

Sample Commonplace Book Entry

"In the long future ahead there would be lawn care and putty work and foundation troubles, leaky faucets and rotting floorboards, and there would be conversation and food and sound sleep, and in the family there would be marriages and deaths and the squall of infants. It was green pastures, still waters, goodness, mercy, and the cup flowing over."

--Jane Hamilton, *The Short History of a Prince*

I love this text for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is that Hamilton writes about Midwestern families in a way that is very real to me. In part, I like this piece because of what she is writing about—a family's connection to their cabin in the woods—but also because of how she chooses the rhythm of her words. In the first phrase (and then later in the first sentence) she separates each noun phrase with "and," which creates a lilting, repetitive pace. She also repeats the phrase "there would be," creating a sense of the inevitable life events that would happen to this family.

The last line is a reference to Psalm 23, something I don't think I would know except for the fact that I sang a version of the psalm in my middle school choir. The song and, more specifically, the words, have been in my head since then, and so when I read Hamilton's sentence, it resonated with something that had become so familiar it was a part of me. I love the way that Hamilton has connected home repair with family and life's richness—for me, family is deeply rooted in place, and as such, it makes sense that a home and its maintenance is inextricably tied with the people who take up that space and fill it with life.