

## Thing, Direction, and Discovery

Here's an untitled poem by Jeffrey Yang that I saw on the New York City subway a while back.

### Untitled

west of rest is sleep  
 east, dream  
 where waters meet  
 north, emptiness,  
 south, wakefulness,  
 and out, rising up  
 to the stars, peace.



Yang chooses *rest* to be **the thing** he writes “around” or about, the central concept out from all sides of which his poem extends. So to write this kind of poem, pick a good thing initially, a good central place to start. It should be a noun like *rest*.

If you want, keep the directions Yang uses—east, west, north, south, and up—or come up with your own directions, like *through*, *left of*, *right of*, *underneath*, etc. Regardless, let's call these five words the **directions**, the places where your poem will travel once it leaves **the thing**.

As for the words *sleep*, *dream*, *emptiness*, *wakefulness*, and *peace*, let's call those the **discoveries**. These are the individual gifts Yang “discovers” as he moves in the directions from the thing. Notice that the word *peace*, in addition to being the last word of the poem, is the **Last Discovery**. It should be special somehow, right?

Lastly, there are two places in the poem where Yang offers a little bit of extra **Explanation**. He might be clarifying what he means by one of the Discoveries—sort of giving an example—or he might be clarifying what he means by one of the directions. Or maybe it doesn't matter, because his goal isn't really clarity. I think it's more like beauty. Or wonder. But notice that there are only two Explanations even though there are five Directions and five Gifts. And I think that's just about right. Yang uses a lot of ellipses to keep from repeating himself. Copy that.