *outside* the house, rather than inside—a practice that has put a stop to most (but not all) of the inexplicable shadows and footsteps that flit through these old wooden rooms.

This scene encompasses both the wild and the urban, the known and the unknown. It reminds me that the dividing line between fact and fiction is less clearly defined here in Thailand and that the boundary between the two is porous. In such a place, stories thrive. —Emma Larkin

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