

# WRITING A PLACE

"...what I'm getting at is like the distinction between tourist and a traveler. The tourist experience is superficial and glancing. The traveler develops a deeper connection with her surroundings. She is more invested in them -- the traveler stays longer, makes her own plans, chooses her own destination, and usually travels alone: solo travel and solo participation, although the most difficult emotionally, seem the most likely to produce a good story." -- Ted Conover

"There comes a moment when the things one has written, even a traveler's memories, stand up and demand a justification. They require an explanation. They query, "Who am I? What is my name? Why am I here?" -- Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *North to the Orient*

"Great travel writing consists of equal parts curiosity, vulnerability and vocabulary. It is not a terrain for know-it-alls or the indecisive. The best of the genre can simply be an elegant natural history essay, a nicely writ sports piece, or a well-turned profile of a bar band and its music. A well-grounded sense of place is the challenge for the writer. We observe, we calculate, we inquire, we look for a link between what we already know and what we're about to learn. The finest travel writing describes what's going on when nobody's looking." -- Tom Miller

**Background:** Travel writing is far more than writing *about* a place. It is writing a place: creating a place like you would create a work of art that you wanted your reader to fully experience. In this project, we are going to enjoy many examples of travel writing including Bill Bryson's *In a Sunburned Country*, excerpts of the *Telegraph's* best travel writing winners, and Elizabeth Bishop's poems on travel. You will read humor, pathos, and incredible diction. You will notice that travel writing is much more than a long descriptive essay. Indeed, in many places, you will see elements of fiction as authors weave stories into their work to bring a place to life. By surveying an array of travel writing, you will be able to answer our essential question:

***How can travel writing successfully evoke a sense of place for readers?***

**Objectives:** At the end of this project, you will be able to:

- Describe the characteristics of the travel writing genre.
- Analyze travel writing and clearly communicate your analysis.
- Synthesize a visual product that demonstrates your exploration of what makes travel writing successful.
- Synthesize your own successful travel writing using the visual product you create.

**Process:**

1. We will read and analyze excerpts of the *Telegraph's* best travel writing winners together to learn about literary analysis.
2. Students will read and analyze *In a Sunburned Country*, by Bill Bryson, and Elizabeth Bishop's poems on travel.
3. In groups of 1, 2, or 3, students will plan and create a visual product that answers the essential question, *how can travel writing can successfully evoke a sense of place for readers?* This visual should be a useful tool for someone who wants to be a travel writer. It should lead them in terms of how to what **content** and **style** would make their writing successful.

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## RUBRIC

	Exceptional (10)	Proficient (8-9)	Developing (6-7)	Beginning (0-5)
<b>Analysis of Travel Writing</b>	You demonstrate an exceptional understanding of how to analyze a literary work. Your analyses are insightful.	You demonstrate an understanding of how to analyze a literary work. Your analyses are appropriate.	You may struggle to understand how analyze a literary work and don't seem to be able to apply our class lessons consistently or without heavy guidance. Your analyses might be weak.	You cannot apply our class lessons to analyze travel writing. You do not demonstrate the ability to analyze a text on your own.
<b>Understanding of the Travel Writing Genre</b>	Your project demonstrates a savvy understanding of travel writing. Your ideas about what makes travel writing successful are insightful. You seem to have developed a sophisticated understanding of this literary genre from our studies.	Your project demonstrates a proficient understanding of travel writing. You have good ideas about what makes travel writing successful. You seem to grasp the features of this literary genre.	You have some ideas about what makes travel writing successful, but they do not always follow from our studies. You may have a very concrete understanding of travel writing, such as thinking of it simply as a description of a place or trip, without understanding its function as a literary work.	You may be unclear on what travel writing is. Your project does not demonstrate that you understand the features of the genre.
<b>Visual Product</b>	Your visual product is neat, professional, aesthetically pleasing, creative, and original. It is a model product that displays your understanding of the content and style of travel writing in a novel, clear way that an aspiring travel writer would find useful. It answers the essential question.	Your visual product is neat, professional, aesthetically pleasing, and creative. It displays your understanding of the content and style of travel writing in a clear way that an aspiring travel writer would find useful. It answers the essential question.	Your visual product may suffer from not being neat, professional, aesthetically pleasing, or creative. It may be a little confusing, but your overall points about what makes successful travel writing are clear. It attempts to answer the essential question.	Your visual product may suffer from not being neat, professional, aesthetically pleasing, or creative. Your product may be confusing, incomplete, messy, or inaccurate. It is not useful as a tool for an aspiring travel writer. It does not answer the essential question.
<b>Process (x2)</b>	You thoughtfully participated in all reading, class discussions, and assignments associated with this project. You faithfully met deadlines and did your fair share of work in your group. You were able to be either an exceptional leader or an exceptional follower, depending on which was needed at a given moment. Your flexibility and insightfulness contributed to your group's overall success.	You participated in all reading, class discussions, and assignments associated with this project. You faithfully met deadlines and did your fair share of work in your group. You worked hard and contributed to your group's success.	You attempted to participate in all reading, class discussions, and assignments associated with this project, but your participation may not have been productive. You may have struggled to meet some deadlines. Some of your actions may have been counterproductive for your group's success.	You may have missed significant deadlines, interfered with your group's successful completion of the project, let your group down, and/or sidetracked your group, causing stress to some of the members. You demonstrated an inability to collaborate successfully.