Welcome to Writing Place at Home

This at-home creative writing workshop explores place, and our relationship to places, drawing inspiration from works in the Ansel Adams in Our Time photography exhibition. Based on the acclaimed Write Around Portland model, refined over 22 years, this workshop provides 60 minutes of generative writing exercises that you can do on your own, or with others in your household. Just bring yourself, a pen and paper, and a way to keep track of time.

This workshop is meant to be done in one sitting, but you are also welcome to break it up over time. We will offer invitations and prompts, including photographs, to help you get started. These are starting off points—think of the written prompts as the beginning of a sentence, and then see where that sentence takes you. Or notice what comes to mind when you read the prompt or see the photograph, and go from there, writing whatever you are thinking, even if what you are thinking is “I don’t know what to write...” Once you start writing, see what else comes and go from there. If you get stuck, go to the next prompt, or write about something else. Just try to keep your pen or pencil moving for the suggested amount of time.

If you are writing with others, we invite you to share your writing with each other after each freewrite. If you are writing solo, take a moment to look back at what you just wrote, and notice what made it onto the page.

The images referenced below can be found in the Ansel Adams in Our Time online exhibition and educator slideshow.

WARM UP

This is a writing warm-up. We encourage you to keep your pen or pencil moving for 3 minutes. You can choose to write about one, both, or neither of these prompts—whatever comes to mind.

PHOTO PROMPT:

PROMPTS:

The nights grew longer... / From my bedroom window...

PHOTO PROMPTS:


CONSIDER:

What speaks to you in these photographs?
How do these landscapes make you feel?
Why do you think the artists chose to exclude wildlife?

*For this freewrite, keep your pen or pencil moving for 8 minutes. You can choose to write about one, both, or neither of these prompts—whatever comes to mind.*

PROMPTS:

The river underfoot... \\ All I could see...

Take a minute or two to look closely at these 2 photographs.
FREEWRITE #2

Sometimes we find it can be helpful to look at another writer’s work to get inspiration and ideas for our own writing. When thinking about this workshop, this piece came to mind:

SAMPLE:

Sometimes we find it can be helpful to look at another writer’s work to get inspiration and ideas for our own writing. When thinking about this workshop, this piece came to mind:

CONSIDER:

What do you notice about this piece?
How does Terry Tempest Williams paint a landscape with her words?

If you’d like, try to incorporate some of your reflections into your own writing. Here are 2 prompts to help you get started. You can choose one, both, or write whatever else comes to mind. Set a timer for 10 minutes and try to keep your pen or pencil moving.

PROMPTS:

“I was not born here.” / The grizzly bear woke...

PHOTO PROMPTS:


For this freewrite, take a minute or two to look at these two photographs and choose one that speaks to you.

CONSIDER:

How does the inclusion of people change the landscape for you?

What comes up for you when looking at these photos?

*Set a timer and try to keep your pen or pencil moving for 15 minutes. You can choose to write about one, both, or neither of these prompts—whatever comes to mind.*

PROMPTS:

The first thing I noticed ... /  
In the summer sun ...
PHOTO PROMPT:


For this quick closing write, set a timer for 5 minutes and see what comes, using this piece as inspiration.

PROMPTS:

After the fire ... / The smell of ...

Thanks so much for writing with us!

A FEW REMINDERS:

If you’d like to write more with Write Around Portland, you can learn more about their work here: writearound.org

And just a note that the great thing about these exercises is that they are different every time. We invite you to revisit them, choosing different photographs from the exhibition, or different prompts you find inspiring. Just set a timer and keep your pen or pencil moving! Happy writing!

*Created by Chelsea Querner and Sarah Weller.*