



HOMEWORDS: A Project of the Poet Laureate of Kansas

By Wyatt Townley

This week our poets navigate HOME AS SKY, using the **American Cinquain** to steer by: 22 syllables arranged in five lines this way: 2, 4, 6, 8, 2.

We are storm-obsessed here in the epicenter of Tornado Alley. **Janet Butler Kerner** of Overland Park is a retired high school English teacher, animal advocate, and nature lover. You can see *all* of this at work in her poem.

*Storm clouds
brew in Kansas
snake across pasture lands
alerting wary horses from
afar*

Polly Swafford of Prairie Village has retired twice—as a teacher and as a publisher—and now enjoys writing poetry, from which she'll never retire.

*Green sky
school bus unloads
tornado sirens blare
we jump, run for the open door—
home safe*

Robert L. Dean, Jr. was born in Topeka, grew up in Wichita, and now lives and writes in Augusta. In between, he spent a few decades in the worlds of music and newspapers via California and Texas. His strong word choices and linebreaks create a real sense of urgency.

Weathermen

*Sirens.
Mom yells Basement
Boys, but we're out the door,
cry-wolf hard cases. Necks craned, we
dare you.*

HomeWords is a weekly column that runs through National Poetry Month

(April) as Wyatt Townley finishes her term as Poet Laureate of Kansas. To read past columns, 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.



Clockwise from top: Poets Janet Butler Kerner (Overland Park), Robert L. Dean, Jr. (Augusta), and Polly Swafford (Prairie Village)