Thomas Lux grew up on a farm and often draws from those childhood memories in his poetry. In “The Voice You Hear When You Read Silently,” for example, he describes the various images the word “barn” ignites in his mind. He compares these images to a “sensory constellation,” suggesting that these thoughts are points of light, organized to form a clear picture. Incorporating various types of imagery (the senses – visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory), he lists multiple concise, specific, and descriptive images to convey this experience to the reader.

Think of your experiences growing up or your present experiences. What is a “word” that would light a “sensory constellation” in your mind? Using Lux’s poem as a model, compose lines that reflect your experience through the images this word ignites. Think of the different senses and try to incorporate multiple senses in concise, clear images. In the boxes below, the excerpt from Lux’s poem is on the left. My example using the noun “station wagon” is on the right. Write your lines in the space below the boxes.

a sensory constellation

is lit: horse-gnawed stalls,

hayloft, black heat tape wrapping

a water pipe, a slippery

spilled *chirr* of oats from a split sack,

the bony, filthy haunches of cows...

And "barn" is only a noun-

a sensory constellation

is lit: stitched, smooth vinyl bench; old French fries, crayons, and coins mingling in darkness beneath; spacious rear hideaway; the refreshing whoosh from the back window’s sudden descent; crackling vibrations from the pin-holed speaker...

And "station wagon" is only a noun-