



Small Marvels: Reflective Writing to Understand Place and Equity

January 13, 2021

Link to the recording: <https://youtu.be/ZbYzkyniVMU>

eePRO post: <https://naaee.org/eepro/learning/webinars/small-marvels-reflective-writing>

The Stories We Tell part 1 Webinar on eePRO:

<https://naaee.org/eepro/learning/webinars/eeinspire-webinar-stories-we-tell>

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See Naama's reflective writing at <https://www.mayla.earth/hope-stories>

Highlights of the chat transcript:

Welcome!

Think of a place from your childhood that brings you joy.

- Carrie Elvey: the creek where I grew up
- Sean Shaffer: local urban forest
- Sally Triant: I love to help connect people with the concept of place as their watershed ~ because we all live in one - and it connects us to everyone and everything else.
- Brandon Caley: childhood treehouse
- Amara Townsend: my patio
- Stephanie Hummel: a series of Nordic ski trails up on the mountain in town
- Kat Hill: Eastern slopes of the rocky mountains
- Laura Smedsrud: morning coffee with my s/o. not talking, just being. I'm usually listening for birds
- Cathy Regan: My front porch
- Katie Krantz: My Nana's house
- Wendy Fontenot: My home with my family

- Judy Braus (she, her) NAAEE: an abandoned farm near my house that we would explore as kids--so much to see (birds, flowers, insects, etc.)
- Judy Braus (she, her) NAAEE: Dilafruz is the chair of the NAAEE Research Symposium for 2021! She's wonderful!
- Erica Meier: I think you can simply say we are all the same species as humans
- Paula Jordan: and do you think reflective writing is a necessary step...ie as opposed to just "thinking"
- Danielle Bunch: Sometimes, the nearby place isn't safe to learn outdoors so choosing another place to focus on that students can connect to are a great alternative. A former classmate teaches in urban New Jersey and her place is Costa Rica. They spend a year learning about CR and then travel there.
- Sally Triant: yes it seems the teachers that carry their own personal narrative that contains place and time spent outdoors are the ones willing to take students outdoors. We need to encourage students to create their own personal narrative in place. Writing outdoors and practicing phenology in place is how I encourage teachers to use their schoolyards.

Reflective Writing Prompts

- **Write about how attention to place might help us understand problems and possibilities. Can seeing a place make us more open to the beauty that is already there?**
- **Think of a specific place - where you teach, where you work, a garden or vacant lot, a classroom or river.**
- **How can you increase access to that place? How can you restore that place? How can you use shared stories of place to see that place differently?**
- Reflective writing can help us understand a place. Sharing our stories (including our students' stories and the stories of teachers and other colleagues) can help us understand each other.
- Judy Braus (she, her) NAAEE: If you want to share what you wrote, we can highlight those on the webinar page! Anne will talk more about this! We'd love to hear what you did! :-)

- Peter Lauzon: the whole world is a "place," my students' neighborhoods are places of nature too. Birds, bugs, weeds and trees out the window. Nature is everywhere not someplace else.
- Shephali Patel: Even as a city-raised child, I felt I always held an immense wonder and willingness for adventure when it came to exploring and communing with the wilder landscapes of Nature. Much of it was nourished by the traditions of the culture I was born into. As a daughter of immigrants and a tiny, brown woman the immensity of this feeling was constrained by the fear of venturing out into wilder America, which was more rural America, where I might be viewed as "not belonging". There are oppositional forces for many BIPOC folks. Made even more ironic by the fact that we are calling upon the worldviews of these traditional cultures to realign us back into right relationship with the Earth. It took me years before I acted on the idea that I could actually live a life that revolved around understanding the natural world and had a "right" to venture out into it capably.
- Shephali Patel: That feeling still pushes at me as an adult, despite becoming a farmer and an educator looking to support youth in cultivating closer, more intimate relationships with the Nature they are inherently a part of. Equity and access are nuanced issues that require more support and transformation of communities, rhetoric, and mindsets that we usually discuss.
- Paula Jordan: I was writing and thinking another side of that...if we feel "ownership" over a space could that inhibit how open we open to "seeing" equity
- Cathy Regan: I continued with the idea of my front porch - which is a transition and a border/edge, but not a boundary. The concept of having a space to take time when changing spaces - e.g. entering a museum or an outdoor classroom and giving a moment to make a mental transition. It got me thinking about other such transitional spaces between the built environment and outdoors, and parking lots is what came to mind. We almost always start a hike or other outdoor experience in a parking lot—is there a way to make them into something more?

- Jacquelyn Guerrero: I wanted to share an experience I had today exploring a community garden in Miami. I was drawn to bright red and black seeds that I recognized from beaded jewelry purchased during trips to the Caribbean. I eagerly began to collect the seeds from the plant to use in my own projects. Later I identified the plant, rosary pea, whose seeds are toxic and can be deadly when consumed. Through the writing exercise I explored this experience, and my feelings of primal fear around a potential exposure to this toxin. Miami is my hometown and I have really enjoyed reconnecting to it through natural experiences, as scary and threatening as they can sometimes be. Today I learned to do my research first before touching and engaging with unfamiliar species. I think the same can be applied to human communities.
- Sally Triant: yes, thank you ~ appreciate your perspective so much!
- Shephali Patel: Thank you all so much for another wonderful session!
- Sean Shaffer: Thank you all!
- Peter Lauzon: Thank you all!
- Paula Jordan: Thank you, Naamal and everyone for sharing too.
- Judy Braus (she, her) NAAEE: And we are still figuring out if we are meeting in person or virtually in October! So stay posted! Thank you all!!!!
- Caleb Carlton: Thank you, Naamal and everyone at NAAEE for this wonderful hour!
- Naamal De Silva: Thank you so much, everyone!
- Erica Meier: Thank you!