

Lockney, Karen (2012) A place for poetry: Teaching presents from my Aunts in Pakistan. *English in Education*, 46 (3). p. 197.

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## A PLACE FOR POETRY

### Teaching *Presents from My Aunts in Pakistan*

#### *i. London E7*

Walking to work from the tube,  
the High Road rattles with metal shutters  
rolling upwards. Pavements become coastlines  
from elsewhere: boxes of plantains, dudhi, arvee;  
hunks of watermelon piled in a crate.  
Long rolls of sari cloth lean against shopfronts,  
offcut squares in baskets. One day I buy one,  
unfold it in class like a map, pass it round.  
Its blue is that of schoolroom globes;  
silver threads cross it like shipping lanes.  
I ask about their aunts, their gifts  
from Lagos, Ilford, Manila:  
lifelines cast from somewhere to now.

#### *ii. Cumbria*

I drive to work down hedgerowed lanes,  
recycling lesson plans in my head.  
This morning, I found the fabric,  
a fragment from a decade ago,  
pressed in a ringbinder marked *Poems*.  
Different pupils run it through their fingers.  
I show them Googled images  
of salwaar kameez, Lahore.  
We are answering questions –  
*Discuss. Compare and contrast.*  
I try to answer them, see myself,  
then and now, staring through vertical blinds  
in Year 10 English classrooms.

*Karen Lockney*

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