**8th Form National Poetry Recitation Contest:**

**Title of Poem**: Housekeeping

**Poet**: Natasha Trethewey

**Link**: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/90616/housekeeping>



**About the Poet**: Natasha Trethewey is a contemporary American poet. Her poems often speak about her unique experience as a mixed-raced woman from the South. Her work often includes characters of black descent and  mixed black- and white- descent. She explores the injustice and poverty experienced by many black people in the South, both in the beginning of the 20th century and modern times. She also has written about Hurricane Katrina, the devastating earthquake that nearly destroyed New Orleans, Louisiana and surrounding areas in 2005.

**About the Poem**: “Housekeeping” describes a house that has been damaged by some external, horrible source. The poem begins with “we,” which is the poem’s speaker and her family. In sentence after sentence, Trethewey shows how much work it takes to repair a broken house. The only character she mentions specifically is the mother, who is singing and lost in her own thoughts. The poem ends with “we,” and a sense of longing; the family looks outward toward information from somewhere far away.

**Housekeeping**

By Natasha Trethewey

We mourn the broken things, chair legs

wrenched from the seats, chipped plates,

the threadbare clothes. We work the magic

of glue, drive the nails, mend the holes.

We save what we can, melt small pieces

of soap, gather fallen pecans, keep neck bones

for soup. Beating rugs against the house,

we watch dust, lit like stars, spreading

across the yard. Late afternoon, we draw

the blinds to cool the rooms, drive the bugs

out. My mother irons, singing, lost in reverie.

I mark the pages of a mail-order catalog,

listen for passing cars. All day we watch

for the mail, some news from a distance place.

**Discussion Guide:**

Have you ever repaired something that was broken? Have you seen your parents fixing things around the house? What was the most important thing they had to fix?

Does this poem remind you of events in your own life or ancestors’ lives?

Why do you think the mother is singing?

Why is the family waiting for news from somewhere far away?

Is this poem sad or hopeful, or a mixture of both? What images are sad? Which images are hopeful?