



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.

Sketching a Map: Prewriting with Memories and Place

The blank page can be a daunting place for a writer, no matter what the age or experience. In his [“Tips for Young Writers”](#), Ralph Fletcher offers this advice: sketch a map. Whether it is a map of a house or a map of a neighborhood, sketching a map offers a place to begin remembering the stories of a place.

Here is how I do this in my classroom:

Materials: copy paper (or bulletin board paper if you have the space) and markers.

Ask students to think of a place that holds special memories for them. I usually start by talking about where I grew up, and I draw a rough sketch of the neighborhood. As I draw, I think-aloud some of the memories and connections to the place. Before I finish my map, I ask students to start on their maps. They can choose where they live now, a home where they once lived, a special place like camp or a relative’s house is fine, too – any place that holds memories. On my map model, I write labels that hold meaning to me, so I can share the stories later.

Once everyone has had time to make his or her sketch, we post them around the room. I share my completed map with students, talking about places where I rode my bike into a tree, where I had ants in my pants at the bus stop, where I ran through the cornfield after the rain and lost my shoes in the mud, and where I read books under the giant evergreen. I entertain any questions about my map and share some stories. I then ask my students which memory or place they would like hear more, and I star it.

Next, I count students into groups of three to visit one another’s maps to do the same thing. While it would be terrific to visit everyone’s maps, I usually keep it to a few, so each student can begin thinking about his or her place and memories. When the sharing is finished, and all students have starred a memory or place that appeal to their audience, we begin writing a draft, describing the place and exploring a moment in a flash memoir – a sketch of something they can develop further.

Writing from a sketch engages students in reflection and taps into a source of story. Often my students they feel a sense of inspiration once they have shared some of their story with others, especially when their audience asks for more. Share your writing and your students’ writing by posting maps and snippets of their flash memoirs around the room in a gallery. Students can tap into their flash memoirs and sketches to develop a composition for entry into the Leslie Walker Writers of Promise contest at KMWP.

Find other ideas for writing with your students and learn more about the Leslie Walker Writers of Promise Contest @ www.kmwp.org