



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

Writing Marathons & Poetry Walks

This “writing about place” idea is inspired by the writing marathon at the NWP Annual Meeting / NCTE Annual Convention. Every year, during summer institutes or conferences, Writing Project fellows converge on a place for an institute, continuity event, or a conference. Usually, a local site coordinates a writing marathon. When the fellows gather for one, it’s often at a destination – a city, a park, a River Walk, a museum, or a town’s main street or town square. The larger group separates organically into smaller groups who go out together and write, share, write, and share, sometimes moving to another spot after each sharing if time allows. The idea is to sit in a place and write for a period of time, unencumbered by parameters, inspired by the surroundings. While the marathons will vary, they loosely follow the model shaped by the NWP. A description of the model used by The National Writing Project is included here:

The model for the writing marathon comes first from Natalie Goldberg, whose book *Writing Down the Bones* deserves credit for inspiring the kind of writing marathons we do. She taught us the basic protocol: write, read your writing to others, and say only “thank you” after each reading. And do this again and again for as long as you can.

From [“A Guide for Writing Marathon Leaders.”](#) NWP, 2010.

You can adopt this approach for your classroom and take students on a writing marathon on your campus, use it with your classroom when they are on a field trip, or you can adapt it as an assignment for your students to go out and write in the world (outside of school) then come back to the classroom to share or share on an online classroom blog or your school’s learning management system.

Directions to your writers: Observe. Pause. Write. Share. Say, “I am a writer” if anyone asks.

Adaptation: Consider the “Poetry Walk” if a Writing Marathon sounds a bit daunting to your students. Have them grab their journals then move them around, snagging bits of ideas to build a poem at each stop.

Most importantly, write with your students and share your writing with them.