



# HOMEWORDS: A Project of the Poet Laureate of Kansas

By Wyatt Townley

This is the last month for HomeWords, my poet laureate project that explores “home” in four expanding contexts: from the mobile home of the **body**, to the **house** that encloses it, to the **land** that anchors the house, to the **sky** that holds it all.

It’s been rich and fun, with far-flung poets of all stripes and ages throughout the state participating in the conversation. A year’s worth of weekly columns have appeared in newspapers throughout Kansas, and in the end, we’ll have printed 105 cinquains symbolizing the state’s 105 counties.

We’ve explored the big themes of home on the head of a pin: the **American Cinquain** (22 syllables divided among five lines—2/4/6/8/2). It’s a form simultaneously challenging to longtime writers, yet welcoming to first-timers.

A few of our writers wove cinquain sequences into larger pieces. This month we will feature those longer poems by some accomplished poets, one each week.

Born in Arizona, **Mary Eaton** lived in Sunflower during WWII, and in Kansas City during the 1980s-90s, publishing in *Kansas City Outloud II*, *Missouri New Women Writers*, and *Number One*. Now in Tucson, she was glad to recall “an adventurous (impudently reckless?) incident” from her pre-kindergarten days in Kansas.

## SUNFLOWER, KANSAS, JULY 1944

### Body

*Bedtime  
but the breeze still  
too hot to wick sweat from  
your sunburnt preschool skin. Decide  
to bolt.*

### House

*Scramble  
right on over  
the scratchy sill of this  
quonset bedroom window. Slide down,  
hit dirt.*

### Land

*Bare feet  
planted, now help  
your littler sister down.  
Done! First time ever, light out on  
your own!*

### Sky

*While war  
worn grownups sleep,  
you roam the thrilling dark  
'til frail new stars parent you safe  
back home.*

To read past HomeWords columns, visit [www.kansashumanities.org](http://www.kansashumanities.org).

The Kansas Humanities Council is

a nonprofit organization that supports community-based cultural programs and encourages Kansans to engage in the civic and cultural life of their communities.

**Note: submissions are now closed for HomeWords. The column will run through National Poetry Month (April) as Wyatt Townley finishes out her term as Poet Laureate of Kansas.**



Poet Mary Eaton