

## **Creative Writing: Sense of Place**

### **High School Creative Writing Standard:**

#### **The student will**

1. understand the integration of the following components of creative writing:
  - a.) elements: setting, imagery, and point of view
  - b.) vocabulary
  - c.) technical skills, such as organization or focus
4. generate and clarify artistic intent
5. make decisions based on artistic intent
7. revise writing using multiple sources of critique and feedback

### **Classroom Level Learning Goals:**

1. integrate point of view, imagery, word sounds and strong verb and noun choices to create a piece of writing that focuses on a sense of place
2. use feedback to make decisions and revise writing to strengthen focus on sense of place
3. clarify artistic intent and use to make decisions to strengthen focus on sense of place



## Create : A Sense of Place

### The Students will:

1. Read and listen to selections from the *Grapes of Wrath* and describe images (mind pictures) in the writing, point of view and intentions of selections using ***Grapes of Wrath Selections*** sheet
2. Select picture and imagine sensory details for place and time in selected picture using ***Sense of Place Sensory Detail Web*** sheet
3. Brainstorm places from their lives and fast write about each place using ***My Places in the World*** sheet
4. Identify point of view and sensory details that create images in fast writes about places and share with a partner

### Imagine/Generate

### The Students will:

5. choose either the selected picture or one place ***My Places in the World*** and write from the point of view of place using stem, "This place" on ***Brainstorming with Stems*** sheet
6. choose either the picture or one place from ***My Places in the World*** and write from the point of view of a person or inhabitant of the place or personify the place using the stem "I am the one who" on ***Brainstorming with Stems*** sheet
7. Circle strongest lines and strongest images in both "This place" and "I am the one who" writings from stems
8. Meet with a partner to share strongest lines and images. Select one place and point of view for further writing

### Plan/Prepare

### The Students will:

18. Make any quick changes to **Final Draft** and new remarks on their **Reflection Sheet** after reading and hearing responses.
19. Post **Final Draft** and **Reflection Sheet** for large group to read

### Reflect/Refine

### The Students will:

17. Share their sense of place writing with the group
18. Respond to other people's readings of writing using **Writing Response** sheet

### Present/Reform

**Learning Goal:** See Standards and Classroom Level Learning Goals

**Task Overview:** Participants draft a piece of writing to capture a sense of place and revise and refine the piece based on artistic intention and feedback from peers.

## Learning Process Create

### The Students will:

9. Combine strongest lines and images and add more lines to write a first draft using **First Draft** sheet that focuses on a sense of place with a single point of view that creates images (four to six great sentences!)
10. Develop a brief statement of intention on the back of the **First Draft** sheet (what do you want reader to experience?) for this sense of place writing.
11. Share draft, images they are trying to create and intention with a new partner to process your thinking. Listener can only ask questions (NO advice).
12. Read **Strong Verbs and Specific Nouns** sheet and circle verb and noun choices and word sounds that are working the way you want based on intention. Draw a line under those that are not

### Explore/Incubate/Focus

### The Students will:

13. Revise/refine first draft exploring different verb and noun choices and word sounds for those that aren't working (may want to reconsider point of view; may even select a different place and/or try new images)
14. Underline verbs, nouns and word sounds with which you are still having difficulty

### Develop/Make

### The Students will:

15. Share revised draft with a new partner and ask for feedback using **Eliciting Constructive Feedback** sheet to begin conversation
16. Write final draft using **Final Draft** sheet based on feedback about intention, imagery, focus on sense of place as well as strong and weak word sound choices and verbs and noun choices.
17. Describe the strengths of their writing and what they would improve/change if they had more time using **Reflection Sheet**

### Evaluate/Refine

**Sense of Place:**

***The Grapes of Wrath*** by John Steinbeck

***First Cutting—from the opening chapters:***

In the water-cut gullies the earth dusted down in dry little streams. And as the sharp sun struck day after day, the leaves of the young corn became less stiff and erect; they bent in a curve at first, and then, as the central ribs of strength grew weak, each leaf tilted downward. Then it was June and the sun shone more fiercely. The brown lines of the corn leaves widened and moved in on the central ribs. The weeds frayed and edged back toward their roots. The air was thin and pale; and every day the earth paled.

The wind grew stronger, whisked under stones, carried up straws and old leaves, and even little clods, marking its course as it sailed across the fields. The air and the sky darkened and though the sun shone redly, and there was a raw sting in the air. During the night the wind raced faster over the land, dug cunningly among the rootlets of the corn, and the corn fought the wind with its weakened leaves until the roots were freed by the prying wind and then each stalk settled wearily sideways toward the earth and pointed the direction of the wind.

The dawn came, but no day. In the gray sky the red sun appeared, a dim red circle that gave a little light, like dusk; and as the day advanced, the dusk slipped back toward darkness, and the wind cried and whimpered over the fallen corn.

. . . [Y]oung Tom stood on the hill and looked down at the Joad place. The small unpainted house was mashed at one corner, and it had been pushed off its foundation so that it slumped at an angle, its blind front windows pointing at a spot of sky well above the horizon. Cotton grew in the dooryard and up against the house, and the cotton was about the shed barn. The outhouse lay on its side, and the cotton grew close against it.

A large red drop of sun lingered on the horizon and then dripped over and was gone, and the sky was brilliant over the spot where it had gone, and a torn cloud, like a bloody rag, hung over the spot of its going. And dusk crept over the sky from the eastern horizon, and darkness crept over the land from the east. The evening star flashed and glittered in the dusk. A gray cat sneaked away toward the open barn shed and passed inside like a shadow.

***Second cutting—from the ending after Tom has killed a man and must run away, leaving the family:***

They sat silent in the coal-black cave of vines. Ma said, "How'm I gonna know 'bout you? They might kill ya an' I wouldn't know. The might hurt ya. How'm I gonna know?"

Tom laughed uneasily, "Well, maybe like Casey says, a fella ain't got a soul of his own, but on'y a piece of a big one—an' then—"

"Then what, Tom?"

"Then it don' matter. Then I'll be all aroun' in the dark. I'll be ever'where—wherever you look. Wherever they's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever they's a cop beatin' up a guy, I'll be there. If Casy knowed, why, I'll be in the way guys yell when they're mad an'—I'll be in the way kids laugh when they're hungry an' they know supper's ready. An' when our folks eat the stuff they raise an' live in the houses they build—why, I'll be there. See? God, I'm talkin' like Casey. Comes of thinkin' 'bout him so much. Seems like I can see him sometimes."

## Grapes of Wrath Selections

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>FIRST CUTTING</b>  | <p>Images: (What pictures did you see in your mind as you listened to the cutting?)</p> <p>Point of View (From what “distance” or how “close” to the action within the scene does the cutting start? From what “distance” or how “close” does the cutting finish?):</p> <p>Intentions:</p> |
| <b>SECOND CUTTING</b> | <p>Images: (What pictures did you see in your mind as you listened to the cutting?)</p> <p>Point of View (From what “distance” or how “close” to the action within the scene does the cutting start? From what “distance” or how “close” does the cutting finish?):</p> <p>Intentions:</p> |

## Sense of Place Picture Sensory Detail Web

Select one picture from those offered and study it closely. Imagine what sensory stimuli would accompany being in this place at the time the picture was taken:

What would you hear?

What would you smell and taste?


What physical sensations would you have?

What else would you see beyond the immediate range of the picture?

What emotions or feeling would you have if you were in the picture?

Other details pertinent to this picture include:

**My places in the world:** Think of three places from your life experiences that have strong meaning for you. They may be places that no longer exist, places you frequent often or a mixture of the two.

| <b>Where?</b><br><b>Name place</b> | <b>Description?</b><br>As fast as you can (don't worry about spelling, punctuation) capture the essence of the place |
|------------------------------------|--|
|                                    |  |
|                                    |                                   |
|                                    |  |

## Brainstorming With Stems

Use the picture you selected or a place from *My Places in the World* and create as many sentences as you can using this stem:

This place

This place

This place

This place

This place

This place



Use the picture you selected or a place from *My Places in the World* and create as many sentences as you can using this stem (you may personify the place or use yourself as the first person “I”):

I am the one who

I am the one who

I am the one who

I am the one who

I am the one who

I am the one who

**First Draft:**

Don't try to write many paragraphs. Steinbeck's paragraphs are 4 to 6 sentences long. Aim for one paragraph—two at the very most. Begin to think even in this first draft about what you really want to accomplish in one or two paragraphs.





## Strong Verbs and Specific Nouns

Generally speaking **specific, action VERBS** are stronger than **general, passive VERBS**.

**Generally speaking specific NOUNS are stronger than general NOUNS.**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Passive verbs:</b>  | <b>Action Verbs:</b>   |
| "I <i>was climbing</i> the rock easily until my fingers <i>began having trouble finding</i> a grip and then I <i>started falling</i> ."<br><br>"We <i>were canoeing</i> across the water." | "I <i>scaled the rock easily until my fingers failed to find a grip and I tumbled downward</i> ."<br><br>"We <i>paddled</i> our way across the inlet." |
| <b>General Nouns:</b>  | <b>Specific Nouns:</b>   |
| "We paddled our way across the <b>water</b> ."<br><br>"He raced the <b>car</b> down one <b>street</b> and up the <b>next</b> ."  | "We paddled our way across the <b>inlet</b> ."<br><br>" <b>He raced the Mustang down</b> Broadway <b>and up</b> Main."                                 |

## Soft and Sharp Sounds: The Angela Jolie-Brad Pitt Phenomenon

Don't try to send a harsh, sharp message with long, soft vowels or a soft, sensual message with hard consonants; the sub-text won't match the message.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Sharp Sounds:</b>   | <b>Soft Sounds:</b>  |
| Hard consonants such as T, D, P, B, CK, CH as in <i>chip</i> make a harsh, sharp tone:<br><br>Men's fragrances: Chaps, Brute | Long vowels such as O, A and E make a soft, sensual tone:<br><br>Women's cosmetics: Oil of Olay, Almay, Revlon |

## Eliciting Constructive Feedback

*Directions: Read your sense of place piece aloud once to your listening partner; allow a few minutes of silence and then read your writing to your listening partner a second time. Pass your writing to your partner for silent reading. When your partner says s/he is ready, begin by asking any of these questions or other questions you may about your writing.*

*(CAUTION TO THE WRITER: DO NOT debate your intentions or justify your writing to your listener. Simply listen and take in what your partner is telling you. Determine if it is helpful or not in your own mind. The only conversation (give and take) the two of you should have is about verb choices.)*

- 1. What pictures/images did you see when I read my sense of place writing to you aloud?**
- 2. What reactions, feelings, emotions did you experience as a listener?**
- 3. What lines/sentences stick in your mind as the heart of the writing?**
- 4. What lines/sentences are not working for you as a listener? What suggestions do you have for making them stronger.**
- 5. Please go with me line by line through the verbs, nouns and word sounds I'm having difficulty with and talk with me about which ones I can let go and which ones I really need to change.**

**Final Draft**



## Reflection Sheet

A.) Strengths I see in my writing:



B.) What I'd work on if I had more time:

### **Writing Response Sheet**

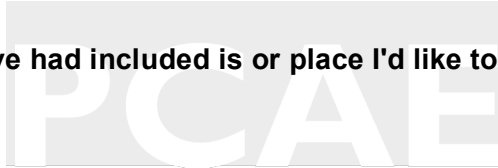
Take notes on this page for each writer. When the writer has finished reading, share a comment about one of these items with him or her.

#### **Writer One:**

- 1. An image that worked for me was:**
- 2. Some of the strong verbs, nouns and word sounds I heard were:**
- 3. An image I'd like to have had included is or place I'd like to have seen this piece of writing go is:**

#### **Writer Two:**

- 1. An image that worked for me was:**
- 2. Some of the strong verbs, nouns and word sounds I heard were:**
- 3. An image I'd like to have had included is or place I'd like to have seen this piece of writing go is:**



#### **Writer Three:**

- 1. An image that worked for me was:**
- 2. Some of the strong verbs, nouns and word sounds I heard were:**
- 3. An image I'd like to have had included is or place I'd like to have seen this piece of writing go is:**

#### **Writer Four:**

- 1. An image that worked for me was:**
- 2. Some of the strong verbs, nouns and word sounds I heard were:**
- 3. An image I'd like to have had included is or place I'd like to have seen this piece of writing go is: (*Continue on reverse side and other pages as necessary.*)**