



KMWP Leslie Walker Writers of Promise Writing Contest – Writing About Place

Springboard lesson for Writing about Place:

If you are just getting started with your students, consider introducing them to writing about place by using this prompt as a writing workshop mini-lesson and write along with them.

Prompt 1: The Fifteen-Sentence Portrait

Try the Fifteen-Sentence Portrait, a guided writing prompt from Wendy Bishop's *Released into Language: Options for Teaching Creative Writing* (NCTE, 1990). Essentially, students paint a portrait of a place with words, sentence by sentence. For reluctant or struggling writers, this prompt is easy to adapt – just add sentence starters, modify the requirements for each sentence, or shorten the required number of sentences. Before asking students to write reflectively about a place they know, you may want to share or print images you find online. National Geographic's Photo of the Day is my go-to. Ask students to work in groups to write a collective portrait. Once they have experienced the process with a collaborative piece, they can try one on their own. We've adapted Bishop's original prompt only slightly for writing about place:

Directions:

1. Picture a place. Places you have personal connections with are more powerful. This place can also be imaginary.
2. Choose an emotion or a color that represents this place to you for the title. Do not mention the name of the place.
3. For a first line starter, choose one of the following:

You stand there. . .

No one is here. . .

In this place, you are. . .

I think sometimes. . .

The place (or specific feature in this place) is . . .

We (the "We" is you and this place) had been. . .

Once you select your sentence starter, complete the sentence.

4. After your first sentence, build a portrait of this place, writing the sentences according to the following directions:

Sentence 2: Write a sentence with a color in it.

Sentence 3: Write a sentence with a feature of this place in it.

Sentence 4: Write a sentence with a simile (a comparison using "like" or "as")



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Sentence 5: Write a sentence of over 25 words.

Sentence 6: Write a sentence under eight words.

Sentence 7: Write a sentence with a zoom lens (zoom in on some feature from this place).

Sentence 8: Write a sentence with a wish in it.

Sentence 9: Write a sentence with an animal and/or a person in it.

Sentence 10: Write a sentence in which three or more words alliterate; that is, they begin with the same initial consonant: "She has been left, lately, with less and less time to think. . ."

Sentence 11: Write a sentence with two commas.

Sentence 12: Write a sentence with a smell and a color in it.

Sentence 13: Write a sentence with a simile.

Sentence 14: Write a sentence that could carry an exclamation point (but don't use the exclamation point).

Sentence 15: Write a sentence to end this portrait that uses the word or words you chose for a title.

Learn more about the Leslie Walker Writers of Promise Contest @ www.kmwp.org



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Prompt 2: The Six Room Poem

Not only is poetry a way to begin writing about place during a writing workshop, the LWWoP contest also accepts poetry submissions. We like the Six-Room-Poem From *Awakening the Heart*, by Georgia Heard. Follow the directions below with your students. I like to write one with my students, first. If it's warm outside, take them to a spot on campus. Kitty Drew and I use these poem with our students at a 6th grade retreat around Lake Allatoona, and we have used the same activity on our campus, in the courtyard or the art gallery.

Take a blank sheet of paper and divide it into six parts, or rooms.

Room Number 1: Think of something that you have seen outside that is amazing, beautiful, interesting, or that has just stayed in your mind. Close your eyes and try to see it as clearly as a photograph-notice all the details about it-and describe it as accurately as you can in room number one. Don't think about writing a poem, just try to describe your object as specifically as possible.

Room Number 2: In room number two, think about the same object/image, but focus on the quality of light. For example: Is the sun bright? Or is it a dull, flat day? Are there any shadows? If it's unclear what the light is like you might have to use some poetic license and make it up. You can also describe colors.

Room Number 3: Picture the same object/image and focus only on the sounds. Are there any voices? Rustling of leaves? Sound of rain? If it's silent-what kind of silence? Empty? Lonely? Peaceful?

Room Number 4: Write down any questions you have about the image. Is there anything you want to know more about? Or wonder about? Room Number

5: Write down any feelings that you have about this same object/image.

Room Number 6: Look over the five rooms you have already created and select one word, or a few words, Q phrase, a line, or a sentence that feels important and repeat it three times. Read over what you wrote in the six rooms, and then see if you can create a poem. You can rearrange the rooms in any order; eliminate rooms, words, or sentences.

Download these directions from [Scholastic](#).

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