



HOMEWORDS: A Project of the Poet Laureate of Kansas

By Wyatt Townley

Welcome to National Poetry Month. We're very excited to debut my Poet Laureate project

in mudluscious April, and to invite you to be a part of it, both as reader and as writer. HomeWords will be a weekly column, syndicated in the finest interested newspapers around our great state.

Our column explores the concept of "home"—a longheld Kansas value—from micro to macro: from the mobile home of the body, to the room or house we live in, to the land that anchors us, to the sky that envelops it all.

To explore these big themes, we'll use a very little poem. The **American Cinquain** is just five lines long, each line having—in order—2, 4, 6, 8, and 2 syllables. Its structure is a little like a door swinging open and closing behind us, welcoming us

home. Yet it's a simple, dynamic form that both beginners and longtime poets can write successfully.

We're going to start where we are, exploring the body as home. The imaginative cinquain below comes to us from Jo McDougall of Leawood. I like how she approaches the body as geography, then finishes with a little geometry.

*I've changed
into a map
of Kansas, life's contours
following roads and fields the wind
has squared.*

Jo McDougall, a native of DeWitt, Arkansas, has lived in Kansas—with some interruptions—for over twenty years, and published a memoir and five books of poetry.

Poets and poets-to-be of all ages from



Poet Jo McDougall, Leawood

across the state are invited to submit to HomeWords. For guidelines, visit 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.