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Living Landscapes of the United States

A remote and expansive landscape like the one used as the setting for *Holding Out* is hard to imagine if you have never seen lava beds or the desert. It's difficult to believe that there are places in the United States where you might drive for hours before encountering other people or finding a town that consists of only four or five buildings. You may be more familiar with concrete sidewalks, high rises, or the artery of a subway system like the one that partially defines New York City. The streets you walk may take you through barrios, tree-lined suburbs, or along the beaches of the Pacific or the Atlantic. If you drive to school, your route may be over twisting mountain roads encased in pine trees, on crowded ribbons of freeway, or across marshlands joined together by bridges. All of these possibilities are reminders of the diversity of landscapes and people in the United States. Each landscape shapes the people who live there, and people shape the landscape they live on.

You'll find layered in this chapter selections by professional and student writers about various landscapes of the United States. You'll write about, photograph, or sketch some of the landscapes that are important to you. You'll consider a variety of angles of vision from which you can extend your ways of seeing and thinking about the landscapes that compose our country. As you did in the second chapter and have continued to do throughout this book, you'll test your perceptions and perspectives by doing fieldwork. We hope that you will come to a deeper understanding of the many landscapes in which you live and those that shape who you are as an individual and who we are as a society. We'll ask you to imagine what future landscapes might be like—those we seem to be creating by our present actions and those that you imagine we will or should create.

The Meaning of "Place"

Much of the literature of the United States depicts remembered or imagined landscapes that make up more than a map's abstract of the plateaus, rivers, mountains, or plains that constitute the geography of a land. The spirit within those physical landscapes, as the ghosts of the Modocs portray in *Holding Out*, is central to what a place means to us. Walt Whitman, one of our early poets, may have been right to suggest in his poem "Our Old Feuillage" that the

country was a mosaic of places—from "Florida's green peninsula," "California's golden hills and hollows," "the silver mountains of New Mexico" to "the city wharf, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, New Orleans, San Francisco." He goes on to show that the spirit of the vast land grows "out of a thousand diverse contributions." What he describes is a United States of distinct lands and various peoples brought together.

The following poems illustrate how writers can bring together a physical and spiritual depiction of place. Read these poems in one sitting to achieve the mosaic-like effect that we just described.

Driving Montana

Richard Hugo

The day is a woman who loves you. Open.
Deer drink close to the road and magpies
spray from your car. Miles from any town
your radio comes in strong, unlikely
Mozart from Belgrade, rock and roll
from Butte. Whatever the next number,
you want to hear it. Never has your Buick
found this forward a gear. Even
the tuna salad in Reedpoint is good.

Towns arrive ahead of imagined schedule.
Absarokee at one. Or arrive so late—
Silesia at nine—you recreate the day.
Where did you stop along the road
and have fun? Was there a runaway horse?
Did you park at that house, the one
alone in a void of grain, white with green
trim and red fence, where you know you lived
once? You remember the ringing creek,
the soft brown forms of far off bison.
You must have stayed hours, then drove on.
In the motel you know you'd never seen it before.

Tomorrow will open again, the sky wide
as the mouth of a wild girl, friable
clouds you lose yourself to. You are lost
in miles of land without people, without

one fear of being found, in the dash
of rabbits, soar of antelope, swirl
merge and clatter of streams.

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Derek Miller

On all of the
highways that you've
never been on
before, you with
your bones of
diamond, marrow
of pulp, a strange
mixture not simply
trees, but something
from someplace where
no hotels have stood,
no guests have been
seen looking as though
they don't know whether
or not they belong.
Your ears of
cleaning rags, your
face a patchwork
of the bandanas of
forgotten outlaws,
the men who never
made it across the
border but died
of thirst in the
desert. Or the men
who made it across
the border, but
picked the wrong
one, and having
burned their bridges
behind them, found that
they did not speak
the language, and

could not change any
of the money that
they had stolen into
currency that would
be accepted, so they
starved. With no
way to even buy so
little as a head of
lettuce, they lay
on park benches under
newspapers until the
print was transferred
onto their skin, and
this you have inherited.
The stories of past
assassinations. I
dream, of an industrial
you, complete with
fire escape and
churning millwheels
visible, smoke pouring
up beneath the bellies
of passing geese, into
the other clouds. You
and the ones who I
wish could be there. I'm
not making plans, because
I don't know what to
expect.

Iowa Spring Viewed from a Plane

Jane Shore

I will not forget how black the earth is!
The grain elevator's sharp momentary 'O'
shifts, leans away and falls
across these squared-off fields.
Occasional roads cut through.
Dot of cow, of car,
no wayward fences here, all order here,

one white farmhouse and a barn and silo
where I can almost smell the corn
going sour, as if the earth were saying
(simply) to me, "Open like these fields."
There is a table, maybe, in that kitchen
where two persons sit who are in love,
perhaps touching, perhaps not, that tension
of distance more exciting than touch;
between them a bowl with one yellow apple,
over which, the wind from the plane I'm in
makes a thin white curtain toss its shadow.

Log Entry 1

- Explain which images in these poems seem vivid or memorable to you and why. Include words or phrases from the poems in your explanations.
- Describe which one of these landscapes is most unlike and then most like any with which you are familiar. Explain why.
- Make a list of any aspect of the landscape that you find in all the poems (for example, color, water, or particular objects). From this list, explain how a description of that aspect may reveal what you think the poet values most in the landscape. Quote examples to make the comparisons specific.
- Describe a place you've visited using detail to make the place vivid and memorable for your reader. Put this description into your writing folder.

Collaborating

With your partner or in a small group:

- Read the poems again out loud.
- Discuss what each of you found vivid or memorable from the three poems. Reread passages that you like and tell why. Talk

about ideas or images in the poems that you don't understand and list questions that you can bring to class discussion.

- Compare your explanations of what each poet values in the landscape. For example, does Hugo see buildings in the same way Shore does? Do these poets deal equally with the physical and the spiritual meanings of the places? What specific images, descriptions, or attitudes make you think so? Read passages to each other to illustrate the differences.
- Read the description you wrote or tell about the place you visited. Discuss what you value in the place you described.

Examining the Familiar

Many writers find that the places they know best offer the subject matter they want to write about. Henry David Thoreau noted the importance of Concord, Massachusetts, where he was born and raised, when he described it as an old coat, a morning-robe and a study-gown. Thoreau believed that to know a place you must stand "up to your chin" in it, submerge yourself in what it has to offer, and confront its facts to find the richness. He detailed the homely (gnats, mosquitos, decaying steps) as well as the sublime (clear ponds, babbling brooks, and spring mornings) in the nearly seven thousand pages of journals he wrote. *Walden*, published in 1854, describes the two-year period that he lived alone in a cabin on the shores of Walden Pond. He, like many other writers from the United States, explored the connections between nature and humanity.

Following Thoreau's advice, some of the student writers that we've worked with have submerged themselves and stood up to their chins in the places they know best. Eric Downing was a junior when he wrote the following entry that describes the ranch in Wyoming where he lives.

Other Fences

Eric Downing

Early this morning I watched the calves herded into the range corral for branding. The irons were heated by a sagebrush bonfire to a red hot glow. Inside a smaller pen, Charlie threw each calf to the ground,

looping a rope around its back feet and the end was tied to a post. The same process occurred for the front legs until the calf was stretched out, much like the torture rack of the Middle Ages. Each calf would bawl horribly, struggle to get up as the branding iron pressed into its hide. The stench rose and a breeze blew it far overhead.

I remember the first time I was taken to the branding corral. I must have been six years old. My grandpa, J.D., was growing into an old man. He limped along. No man who lives on the range escapes a few broken bones from a battle of wills with the animals. I remember him chewing and spitting and packing more tobacco under his tongue as we walked. The first wave of stench hit me and my stomach turned upside down. For the first time I heard the cry of a calf. I called to my Uncle Charlie to "Stop. Why are you hurting them?" The men all laughed at me and Grandpa squeezed my shoulder with his monstrous hand. "It's okay, son," he said. "It's the way of the range. You'll learn." I was crying by then. The combination of smoke and stench burned my eyes and my uncles and the hired men continued to laugh. I remember vomiting on my Grandpa's shoe and the laughter only echoed away with the wind. Grandpa swept me up in his arms and hugged me close. "Son," he said. "Someday this will all be yours. You'll teach your grandson about branding. Let's get on it." And with that he swept me into the corral and put me next to the fire. "Your job's to keep the fire hot. Stir the logs and keep the irons in the hottest part."

So, today I realized how accustomed I've grown to branding. These calves represent our shelter, our bread, our whole livelihood. The branding makes them legally ours. The brand defends our property much like a good fence does. Yet, a brand's like words shared between people. It's only a symbol of an idea.

Regina Wilson was a senior when she wrote this piece about her neighborhood in New York City.

On the Move

Regina Wilson

He wore running shoes and his dog made insistent whines but clung hard at his heels. A crystal frost hung in the air and must have burned right into the man's lungs. He was running fast and seemed in a hurry to go somewhere. But, that's what it's like in this

city. Always in a rush—head down and "mind your own business." As quickly as he'd come into my line of sight he was gone and the path was silent and empty, unusual in New York City to have empty space anywhere. I counted "1,2,3" before five more joggers filled the path, all wearing Walkmans. They ran in unison like their lives depended on precision, their feet hitting the pavement as if they'd practiced some dance step together. Then, they were gone. Around me the City came alive as the clock ticked toward 6:00 A.M.—the screech of tires, the whine of bus brakes, a barking dog, and some preacher-like voice arguing with the air, a siren wails.

I remember how bad I felt the time somebody needed my help, but I kept on moving toward home with my heart beating in my throat. Mr. Malinkowitz owns the deli on the corner in my neighborhood. He's given us kids suckers and gum for free sometimes when we don't have money. He lets us sweep or carry groceries to old Ms. Symonds or something else. Now on this particular day I see this guy swaying, drunk or drugged up or something, and he's shaking his fist at Malinkowitz. I don't know if he's just mad or got robbery on his mind. Anyway, I think if I just walk over that will break things up, but I don't have the nerve. If I just yell someone else will do something. But, I can't. I pick out a man who looks decent and he calls 911 from the corner pay phone. I scram out of there and head home but hear the sirens wail. Later, I don't say anything to Malinkowitz, but he's alive and never lets on if he knew I was chicken.

Suddenly, I'm sitting here in the park thinking about all of this. I feel alone and have the urge to do some running myself. Maybe in a city full of people it is fear that keeps us on the move. It's like some attempt to escape looking anyone straight in the eye.

Collaborating

With your partner or in a small group:

- Discuss your initial responses to Eric's and Regina's descriptions. What do you think is the most important idea each described about the places where they live? In which of these places would you find it more desirable to live? To visit? Explain your answer. In the actual writing of the pieces, what do you think each writer does best?

- Distinguish the different types of information that each paragraph in each piece gives about place. Then explain how these different aspects add to your total understanding of life on the ranch and in New York City.

Modeling as a Way of Shaping a Familiar Subject

Sometimes it is important to get a different perspective or an added dimension of meaning when you are writing about something you know well. Modeling is one way of shaping your subject matter with some guidance from another writer. Use the structure of Eric's and Regina's pieces to structure a piece of your own: In the first paragraph present a description of something going on in the place; in the second paragraph describe a memory of another time in that place; in the third paragraph highlight the significance of something learned from looking at the present and the past together. The first thing you'll need to do is decide which place is important enough to write about, then get the writing started. Choose a place you can observe in the next couple of days.

Work in Progress

1. Write a quick draft that highlights what you think stands out or is most important about this place.
2. Visit the place and write a description about what is going on at the time of your visit.
3. Draft a paragraph that focuses on a memory of this place.
4. Combine the three parts above into a rough draft and add a section on the significance of the place, as Eric and Regina did in their pieces.

Collaborating

- Read your draft to a partner. Have your partner explain what the description reveals about your attitude toward the place you describe.
- Discuss possible revisions that would clarify descriptions, tone, and organization. In future revisions you might find that you structure the piece differently than Eric and Regina did. Modeling their structure was a way of getting started.
- Revise as necessary and include your latest draft in your writing folder. Later you may want to refine this draft for your portfolio.

Exploring the Places Where We Live

The place you chose to describe may or may not have been a part of what you would call your neighborhood. The word *neighborhood* is defined in Webster's dictionary as an "adjoining district and its people; proximity; vicinity." Yet, *neighborly* is defined as "friendly; sociable." We find a difference in tone between these two words. The first word suggests a state of existence—people and place brought together because of their proximity. People who live in the same place are not necessarily connected by feelings. The second word creates an emotional connection, the sociability that is associated with the neighbors. Of course, the friendliness that may or may not exist in neighborhoods is dependent on many factors.

For a moment think back on the pieces written by Eric and Regina. What's a neighborhood for an extensive ranch in Wyoming? Eric explained to his classmates that his closest neighbors are his two uncles and their families. One uncle lives approximately seven miles and the other nine miles from Eric's house. The nearest neighbor who is not a family member lives approximately fifteen miles away. Yet, Eric considers the broad expanse of range land, dotted occasionally with a house, a neighborhood. He said, "Yes, we have neighbors. We see them in town at the church or store. We get together for dinners and dances. People have helped each other build barns or round up stray cattle. Especially in winter,

we watch out for each other when the weather is harsh. Of course, family are also neighbors where I come from."

Regina's sense of neighborhood is quite different. "We're all packed in like sardines. In our building (a ten-story apartment building) I meet people I recognize on the elevator or sitting out on the steps in nice weather. I know some by name. What makes us a neighborhood? Well, we share the same stores and streets and elevators. We do make small talk. You know, 'Hello. Nice day. The weather's fine. Your new "do" looks great.' Things like that. Some people have massive families that live in the neighborhood. Others, like us, are just the mamma, papa, and kids. Actually, our storekeepers are the neighbors I know best—like Malinkowitz. He's been here forever. We're protective though. We know outsiders when they come in. Some of the guys who beg on the streets have been here for years, and we know them by name. We're suspicious of strangers. This is mostly a neighborhood of color. The whites, though, who live and work here are trusted. It's good. There's a feeling, but I wouldn't say a closeness."

How would you describe your neighborhood? What do you consider special or unique about where you live? About the people there? How well do you know them? How do you feel about them? All of these questions need to be considered as you think about how you'd define your neighborhood. In what follows, you'll explore your neighborhood in some detail. We hope that you will develop new insights about where you live and that you will write, draw, or photograph your neighborhood as a way of representing it for yourself and others.

Graphic

Sketch a map of your neighborhood from a bird's-eye view (like a road map). Label the places that figure most in your life, places where memorable events occurred or where everyday events take place. Identify where the people who are important to you live. If it is helpful, you might create a legend for your map that simplifies ways to represent places, events, people, positive or negative memories, important dates, or any other of the hundreds of ways to depict your neighborhood. At some point we hope these maps will be displayed in your classroom.

Work in Progress

1. Using your map, take a partner on a guided tour of your neighborhood. Point out places that have particular importance. Stop occasionally to tell stories about what happened at certain times or in particular places. Add to your map as you talk. The tour often triggers other memories or significant places or events that you didn't include in the initial sketch. Explain how your neighborhood does or does not shape your attitudes, values, and actions. If your partner lives in the same neighborhood, compare the ways in which you describe it.
2. Write at least three short descriptions of your neighborhood using your map as a guide. Think of these pieces of writing as snapshots—brief, vivid glimpses of people, places, key events, celebrations, or tragedies that have been important in your neighborhood.
3. Display your map (attach your short descriptions) in the classroom. Take some time to examine classmates' maps and read the descriptions they wrote.
4. Include your map and descriptions in your writing folder.

An ode to your neighborhood

Using your map and the descriptions that you wrote, create an "Ode to Your Neighborhood." Although the word *ode* literally means "a lyric poem of exalted tone," we mean it metaphorically as "a song, a celebration" of where you live. Our idea came from the collection of poems by Gary Soto titled *Neighborhood Odes*. Here's one of his odes.

Ode to Los Raspados

Gary Soto

Papá says
They were
A shiny dime
When he was
Little, but for me,
His daughter
With hair that swings

Like jump ropes,
They're free:
Papá drives a truck
Of helados and
Snow cones, the
Music of arrival
Playing block
After block.
It's summer now.
The sun is bright
As a hot dime.
You need five
Shiny ones
For a snow cone:
Strawberry and root beer,
Grape that stains
The mouth with laughter,
Orange that's a tennis ball
Of snow
You could stab
With a red-striped straw.
We have
Green lime
And dark cola,
And we have
An umbrella of five colors.
When the truck stops,
The kids come running,
Some barefoot,
Some in T-shirts
That end at the
Cyclone knot
Of belly buttons,
Some in swimming
Trunks and dripping
Water from a sprinkler
On a brown lawn.
I'm twelve going
On thirteen,
And I know what's what
When it comes to

Snow cones
Packed with the flat
Of a hand and laced
With a gurgle
Of sugary water.
I know the rounds
Of the neighborhood.
I know the kids,
Gina and Ofélia,
Juan and Ananda,
Shorty and Sleepy,
All running
With dimes pressed
To their palms,
Salted from play
Or mowing the lawn.
When they walk away,
The dime of sun
Pays them back
With laughter
And the juice runs
To their elbows,
Sticky summer rain
That sweetens the street.

In this ode, Soto focuses on one specific event in the neighborhood and represents all that takes place through the eyes of one twelve-year-old girl. Yet, we can infer a lot about the neighborhood from how the children are described, the activities in which they engage, and the scant details that hint at what the neighborhood looks like. Reread the poem, looking for clues about the physical place and the people who live there.

Work in Progress

We'd like to stress again that we use the term *ode* in a metaphoric way. In what follows, we've listed a variety of possible ways to present an ode to your neighborhood. Some of you who live in the same neighborhood may want to make this a collaborative project.

If you think of other options or alternatives for collaborating, consult with your teacher to work out a plan.

- Write a poem, memoir, essay, or short story to present a specific portrait of your neighborhood.
- Write a series of vignettes true to the experience of your neighborhood.
- Compile a slide show or film presentation on your neighborhood.
- Write song lyrics and original music. You might choose to combine this option with film or slides.
- Sketch or paint a series of artistic renditions about your neighborhood.
- Photograph your neighborhood and put together a photo essay.

You may have seen photo essays presented in magazines or newspapers. Often a photographer puts together a series of photos so that the combination and sequence tell a story or make a specific point about the subject. For example, one Pulitzer Prize–winning essay was a compilation of photos showing Iowa farmers who had lost their farms. Each photo presented different facets of loss: In one, the family was moving out of its house; in another, an empty barn and a broken-down fence showed the deterioration after a family moved out; in a third, farm equipment was rusting in an open field; in a fourth, a man and woman stood on a hillside overlooking the barren fields. The whole impression was one of abandonment, barrenness, and deterioration.

Collaborating

- Share your ideas with a partner or a small group after you have a skeletal plan for your project. Get help on how to proceed.
- Check with your group periodically as you develop and revise your ode. Consider their advice as you prepare your project for presentation to the class.

Performance

- Present your ode to the class or other classes that may be invited as audience. The combination of these presentations should be another example of the mosaic-like nature of our neighborhoods.
- Determine whether or not your project has potential as a portfolio piece.

Getting a Sense of How People Live

You've looked closely at your neighborhood and those of your classmates. We'd like to help you broaden the landscape now and look at neighborhoods beyond those where you live. To start, we'd like to share a journal entry written by John Barker. He spent the summer after his sophomore year in high school traveling throughout the United States. He was part of a group of students that was invited to stay in the homes of other students of the same age. At the time, Barker lived in Nevada. The group hoped to find out more about where other young people lived, how they spent their time, and what they valued. Barker recorded in photographs and video his various impressions of what he saw and heard. He kept a journal and agreed to let us reprint one of the entries. He wrote the following on August 29.

Now that the trip is over and I'm back home, I keep thinking about how much of what I believed about other people wasn't necessarily true. I just didn't and still don't know enough about how other people live and think. I set out to learn about people—what makes them laugh or cry, what they value, and how they live. I was afraid sometimes on this trip when people seemed so different from me. It was always intimidating to walk into a house or apartment and know that I'd live with these people for a week. What if we couldn't communicate? What if they didn't like me? I could relate to Sam, also fifteen, from Minnesota who loves to go fishing in the evening and on Saturdays. No fishing on Sunday. That was church day and

the family was strict in observing the day. His father spent time showing me how to cast. I had a bedroom that didn't look much different from home—family pictures, trophies, and plastic flowers. His parents were much like my parents. It was comfortable. We ate corn and hamburgers and mashed potatoes smothered with gravy.

And Sarah. Sarah works at MacDonalds in Tahoe so that she can buy a season pass for skiing. While I was there, her parents invited friends over for a barbecue. I'd never eaten artichokes before. I can't imagine doing it again. Oyster, lobster, and shrimp were piled on trays. I slept on a screened porch overlooking the lake. Everything was clean, including the air, and there were moments I believed nobody but me had ever seen this place before. I felt like I was camping. That's how quiet it was. The house was clean and white and everything shined—no family pictures or heirlooms that I could see. Everything looked new like this was a family starting over. We spent days with Sarah's dad sailing and Sunday came and went without a mention of church.

Then, I arrived at Netta's apartment in Detroit. She lives with her grandmother and five brothers. It was tense. The apartment has one bedroom for the grandmother and youngest children. Everyone else sleeps in the living room. While I was there grandmother Benson slept on the couch. I'm sure she'd spent days cleaning the bedroom. It smelled of Pinesol. I felt lousy about taking her room, but it seemed important to them. I've never smelled such clean sheets before. "Line dried," is what Netta told me. Grandmother Benson had done it "special." Meals were simple and sparse but the family spent hours around the table talking. We'd go out on the steps in front of the building. Walking out, the humidity slapped me in the face like those hot towels you get on transcontinental flights. Children, it seems like hundreds of them, were at play in the streets. People called out greetings, came over to check out the newcomer. The sirens whined continually, but there was excitement and the bustle of life. We went to the Baptist Church on Sunday and I was the only white person there. We sang hymn after hymn and there were barely any dry eyes in the place they get so into the singing.

With Netta it was hard to find common ground for talk until she told me that one of her brothers had been killed on the street only three weeks before. He was just walking along and a stray bullet found him. Netta has this beautiful smile and her eyes look old

when they fill with tears. In some strange way we made a connection then. My brother was killed when he was rock climbing three years ago. Once I told her about this, we talked easier about how we felt and our plans for the future.

Collaborating

With your partner or in a small group:

- Compare John's descriptions of the three places he stayed.
- Describe in which one you'd feel most comfortable and most uncomfortable. Why did you make the choices you did? Which of these places is most like your neighborhood? Which one is least like it?

Feeling Alone in the Place Where You Live

Barker learned a good deal about race, ethnicity, religion, leisure-time activities, and family values when he stayed with people from different regions in the United States. He found that the names of people, the places they live, the clothes they wear, the language they use to express ideas, and the foods they eat were very different from his own. As a way of helping you "travel" to other neighborhoods, we've included three writers' descriptions of the places they live.

The following poem was written by Maurice Kenny. Kenny is of Mohawk ancestry. He was born and lived his adolescent life in northern New York state but lived in Brooklyn when he wrote this poem. Kenny has written extensively, publishing more than ten volumes of poetry. Consider, as you read his poem "Going Home," what Kenny said about the poem: "So I travel north to the re-birth of chicory, burdock, tadpoles, otters and the strawberry. I fly with geese who, like myself, have wintered in a more southern clime, or

salmon who have matured in the ocean. I travel home to those natal waters. 'Home' is with your people who stand on that earth and partake of its nourishment, spiritual and corporeal (*Between Two Rivers: Selected Poems,* White Pine Press, 1983, p. iii)."

Going Home

Maurice Kenny

The book lay unread in my lap
snow gathered at the window
from Brooklyn it was a long ride
the Greyhound followed the plow
from Syracuse to Watertown
to country cheese and maples
tired rivers and closed paper mills
home to gossipy aunts . . .
their dandelions and pregnant cats . . .
home to cedars and fields of boulders
cold graves under willow and pine
home from Brooklyn to the reservation
that was not home
to songs I could not sing
to dances I could not dance
from Brooklyn bars and ghetto rats
to steaming horses stomping frozen earth
barns and privies lost in blizzards
home to a Nation, Mohawk,
to faces I did not know
and hands which did not recognize me
to names and doors
my father shut

Collaborating

With your partner or in a small group:

- Read phrases aloud that best describe what represents home for Kenny.

- Discuss the details and images in the poem that describe Kenny's attitude toward Brooklyn and "home to a Nation."
- Compare some of the themes that you find in this poem with those you identified in *Holding Out*.

When you think about where you live, are there conditions or circumstances that interfere with or enhance your quality of life? For example, is your home in a high-crime or drug area? In a relatively crime- or drug-free area? How do these factors affect your life? Is noise, air, or chemical pollution a problem? Danny Romero wrote the following story about the neighborhood in Los Angeles where he was born and raised. The place he describes in both the physical and the spiritual setting may seem more like a film than reality. For some of you, the conditions described may be similar to those you face daily.

The Alley

Danny Romero

The setting sun casts a growing shadow over the backs of the wooden houses lining the alley between Seventy-fifth and Seventy-sixth streets. From Bell Avenue it runs east to Crockett Boulevard, across it, then past the grammar school and the Catholic church to Lou Dillon Avenue, then Alameda and the railroad tracks where it dead-ends. The yards adjacent have either fences or walls surrounding them. Some are topped with strands of barbed wire; on others, shards of glass ward off would-be trespassers and felons.

A skinny young boy dressed in baggy khaki pants and an oversize Pendleton shirt scrambles desperately across the debris-strewn asphalt. In his frenzy he almost loses his dark glasses and the woman's purse he has stolen.

Behind him comes Cesar Rojas. Cesar has been walking home from the public library when he hears Mrs. Ramirez's high-pitched voice shrieking, "*Oye cabrón!?* What are you doing!?" At that, Cesar looks over in her direction and sees the young *cholo* stumble for an instant, then regain his footing and head down the alley.

Cesar takes off in pursuit instinctively, not allowing himself time to doubt his actions. Later he will look back on it and see the real

trouble he could have been in if he had been led into the alley where the rest of the gang had waited. He runs still carrying a book in his hand. It is a large, hardbound copy of *1984* by George Orwell.

Cesar uses it much as a relay-race runner uses a baton: legs moving in a rhythmic motion, arms pumping the book up and down, pistonlike. Two years earlier, as a sophomore, he had been on the track team, but his lackluster performance had left him feeling a more urgent need to get into college than running in track meets or relay races.

That was the reason he had been spending so much time at the library. His English teacher, J. Smith, had given Cesar a list of books he should read, and *1984* was one of them. Now when Cesar read the newspapers and watched the television news closely, the resemblance between his world and that of the main characters in Orwell's novel grew more apparent and frightening. And he wondered what he could do to make this less true.

Cesar halts in his tracks for a moment. The boy in front of him now comes running back toward Cesar, carrying a long wooden stake. It is more than five feet long and had been used as a means of support for a young tree planted by the city. Cesar backs up. The stake, hurled through the air, flies end over end over end over end over end toward Cesar, then tangles in the electrical wires overhead and falls down, crashing loudly onto the hood of a rusted Volkswagen abandoned in the alley.

The pair cross Crockett Boulevard and pass the grammar school. Cesar still follows the khaki-clad figure.

When he was younger, Cesar and his friends walked this way home from school. Up ahead in the alley, he knows, there is a buzzer at the back door of a garage. As kids, they would press the button, then run off before anyone answered it. Now as he remembers it, he wonders if the buzzer really worked. He had never before waited to see who might answer it.

Plastic bags filled with garbage come flying back at Cesar. The younger boy grabs them as he passes by and flings them backward. Cesar steps over a large watermelon rind and a half-dozen used diapers. The khaki pants stops and picks up a bottle, turns, and throws it. Cesar stops just in time and moves behind a graffiti-covered wall. The glass splinters away from him. The chase continues.

It seems to Cesar like the summer he spent in this alley more than three years ago. It was during that summer before high school

when things had changed for him. He was leaving the security of his *barrio* and would have to travel on the bus to another *barrio* for high school. In the beginning of that summer he had felt all alone. None of his old friends was around. And he began to wonder if it was only his family that never went on vacation. Then he met his friends in the alley.

They all walked a thin line between drugs, gangs, and the law. The boys made decisions about right and wrong, for better and for worse. The sheriffs, no matter, always held the boys under suspicion because of the color of their skin and the neighborhood they lived in. And more than once the boys had been lined up with their faces in the asphalt and broken glass. The boys were guilty in the sheriffs' eyes until proven innocent, and sometimes not even then.

Cesar and his friends had still been young enough to build go-carts with washing machine motors, and they raced them over the cracks and bumps in the asphalt of the alley straight away into the night.

After those few summer months Cesar never saw any of those boys again. Except for one whose name was Mando. Cesar had seen him a couple of times on the bus in the morning. They spoke to each other briefly, but they had never been very close among the bunch in the alley that summer. Cesar remembered that Mando once had blamed him for causing him to wreck and flip over the go-cart and break his arm, but they both knew Mando lied.

It had been Frank and his brother Clown who had caused the accident. The brothers, fifteen- and sixteen-year-old gang members, were shot dead at the end of that summer by the sheriffs. Cesar was the passenger on the go-cart that Mando drove, and they both saw clearly the brothers at the far end of the alley, sniffing paint. As Cesar and Mando had sped faster and faster toward Lou Dillon Avenue, the brothers turned with slingshots in their hands and, smiling, fired steel ball bearings. They hit Mando, who lost control of the vehicle, veering closer and closer to a wall on one side, then running into a trash can and flipping over.

The pair crossed Lou Dillon Avenue.

Cesar already can smell the dog turd coming from the Lozano family's yard near Alameda. The yard has been filled with a dozen Chevrolet Impalas from the 1950s and 1960s, sitting among the weeds for as long as Cesar can remember. Many people had offered Mr. Lozano money for the vehicles so they could restore them to their original splendor, but all had been refused.

The horrible smell comes from the chow-chow dogs that guard the yard. There are three or four of them, Cesar does not know for sure. He does know they are the meanest, oldest, and ugliest dogs he has ever met, and he has wished never to see them again. They begin a loud, rasping bark from the other side of the sheet-metal siding that surrounds the yard these days. Another bottle comes sailing past Cesar.

The thief has stopped and is hiding in some shrubbery near the Lozanos' yard. Cesar proceeds with caution. He notices the heavy traffic on Alameda, thousands of cars speeding north and south. He tries to listen for the thief, the sound of his own heart thumping in his ears.

The thief lunges at Cesar from the bushes, this time with a piece of broken bottle in his hand. Cesar quickly raises his book in front of him and deflects the blow. The glass sticks momentarily in the cover of the book, then is twisted free. Cesar slams the spine of the book into the face of the other boy with all his might. The dark glasses go flying. Blood splatters over both boys as Cesar grabs the hand holding the broken glass and turns the wrist until the weapon is dropped. The younger boy pulls Cesar's hair and head backward. Cesar backpedals, knocking both of them to the curb. Cesar turns the boy over.

It is his cousin.

Though it has been years since they have seen each other, Cesar remembers him. Cesar recalls that he is three years older and that their fathers had disowned each other as brothers years earlier after a drunken brawl at a family gathering.

The two boys had never been introduced. By the time they both had been born, the two men were firmly entrenched in their dispute, though it had overlooked the cousins. They knew each other only from those gatherings where the two families had sat on opposite sides of the room and never spoke to or acknowledged the existence of each other. Except for once, Cesar remembers, when at a funeral the two boys had seen each other from across the church and made eye contact, then nodded to each other. Quickly they recovered before anyone else noticed and never let their guard down again.

Lalo is his name, Cesar remembers. Cesar looks into the boy's eyes and sees the growing desperation and almost animal-like look brought on by the pipe that never stops calling. Cesar has seen the same look on the faces of other boys, girls, men, and women in the

barrio now addicted to rock cocaine. The rockheads, as they are known, always look worried and nervous: tense, as if their jaw were on a spring and wanted to snap right off their face at any moment. Cesar has noticed that at least with the PCP zombies they sometimes look as if they are having a good time.

Cesar unhands the boy and stands. He picks up the purse from the ground nearby. No one has been hurt, he thinks, except for his cousin. He turns back toward the boy and sees the small figure dodging across the traffic on Alameda. Jail will not help the boy, thinks Cesar, though perhaps this chance he is given now might. Cesar can think of no other solution.

Log Entry 2

1. Record your initial reactions to the events that take place in the story.
2. Describe any connections you can make between lessons learned in this story and any that you have learned in your own neighborhood.
3. Imagine that the cousin, Lalo, is telling the story. Write out at least one paragraph from his point of view. In your piece keep details of the setting and the events as Cesar describes them.

Collaborating

With your partner or in a small group:

- Share your stories from Lalo's perspective. Talk about the similarities and differences in how each of you perceive his reactions and the type of person you think he is.
- Discuss the events that take place in the story. Explain why you think Cesar did or did not make the right choice in letting Lalo go at the end. What would you have done? Did you find the

story believable? Do you think the story is well written? Why or why not?

- Explain whether or not you believe that actions you take in your neighborhood could make a significant difference. If you could change anything in your neighborhood, if you could have three wishes granted, what would you change and why?

Work in Progress

Continue revising the descriptions of your neighborhood that you wrote earlier or draft new ones as the texts you read remind you of other aspects of your neighborhood that you are interested in writing about. You might expand your descriptions into longer scenes that could take the form of personal narratives, poems, or fictional pieces.

The scenes that follow are taken from Ruth Vinz's journal. Through these exploratory drafts she began to capture scenes that might be useful for a fictional story she wanted to write, a process she explains as follows:

> I had this idea about two girls who develop a friendship when they are young. Somehow, I imagine them together for a reunion when they are in college. They decide to take a trip to Nevada and while they are driving, the narrator, Sarah, keeps flashing back on key moments that defined their friendship when they lived in the same neighborhood. I need to write out some of the scenes before I can imagine a structure to bring this together in some blending of the present and of flashback.

Scene 1

Jamie McCaslin's mother was a drunk. I didn't know this when I was seven, and we'd catch a glimpse of her behind closed French doors, draped across the wingback as dinner time moved in. I didn't know this when I was eight, and we found her more and more often in her bedroom when we'd slip into the shade darkened room.

Jamie, in her khaki shorts, says, "All clear, Sarah," putting an arm through the loop of my elbow like she was nudging me across a busy intersection; Jamie's mother under her navy comforter, alcohol strong in the room like a mist, and me tiptoeing across the plush because I need to reach the window seat, feel drawn to the sliver of light that brings sight back to me.

The glint from beneath the shade reflects off her alligator purse tempting me to touch. Jamie whispers, "She's out." Mrs. McCaslin mumbles and shifts under the eiderdown. And I unlatch the gold hooks, and Jamie says, "How much is there? She loses track of change. She'll never know. Go on, Sarah." And that's when I grab at coins I can't distinguish—pennies, nickels, dimes, half-dollars. The latch clicks shut, louder than I like.

Then my mother is saying, "Where do you get the candy, Sarah?" Grandma looks her stern look, eyebrows curve in the wrinkle of brow as she dishes mashed potatoes, whipped in heavy cream, next carrots steamed past crispness. And mother again, in her threatening voice, "Where do you get the money?"

Lord knows we don't have the money and my throat chokes dry for an answer. It is easy to steal quarters from Mrs. McCaslin's purse and head out for Wilson's market for a Fudgesicle, a Butterfinger, or penny Tootsie Rolls. Finally, we take dollar bills then fives to buy Revlon lip ice, Blue Waltz, and roll-on eyeshadow at Woolworth's. We hide our secrets in pockets of cardigan sweaters in my bureau. The drawer fills to bulging while we wait for a day when we dare to wear the sin across our faces. Looking back, this was a time when I thought Jamie's mother was careless or distracted. Now I know, in truth, she was a drunk, pure and simple.

A day comes when I know I must give back all that I have taken: Reverend Grayson looks right at me when he says, "Eye of God, the eye of God, God bends over you, sees every hand twitch, hears the thoughts that pull at your heart; hears the voices in your head; God knows everything; God sees everything." After church, I race to Jamie's: out on the front steps arguing with her; Jamie oblivious to my need for absolutions; her mother staggers through the screen door, camouflaged by shadow, and Jamie talks furiously, her arms flailing. They turn to go inside. Jamie steadies her mother's step as I turn my back and descend the thick, painted stoop bearing a heart near bursting with my need to confess, but Jamie's voice above Reverend Grayson's, the congregation's, or my own, echoes: "She's a

drunk, Sarah; it doesn't matter because she's always drunk; Dad says she can't say her own name half the time. She's a drunk, Sarah."

Scene 2

We're breezing across Nevada, and I try to explain to Jamie why I love the emptiness of the desert, the predictability of broken yellow lines that unwind under the wheels. "What's to love," Jamie wants to know, "about dust and sagebrush and the black night?" Yet, it is in the deserts of the West that I first felt myself to be myself, sensing how insignificant were my thefts, and yet how full is the capacity to hope for more in a world that possesses such darkness and space and wind.

The headlights freeze a jackrabbit to numbness. I feel the fur break loose from bone as I hear the thud. This rabbit is beautiful, his brown fur and brilliant white breast, his appalled eyes catching the headlight beam. For now, I wonder if this is the desert's way of getting back at me for discovering its beauty.

"Two hundred fifty miles to clean sheets and sleep," Jamie stretches her legs long to shift weight. Two hundred fifty miles down a road that slithers silvery toward a mirage of city lights on the horizon. "Perspective," Jamie announces as if she's heard my thought. "Remember Mrs. Graywolf?" she's asking. I remember. Mrs. Graywolf taught art. She'd make a desert highway with three quick strokes. A highway that sucked you into its vanishing point. Before me is a mirage of city, a desert river shimmering just out of reach. The road's one quick stroke and Jamie's saying something from *Isaiah* about streams in the desert. Something like: Do not look back; do not ponder things that are past.

Scene 3

What was it I thought about that morning when Mr. McCaslin hoisted the wicker basket in the back of the '52 Ford wagon? I know we filled the basket near bursting with foods I'd never tasted at home—thick slabs of pastrami, french bread, kosher dills, cocktail onions, dijon mustard, and potato chips. Food, I believed, existed only in the McCaslin kitchen. At our house we raised our own meat—chickens and a calf each year; our own vegetables, fresh in summer then stored in the cellar or canned in a kitchen where walls sweated steam for days running. Mason jars, glass lids, my mother

and grandmother canning days on end. Other days: huge pots of soup bubbling; bread rising near the pot belly stove; the smell of yeast thick in the air. But, at the McCaslins, I discovered the sweet world of delicacies.

Mrs. McCaslin waves from the kitchen window, her face obscured by the pane of glass. I wonder if she makes a resolution as we back out: "I will not take a drink today. I will stay sober. I will clean the fish and wash the huckleberries when they get back. I will not take a drink." And then she takes one drink. Only one. Then another. By noon she's in the wingback imagining us: three figures darkened by the thick bushes, silver buckets in hand; the groves, a thick lace of green. By early afternoon she opens a new bottle of gin, at the moment Jamie catches her first fish: Mr. McCaslin, arms wrapped around her, both laughing as he helps her reel it in. "Tighten the drag. Not that much. Keep the rod tip up. A little tension on the line. Tighten up now. Yes. Keep the slack out of the line. Don't horse it." Jamie's dancing her little dance—arms tense, hand on the reel, feet in motion. Her back arches, neck muscles taut. Mr. McCaslin leads, a touch here, a touch there. Then, the fish. Mrs. McCaslin searches for more tonic water. Resorts to straight gin.

We search out huckleberries, buried under thick leaves, fill the buckets overfull. By 3:00 we load berries, five rainbow trout in ice, then the four-hour drive down the canyon. Headlights beam shadows into the garage—fishing poles lock into the rack; buckets litter the workbench; the picnic basket comes out, lighter than before. Finally, the ice chest.

We enter the darkening house, full of ourselves, laughing through the re-telling of Jamie's catch. The kitchen light blossoms. We run the flight of stairs. "Mom, Mom, I caught a fish. It's a three pounder! Mom!" Jamie takes two steps with each leap. It is her dance again. I follow breathlessly. Jamie stops short of the second landing. I bump her forward in my hurry to keep up. Her shoulder knocks against the wall with a dull thud as she straddles the rag of a body that was her mother. Between Jamie's legs I see a mouth, lips slightly apart, a pool of drying foam oozing out, but a second pool, rust colored and more recent taking over the first. Jamie screams, "Dad, Dad, I need you. Dad!"

I feel the pastrami, the dijon, the huckleberries rise in my throat. I gag back the sweet day. I want to go home. I want to sleep in my own bed tonight. It is a relief when Mr. McCaslin excuses me, "It's

time for you to go home, Sarah. Jamie will call you tomorrow." He reminds me to take a bowl of huckleberries and two trout home. I walk the block alone and forget to tell my family what I've seen.

"How was the day, Sarah?" My mother feeds the last of the whites through the wringer. Grandmother draws a hot bath for me, checking through my hair for ticks. "This time of year the ticks are thick in the canyon. I remember when your Uncle Buddy came home with seven already burrowing into his scalp," she scrubs my hair hard. She tops off the cleaning with rubbing alcohol. "We had to burn those ticks out," she weaves her finger in and out of my hair, checking.

"What prayer will you say tonight, Child?" she asks as she tucks the blanket tight around my neck. I think of nothing to ask God for. I think I hear a lone siren whir to a stop down the street. I imagine the red lights flashing; a stretcher, Mr. McCaslin pale, the ticks burrowing into his scalp as I drift into sleep. Jamie doesn't call the next day. I wait. I can't eat the trout we've cooked for dinner. The huckleberries, placed on rice pudding, turn my stomach. "Are you sick, Sarah?" My mother feels my forehead. "I hope she doesn't have a tick burrowing in," announces my grandmother as she carries the full plate to the kitchen.

Scene 4

The waitress plonks down the coffee cups like she's mad at us for something we've said. She has a right. It's 2:30 A.M. Truckers line Naugahyde stools. There isn't a table in the place, just this counter with discolored Formica and pock marks from cigarette burns. The coffee is bitter. I remember hearing that truck stops have good coffee. It isn't true in Fallon, Nevada. The counter feels gritty against my forearm. I reach for a napkin but the metal dispenser's empty, both sides. Jamie, hand on chin, asks the trucker next to her how much longer it will take us to get to Reno. She's turned on her stool, sideways, toward him, studying the square jaw line and the teeth, dazzlingly white, against his tan.

"Then you'll be heading for San Francisco tomorrow?" I see his hand cradle his chin, mirroring Jamie's gesture. Outside, truck lights send lightning flashes into the night's darkness.

"We better hit the road, Jamie. We've got another two hours to Reno." She does not speak or turn around. The trucker narrows his eyes at me. No one is smiling.

Scene 5

I wonder what terrible thing I have done. The McCaslins drive by me on Elm Street but don't wave. Their eyes fasten to the road ahead. Jamie, sitting in the back seat, studies the back of her father's head. The car crawls forward, slowly. I watch my tanned toes move toward the cracks in the sidewalk ahead of me. I know the car has turned into their driveway when I hear metal against metal as the garage door opens. Then silence. Jamie isn't calling, "Sarah, Sarah, wait up." Mr. McCaslin isn't shouting, "Hey, Sport, you wanna sink a few?" For now, walking the hot pavement home, the tears come, unfolding a blossom of fear or sorrow that I can't understand.

Collaborating

With a partner or in a small group:

- Share your initial impressions.
- Describe what type of person you think Sarah is. What type of person is Mr. McCaslin? Jamie? What makes you think so?
- Jot notes about the relationship between Sarah and Jamie. Why do you think they have maintained a friendship all these years?
- Do you think your family would hide its problems from neighbors? Would you tell your family about neighbors' problems, or would you keep silent as Sarah did? Think of circumstances in which you might or might not reveal such information.
- Review the three selections that you read in this section, Getting a Sense of How People Live, and discuss some of the issues that are raised about what is important to people about the quality of life in their neighborhoods and what conditions exist that work against achieving it. Discuss these issues and think about what each selection suggests that is important to your understanding about how people live.

Performance

- Write a script for a one-scene performance in which some of the characters from the selections come together to describe where they live and what affects their quality of life. You'll need to think of some way to bring them together. It may be outrageous or common. The key is that they have some motivation to get into a discussion about how they live and what is important to them. You might put them together on a talk show, have them meet in an airport or a hospital. Your script may have more characters than the major ones introduced in the text. You may need to create new characters to explain some situations. Create enough roles for the members in your group even if someone serves as narrator or has some other role. You might choose to write a script that depicts your neighborhood or a collection of neighborhoods that are represented by your performance group instead. Assign parts, rehearse, and present these scenarios to the class.
- Write a series of scenarios, either individually or collaboratively. You might choose to illustrate these or transform them into a fictional story or a series of poems.

Portfolio Entry

You might want to consider a video of the performance or final drafts of personal narratives, stories, or poems as portfolio entries.

Traveling the Landscapes

If you've done any traveling throughout the United States, you've probably encountered places where the physical landscape doesn't look anything like where you live. You may have thought about whether you'd like to live there. Maybe the people did or didn't impress you. We carry such impressions away from our travels. Of

course, many of our travels may not be actual visits to places. Places you have read about or seen in films or on television are part of a landscape of the United States that you know better than you might have imagined.

Graphic

Draw a map (use extra-large paper) of your version of the landscapes of the United States. You might use an actual map to make the outline or create your own map. Fill in the names of places, names of people, highways, and landmarks that you know and have read or heard about. You might want to label areas with words that describe your feelings about various places. You might use symbols for certain physical or spiritual characteristics. Leave uncharted territory blank, or find ways to depict the blurred vision that you have of places you don't know. You'll think of other ways we haven't mentioned here.

Collaborating

Take a partner on a guided tour. Describe the places you've included and why you depicted them the way you did. You might find that talking about your map with someone triggers other ideas or memories. Your partner's map may give you additional ideas as well. After your discussion, add other places or representations to your map.

Work in Progress

Store your map in your writing folder so that you can make additions as you think of them. You may find that the next few reading selections give you more ideas.

Landscapes from the Past

The map you've drawn may represent the landscape of the United States as it exists today. Did you include any historical events or sites on your map? For example, you might have included the Oregon Trail, sites of battles, important events, and natural or man-made disasters. Obviously there isn't room to put everything on your map, but one way of re-seeing the landscapes of the United States is to imagine how past events and circumstances create a layered map—from the earliest civilizations that inhabited this land to the present moment.

You've probably seen in an encyclopedia or an anatomy textbook a series of anatomical drawings of the human body where layer after layer of transparent plastic, differentiating one body system from another, is added to the human skeleton. We imagine a map of the United States in much the same way. Whether you are studying historical or literary texts, each layer adds a dimension to what we know about the country in which we live. The following poem, written by Leticia Monroe when she was a junior, imagines the past in a place she was visiting. We think that Leticia's poem emphasizes again what we introduced with the play *Holding Out*. Both serve to remind us that the ghosts of landscapes that are layered beneath and over others produce a composite that represents the rich layers of the landscape of the United States.

Monuments

Leticia Monroe

It's like walking into a museum
where stone has been cracked open
to let the spirits walk on earth
again.

Imagine the mother, holding
the dying infant in her arms.
All that's left now:
Lettie Burns Martin
September 7, 1893—September 12, 1894.
What did father say to mother? To
baby Lettie lying too still? Who dug the earth
away, preparer for the box of bone and flesh?

Ernesto Martinez dead at forty-two.
He loved the random joy of dance
and drink and cards. I know it by his name.
Beside him dark-haired girls who listen
now to unheard beats. Ernesto
doesn't come again, he's trapped
in earth so heavy it takes love and memory
to break him free.

Stones grow here like flowers in a garden,
cropping up like weeds too fast, too soon
for those who stand upon the hill shaded
still by maple, birch, and ash.

I pity them the memories I can't sow
for them in life, in love, in constant
competition with the loss. Monuments
of stone so deep I dare not love for
fear of what is lost in love. This
country of monuments has a silent
solace of its own, retreats into the dark
of night, the spade to clink again
another day.

Log Entry 3

1. Write or sketch your initial reactions to the poem.
2. Use a double-entry log format to record, in the left-hand column, phrases or sentences that are important or interesting to you. In the right-hand column, write your responses.
3. Write about a place you have visited that made you think about past events or reminded you about the multiple layers of landscapes in the United States.
4. List landscapes or remembered events from your knowledge of history that would make the subject matter for a story or poem.

Collaborating

With your partner or in a small group:

- Discuss Leticia Monroe's poem and the notes you made. Consider any questions you have about the meaning of the poem.
- Read your log entry aloud and then discuss possibilities for revision. If you choose to revise this log entry, you may want to include it in your portfolio.
- Share your lists of historical events and add to your list as you or members of your group think of other events.

Graphic

Add events from the past to your map if this seems appropriate. You might want to think about ways in which you could add layers to the current map.

Learning from the Places We Visit

As you read the following excerpt from William Least Heat Moon's *Blue Highways: A Journey into America,* notice how his attitude is affected by the places he visits. Moon writes that his journey across the United States was his search for "places where change did not mean ruin . . ." He traveled in his van, christened "Ghost Dancing," across back roads from Missouri to North Carolina and on to Louisiana, Texas, and New Mexico. He continued into Utah, California, and Washington state, and on to Maine before returning to Missouri. He discovered a vigorous and imaginative landscape on these back roads, places filled with the spirit of a people who have made this land their home.

Blue Highways: A Journey into America

William Least Heat Moon

Had it not been raining hard that morning on the Livingston square, I never would have learned of Nameless, Tennessee. Waiting for the rain to ease, I lay on my bunk and read the atlas to pass time rather than to see where I might go. In Kentucky were towns with fine names like Boreing, Bear Wallow, Decoy, Subtle, Mud Lick, Mummie, Neon; Belcher was just down the road from Mouthcard, and Minnie only ten miles from Mousie.

I looked at Tennessee, Turtletown eight miles from Ducktown. And also: Peavine, Wheel, Milky Way, Love Joy, Dull, Weakly, Fly, Spot, Miser Station, Only, McBurg, Peeled Chestnut, Clouds, Topsy, Isoline. And the best of all, Nameless. The logic! I was heading east, and Nameless lay forty-five miles west. I decided to go anyway.

The rain stopped, but things looked saturated, even bricks. In Gainesboro, a hill town with a square of businesses around the Jackson County Courthouse, I stopped for directions and breakfast. There is one almost infallible way to find honest food at just prices in blue-highway America: count the wall calendars in a cafe.

> No calendar: Same as an interstate pit stop.
> One calendar: Preprocessed food assembled in New Jersey.
> Two calendars: Only if fish trophies present.
> Three calendars: Can't miss on the farm-boy breakfasts.
> Four calendars: Try the ho-made pie too.
> Five calendars: Keep it under your hat, or they'll franchise.

One time I found a six-calendar cafe in the Ozarks, which served fried chicken, peach pie, and chocolate malts, that left me searching for another ever since. I've never seen a seven-calendar place. But old-time travelers—road men in a day when cars had running boards and lunchroom windows said AIR COOLED in blue letters with icicles dripping from the tops—those travelers have told me the golden legends of seven-calendar cafes.

To the rider of back roads, nothing shows the tone, the voice of a small town more quickly than the breakfast grill or the five-thirty tavern. Much of what the people do and believe and share is evident then. The City Cafe in Gainesboro had three calendars that I could see from the walk. Inside were no interstate refugees with full bladders and empty tanks, no wild-eyed children just released from the

glassy cell of a stationwagon backseat, no longhaul truckers talking in CB numbers. There were only townspeople wearing overalls, or catalog-order suits with five-and-dime ties, or uniforms. That is, here were farmers and mill hands, bank clerks, the dry goods merchant, a policeman, and chiropractor's receptionist. Because it was Saturday, there were also mothers and children.

I ordered my standard on-the-road breakfast: two eggs up, hashbrowns, tomato juice. The waitress, whose pale, almost translucent skin shifted hue in the gray light like a thin slice of mother of pearl, brought the food. Next to the eggs was a biscuit with a little yellow Smiley button stuck in it. She said, "You from the North?"

"I guess I am." A Missourian gets used to Southerners thinking him a Yankee, a Northerner considering him a cracker, a Westerner sneering at his effete Easternness, and the Easterner taking him for a cowhand.

"So whata you doin' in the mountains?"

"Talking to people. Taking some pictures. Looking mostly."

"Lookin' for what?"

"A three-calendar cafe that serves Smiley buttons on the biscuits."

"You needed a smile. Tell me really."

"I don't know. Actually, I'm looking for some jam to put on this biscuit now that you've brought one."

She came back with grape jelly. In a land of quince jelly, apple butter, apricot jam, blueberry preserves, pear conserves, and lemon marmalade, you always get grape jelly.

"Whata you lookin' for?"

Like anyone else, I'm embarrassed to eat in front of a watcher, particularly if I'm getting interviewed. "Why don't you have a cup of coffee?"

"Cain't right now. You gonna tell me?"

"I don't know how to describe it to you. Call it harmony."

She waited for something more. "Is that it?" Someone called her to the kitchen. I had managed almost to finish by the time she came back. She sat on the edge of the booth. "I started out in life not likin' anything, but then it grew on me. Maybe that'll happen to you." She watched me spread the jelly. "Saw your van." She watched me eat the biscuit. "You sleep in there?" I told her I did. "I'd love to do that, but I'd be scared spitless."

"I don't mind being scared spitless. Sometimes."

"I'd love to take off cross country. I like to look at different license plates. But I'd take a dog. You carry a dog?"

"No dogs, no cats, no budgie birds. It's a one-man campaign to show Americans a person can travel alone without a pet."

"Cain't travel without a dog!"

"I like to do things the hard way."

"Shoot! I'd take me a dog to talk to. And for protection."

"It isn't traveling to cross the country and talk to your pug instead of people along the way. Besides, being alone on the road makes you ready to meet someone when you stop. You get sociable traveling alone."

She looked out toward the van again. "Time I get the nerve to take a trip, gas'll cost five dollars a gallon."

"Could be. My rig might go the way of the steamboat." I remembered why I'd come to Gainesboro. "You know the way to Nameless?"

"Nameless? I've heard of Nameless. Better ask the amlance driver in the corner booth." She pinned the Smiley on my jacket. "Maybe I'll see you on the road somewhere. His name's Bob, by the way."

"The ambulance driver?"

"The Smiley. I always name my Smileys—otherwise they all look alike. I'd talk to him before you go."

"The Smiley?"

"The amlance driver."

And so I went looking for Nameless, Tennessee, with a Smiley button named Bob.

Collaborating

With your partner or in a small group:

- Describe the ideas, images, or places that are most interesting or vivid in this excerpt from *Blue Highways*.
- Reread passages that deal with food, and then discuss the following questions: What does food tell you about people? Give examples from your own experiences when the kind and quality

of food helped define the people. What foods are identified with your neighborhood, region, or state? Tell any travel stories from your experiences that are associated with food.

- Speculate on why you think Moon associated the number of calendars with the quality of food. Can you classify the restaurants in your neighborhood or where you've traveled by objects that are displayed on the premises?
- Discuss why you think Moon made this trip. What was he looking for? What does he find? If you travel, what are the major purposes behind your trips? Have you made any startling discoveries about human nature in your travels? What do you think Moon means by "You get sociable traveling alone"?

Graphic

Add anything to your map that comes to mind after reading Moon. It could be interesting to create another layer that represents your travels if you haven't included those.

Looking at the Landscapes We've Created

When you look closely at the literary landscape that writers have represented or investigated, you'll notice that the subjects they choose are as diverse as the landscapes of this country. They include every kind of person: young, old, rich, poor, decent, and not-so-decent; ethnically, racially, and spiritually diverse; mad and desperate, or loving and compassionate; beautiful and common. The writing includes every landscape: barren, bountiful, desolate, resplendent; enormous, minute, shallow, deep; green, golden, gray, white; mountainous, hilly, flat. Every event is included: birth, death, growing up, marriage, aging. The meaning of the literary landscape is to be found in all the writing, including yours, that we could place layer upon layer across this nation to represent ourselves.

Some writers take their readers for the first time to places they may sometime visit; others create imaginary landscapes; many authors describe how we are changing the landscape by what we've constructed on it. We've become so accustomed to these changes in the landscape that it is hard to imagine that they haven't always existed. As a reminder of how we have changed the landscape, we've included the next two selections. Please read both of them before you write about and discuss them.

Mall Rats

Tyrone Nixon

The rain doesn't mind a rainy day but me and Robert, James, and Joe use one to our advantage. We hit the road, screech the tires, turn a quick right on 105. The mall stands like some circus tent, filled with cubicles of pleasure. We take our pictures first—standing in those booths, grinning like gorillas when the light flashes. A gruesome foursome looking like we own the block. It's ice cream next cause girls in tight pink blouses dip our favorites out—cookie dough with fudge topping and she gives me that smile that shows her tongue and teeth. We stake our claim on a bench near The Wiz and watch the girls go by. Eight billion girls paw through earrings, white blouses, and belts on the bargain tables and there we sit making comments until Russell and Walter come by with some girls they've met who hang on every word. Robert impresses them by striking a book full of matches and then he stomp, stomp, stomps on the flame when everybody's getting nervous and the girls are squealing.

Joe will talk your ear off if you let him, so I head for some peace at the Arcade—red wallpaper, glittering lights, sounds of winning, clinks of quarters—my brain explodes in light. I start thinking that I'm losing my mind with boredom. I head over to the food court and grab a Coke. I see the guys sitting with a girl from school, one of those with finger nails that click, click against the plastic of her cup. Joe's going on about how his brother climbed this mountain in Australia last year and made it sound like he marched straight up this hill and overtook the top. I know his brother nearly died of food poisoning and they had to bring him down on some pieced-together stretcher. I don't say anything cause I'm not trying to impress this girl. Not true, I'm thinking the silent type might be a relief in this

place. So she's saying to me now, "Tyrone, what you thinking? You got the downs?" Her eyes are dark as that fudge topping and sparkling with little glitters of light. I'm thinking how I'll ask her out. Tell her she can fix my blues. "Let's blow this place and leave these mutts behind. You and me breezing down 105 with the top down. You and me at the movie. Let's go." It didn't happen. I couldn't get the words out. I sat there like some stone statue in the park and sipped my Coke. She looks back at Joe, "What's with him? Sometimes he's sooo boring." I'm thinking how I'd rather be flying a kite against a strong wind, diving into the surf and feeling the sting of salt water, or shooting hoops with my dad. I say, "Let's go." Above the protests, I hear myself saying, "I'm the driver. I says it's time to go." That's that. We're out of there.

Merritt Parkway

Denise Levertov

As if it were
forever that they move, that we
keep moving—

Under a wan sky where
as the lights went on a star
pierced the haze & now
follows steadily
a constant
above our six lanes
the dreamlike continuum . . .

And the people—ourselves!
the humans from inside the
cars apparent
only at gasoline stops
unsure
eyeing each other

drink coffee hastily at the
slot machines & hurry
back to the cars
vanish
into them forever, to
keep moving—

Houses now & then beyond the
sealed road, the trees / trees, bushes
passing by, passing
the cars that
keep moving ahead of
us, past us, pressing behind us
and
over left, those that come
toward us shining too brightly
moving restlessly
in six lanes, gliding
north & south, speeding with
a slurred sound—

Collaborating

With your partner or in a small group:

- Discuss other constructions, such as malls and highways, that have sprung up across the physical landscape of the United States.
- Make a list that you can share with the rest of the class. After you've shared the list and discussed it with the class, take another look at your map.

Graphic

- Add any of the constructed landscapes that you might not have already included on your map if you think these are important. You could add another layer if this seems appropriate.
- Prepare your map for display.
- Display your map in the classroom or share it in a small group.

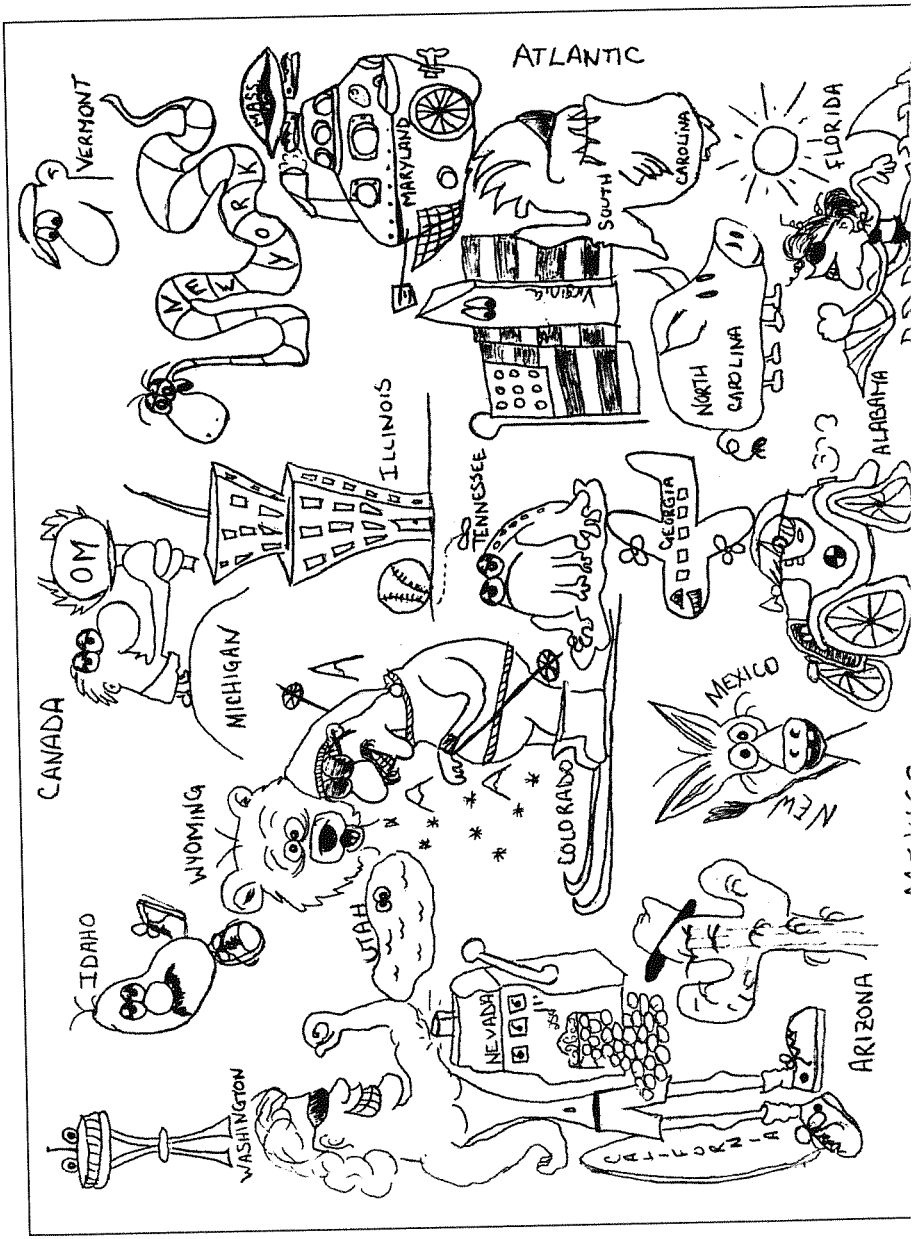

Figure 4-1. *Katie Kress's Portrait of the Land and Its People*

Portraits of the Land and Its People

As a culminating assignment, examine your map for important stories or impressions that you could create in writing, photographs, films, or some other way of presentation. This portrait is much like your ode to the neighborhood except, taken together, all of your class portraits will take you beyond your neighborhood landscapes. To prepare for this assignment, examine your map and determine places, events, or stories that would be most interesting to tell. To give you an example, we've included a map drawn by Katie Kress, a student in Colorado who completed this same assignment (Figure 4-1). Then, we've included her list of possible topics for the "Portrait" assignment.

Here are Katie's notes about her memories of places she's visited over the years or remembers hearing about.

Alabama:	My friend in Alabama wrecked her new BMW.
Arizona:	Cactus grows everywhere.
California:	All guys in California look like the one I drew.
Colorado:	Doesn't everyone come to Colorado for skiing?
Florida:	I got chased right out of the water by a sand shark.
Georgia:	The only place I know in Georgia is the airport.
Idaho:	Isn't that where all potatoes come from?
Illinois:	The only part of Illinois I've seen is the Sears Tower, but I am a loyal White Sox fan.
Maryland:	My friends and I transported a submarine go-cart to Maryland one year for the world finals for Odyssey of the Mind.
Michigan:	World finals for Odyssey of the Mind in Mount Pleasant one year.
Nevada:	Las Vegas, of course.
New Mexico:	In a little town I saw a boy riding a donkey.
New York:	A cute little worm was found on our dinner table trying to catch a scrap or two.
North Carolina:	I ate the best BBQ ribs in North Carolina.
Utah:	Lake Powell is where I learned to water ski.
Vermont:	Mike, one of my friends, lives in Vermont.
Virginia:	Washington Monument
Washington state:	The Space Needle
Wyoming:	Grandpa scared us to death pretending to be a bear, and later that night a real bear showed up.
Tennessee:	My friend's grandpa made it a game to run over all the frogs on the road.
South Carolina:	This is where the fish bit my big toe.

Obviously, Katie's way of cataloging possibilities for a presentation of her portrait may not be the same as yours, but her version is offered as a possibility.

Portfolio Entry

We've listed many of the same options that we did for the ode to your neighborhood. We encourage you to try something other than what you did for that project. If you think of other options or alternatives for collaborating, consult with your teacher to work out a plan.

- Write a poem, memoir, essay, short story, or series of scenarios to present your map portrait.
- Gather a series of photographs true to your travel experiences throughout the United States.
- Compile a slide show or film presentation from your own photographs or from professional presentations.
- Make a collage using magazines or other appropriate materials to demonstrate aspects of the United States landscape.
- Write song lyrics and original music. You might choose to combine this option with film or slides.
- Sketch or paint a series of artistic renditions on your neighborhood.
- Create a photo essay from photos you've taken during your travels.

Collaborating

With your partner or in a small group, share your ideas and get help on how to proceed once you have a tentative plan. Check with your group periodically as you develop and revise your portrait. Consider the group's advice as you prepare your project for presentation to the class.

Performance

1. Present your portrait to the class or other classes that may be invited as audience. The combination of these presentations should be another example of the mosaic-like nature of our physical and spiritual landscapes.
2. Determine whether your project has potential as a portfolio entry.

Landscapes of Possibility

As a final way of exploring the living landscapes of the United States, we'd like to confront some of the tough questions about how we might preserve and extend our landscapes in the future. The film producer Francis Ford Coppola suggested that "we are the custodians of the land. Others have gone before us and someone will follow after us." Of course, as we have tried to suggest throughout this chapter, those landscapes are both physical and spiritual.

What new or different landscapes do you dream of for yourself, your neighborhood, your state, country, and world? How do you think we might go about ensuring the preservation and protection of our landscapes and, at the same time, move into the future? To begin this exploration, we'd like to suggest two of the landscapes that we believe need our attention: the influx of immigrants or visitors to the country and the preservation of natural resources. How we determine to deal with these issues will have impact on the future geographic and spiritual landscapes of this country.

Taking the Familiar Landscapes Away

It's easy to say—and has been said often—that the United States is a land of immigrants. But, as the past few years have shown, the influx of recent immigrants has created more complexity and fewer clear-cut answers about how diverse people will live together. Think, too, how difficult it is for people new to this country to adjust to physical and spiritual landscapes very different from the ones to

which they are accustomed. As we consider our future landscapes, this adjustment will be one of the issues that we confront.

You've examined diverse neighborhoods and ways of living, and we hope your examination has made you sympathetic to the situations that people might face when confronted with overwhelming and sudden changes of environment. Imagine that you are getting off an airplane that has landed in a place that is completely unlike where you live. The houses look different; people wear different clothes, listen to different music, and eat foods foreign to you. The language is unfamiliar and the people's values and beliefs are different from your own. Visualize a place that is totally foreign to what you know in your own environment.

Log Entry 4

Use a double-entry log format and list, in the left-hand column, all of the things that are different about this new place. In the right-hand column, speculate on how you think you might adjust to these differences. What will you do to get along there? How will you know what to do? Where to go? How will you react to the food? What advice or information will you need and how will you get it? Use your own particular strengths to guide you as you write about how you might adjust.

Collaborating

With your partner or in a small group, share your ideas. Agree on a list of ten priorities for surviving in an unfamiliar place.

Read the following excerpt from a writer who describes how it was to enter and try to live in a place unfamiliar to him. In "I Leave South Africa," Mark Mathabane recounts his experiences of arriving in the United States.

I Leave South Africa

Mark Mathabane

The plane landed at Atlanta's International Airport the afternoon of September 17, 1978. I double-checked the name and description of

Dr. Killion's friend who was to meet me. Shortly after the plane came to a standstill at the gate, and I was stashing Dr. Killion's letter into my totebag, I felt a tap on my shoulder, and turning met the steady and unsettling gaze of the Black Muslim.

"Are you from Africa?" he asked as he offered to help me with my luggage.

"Yes." I wondered how he could tell.

"A student?"

"Yes." We were aboard a jumbo jet, almost at the back of it. From the throng in front it was clear that it would be some time before we disembarked, so we fell into conversation. He asked if it was my first time in the United States and I replied that it was. He spoke in a thick American accent.

"Glad to meet you, brother," he said. We shook hands. "My name is Nkwame."

"I'm Mark," I said, somewhat intimidated by his aspect.

"Mark is not African," he said coolly. "What's your African name, brother?"

"Johannes."

"That isn't an African name either."

I was startled by this. How did he know I had an African name? I hardly used it myself because it was an unwritten rule among black youths raised in the ghettos to deny their tribal identity and affiliation, and that denial applied especially to names. But I didn't want to offend this persistent stranger, so I gave it to him. "Thanyani."

"What does it stand for?"

How did he know that my name stood for something? I wondered in amazement. My worst fears were confirmed. Black Americans did indeed possess the sophistication to see through any ruse an African puts up. Then and there I decided to tell nothing but the truth.

"The wise one," I said, and quickly added, "but the interpretation is not meant to be taken literally, sir."

We were now headed out of the plane. He carried my tennis rackets.

"The wise one, heh," he mused. "You Africans sure have a way with names. You know," he went on with great warmth, "one of my nephews is named after a famous African chief. Of the Mandingo tribe, I believe. Ever since I saw 'Roots' I have always wanted to know where my homeland is."

I found this statement baffling for I thought that as an American his homeland was America. I did not know about "Roots."

"Which black college in Atlanta will you be attending, Thanyani?" he asked. "You will be attending a black college, I hope?"

Black colleges? I stared at him. My mind conjured up images of the dismal tribal schools I hated and had left behind in the ghetto. My God, did such schools exist in America?

"No, sir," I stammered. "I won't be attending school in Atlanta. I'm headed for Limestone College in South Carolina."

"Is Limestone a black college?"

"No, sir," I said hastily.

"What a pity," he sighed. "You would be better off at a black college."

I continued staring at him.

He went on. "At a black college," he said with emphasis, "you can meet with your true brothers and sisters. There's so much you can teach them about the true Africa and the struggles of our people over there. And they have a lot to teach you about being black in America. And, you know, there are lots of black colleges in the South."

I nearly fainted at this revelation. Black schools in America? Was I hearing things or what? I almost blurted out that I had attended black schools all my life and wanted to have nothing to do with them. But instead I said, "Limestone College is supposed to be a good college, too, sir. It's integrated."

"That don't mean nothing," he snapped. "Integrated schools are the worst places for black folks. I thought you Africans would have enough brains to know that this integration business in America is a fraud. It ain't good for the black mind and culture. Integration, integration," he railed. "What good has integration done the black man? We've simply become more dependent on the white devil and forgotten how to do things for ourselves. Also, no matter how integrated we become, white folks won't accept us as equals. So why should we break our backs trying to mix with them, heh? To them we will always be niggers."

I was shaken by his outburst. I longed to be gone from him, especially since he had drawn me aside in the corridor leading toward customs. The Black Muslim must have realized that I was a complete stranger to him, that his bitter tone terrified and confused me, for he quickly recollected himself and smiled.

"Well, good luck in your studies, brother," he said, handing me my rackets. "By the way, where in Africa did you say you were from? Nigeria?"

"No, South Africa."

"South what!" he said.

"South Africa," I repeated. "That place with all those terrible race problems. Where black people have no rights and are being murdered every day."

I expected my statement to shock him; instead he calmly said, "You will find a lot of South Africa in this country, brother. Keep your eyes wide open all the time. Never let down your guard or you're dead. And while you're up there in South Carolina, watch out for the Ku Klux Klan. That's their home. And don't you ever believe that integration nonsense."

He left. I wondered what he meant by his warning. I stumbled my way to customs. There was a long queue and when my turn came the white, somber-faced immigration official, with cropped reddish-brown hair, seemed transformed into an Afrikaner bureaucrat. I almost screamed. He demanded my passport. After inspecting it, he asked to see my plane ticket. I handed it to him.

"It's a one-way ticket," he said.

"Yes, sir. I couldn't afford a return ticket," I answered, wondering what could be wrong.

"Under the student visa regulations you're required to have a return ticket," he said icily. "Otherwise how will you get back home? You intend returning home after your studies, don't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you ought to have a return ticket."

I remained silent.

"Do you have relatives or a guardian in America?"

I speedily handed him a letter from Stan Smith, along with several completed immigration forms indicating that he had pledged to be my legal guardian for the duration of my stay in the United States. The immigration official inspected the documents, then left his cubicle and went to consult his superior. I trembled at the thought that I might be denied entry into the United States. But the one-way ticket, which created the impression that I was coming to America for good, was hardly my fault. Having had no money to purchase a ticket of my own, I had depended on the charity of white friends, and I was in no position to insist that they buy me a return ticket. The immigration official came back. He stamped my passport and welcomed me to the United States. I almost fell on my knees and kissed the hallowed ground.

"Welcome to America, Mark," a tall, lean-faced white man greeted me as I came out of customs. It was Dr. Waller.

His kind voice and smiling face, as he introduced himself and asked me if I had a good flight, raised my spirits. As we walked toward the baggage claim area I stared at everything about me with childlike wonder. I scarcely believed I had finally set foot in *the* America. I felt the difference between South Africa and America instantly. The air seemed pervaded with freedom and hope and opportunity. Every object seemed brighter, newer, more modern, fresher, the people appeared better dressed, more intelligent, richer, warmer, happier, and full of energy—despite the profound impersonality of the place.

"I would like to use the lavatory," I told Dr. Waller.

"There should be one over there." He pointed to a sign ahead which read RESTROOMS. "I'll wait for you at the newsstand over there."

When I reached the restroom I found it had the sign MEN in black and white on it. Just before I entered I instinctively scoured the walls to see if I had missed the other more important sign: BLACKS ONLY or WHITES ONLY, but there was none. I hesitated before entering: this freedom was too new, too strange, too unreal, and called for the utmost caution. Despite what I believed about America, there still lingered in the recesses of my mind the terror I had suffered in South Africa when I had inadvertently disobeyed the racial etiquette, like that time in Pretoria when I mistakenly boarded a white bus, and Granny had to grovel before the irate redneck driver, emphatically declare that it was an insanity "not of the normal kind" which had made me commit such a crime, and to appease him proceeded to wipe, with her lovely tribal dress, the steps where I had trod. In such moments of doubt such traumas made me mistrust my instincts. I saw a lanky black American with a mammoth Afro enter and I followed. I relieved myself next to a white man and he didn't die.

The black American washed his hands and began combing his Afro. I gazed at his hair with wonder. In South Africa blacks adored Afros and often incurred great expense cultivating that curious hairdo, in imitation of black Americans. Those who succeeded in giving their naturally crinkly, nappy and matted hair, which they loathed, that buoyant "American" look were showered with praise and considered handsome and "glamorous," as were those who successfully gave it the permanent wave or jerry curl, and bleached their faces white with special creams which affected the pigmentation.

I remember how Uncle Pietrus, on my father's side, a tall, athletic, handsome man who earned slave wages, was never without

creams such as Ambi to bleach his face, and regularly wore a meticulously combed Afro greased with Brylcreem. Many in the neighborhood considered him the paragon of manly beauty, and women were swept away by his "American" looks.

From time to time he proudly told me stories of how, in the center of Johannesburg, whites who encountered black men and women with bleached faces, Afros, or straightened hair, and clad in the latest fashion from America often mistook them for black Americans and treated them as honorary whites. A reasonable American accent made the masquerade almost foolproof. So for many blacks there were these incentives to resemble black Americans, to adopt their mannerisms and life-styles. And the so-called Coloureds (mixed race), with their naturally lighter skin and straightened hair, not only frequently took advantage of this deception but often passed for whites. But they were rarely secure in their false identity. And in their desperation to elude discovery and humiliation at being subjected to fraudulent race-determining tests like the pencil test (where the authorities run a pencil through one's hair: if the pencil slides smoothly through, one gets classified white; if it gets tangled, that is "positive" proof of being black), they often adopted racist attitudes toward blacks more virulent than those of the most racist whites.

I had sense enough to disdain the practice of whitening one's skin. I considered it pathetic and demeaning to blacks. As for the companies which manufactured these popular creams, they are insidiously catering to a demand created by over three hundred years of white oppression and domination. During that traumatic time the black man's culture and values were decimated in the name of civilization, and the white man's culture and values, trumpeted as superior, became the standards of intelligence, excellence, and beauty.

I left the bathroom and rejoined Dr. Waller at the newsstand. I found him reading a magazine.

"There's so much to read here," I said, running my eyes over the newspapers, magazines, and books. Interestingly, almost all had white faces on the cover, just as in South Africa.

"Yes," replied Dr. Waller.

I was shocked to see pornography magazines, which are banned in South Africa, prominently displayed. The puritan and Calvinistic religion of the Afrikaners sought to purge South African society of "influences of the devil" and "materials subversive to the state and

public morals" by routinely banning and censoring not only books by writers who challenged the status quo, but also publications like *Playboy*.

"So many black people fly in America," I said.

"A plane is like a car to many Americans," said Dr. Waller.

"To many of my people cars are what planes are to Americans."

At the baggage-claim area I saw black and white people constantly rubbing shoulders, animatedly talking to one another, and no one seemed to mind. There were no ubiquitous armed policemen.

"There truly is no apartheid here," I said to myself. "This is indeed the Promised Land."

I felt so happy and relieved that for the first time the tension that went with being black in South Africa left me. I became a new person.

Log Entry 5

- Record your initial impressions. What are your reactions to the differences that Mark notices at the airport? What strengths does he seem to have for coping? Add to your list in Log Entry 4 any new issues that his account introduces.
- Notice that one of the issues raised in this selection is that people often try to change their heritage—by giving up a name, moving to a new place, bleaching or darkening skin, or changing hairstyles. Recall a time when you tried to hide, give up, or alter something that reflects your background. Write about this incident, describing what you changed or tried to change. Examine why you did what you did. What were the outcomes of this attempt?

Collaborating

With your partner or in a small group:

1. Share your initial impressions, questions, and reactions to this selection. Skim back through the account and find the one or

two most memorable parts of Mark's/Thanyani's conversation with Nkwame. How does this conversation challenge his beliefs about the place he expects America to be? After Mark's/Thanyani's arrival at the airport, are his beliefs supported or challenged?

2. Imagine that you could give Mark/Thanyani one piece of advice before he leaves the airport. What would it be?
3. Make a list of examples of intolerance and prejudice that you think are part of what citizens or immigrants must tolerate.
4. List the accomplishments you think have been made to eliminate various forms of prejudice.
5. What priorities would you set for the next generation for solving issues that will arise?
6. Share your lists and priorities with the rest of the class.

Preserving the Natural Resources

Many writers urge their readers to consider the threats posed to our vanishing resources, wildlife, and various ecological systems. There is a growing concern that we are using or abusing our natural resources and not thinking clearly about how to preserve them for future generations. Whether the cause is to protect wetlands, the spotted owl, a particular gully or range land, or to clean up our water or air, attention is focused on what effect we are having on the environment. In the following essay, Marie De Santis focuses on one such threatened species, the salmon.

Last of the Wild Salmon

Marie De Santis

In a stream so shallow that its full body is no longer submerged in the water, the salmon twists on its side to get a better grip with its tail. Its gillplate is torn, big hunks of skin hang off its sides from collisions with rocks, there are deep gouges in its body, and all around for miles to go there is only the cruelty of more jagged rocks and less and less water to sustain the swim. Surely the animal is dying!

And then the salmon leaps like an arrow shot from a bow; some urge and will and passion ignores the animal body and focuses on the stream.

Of all the extremes of adaptation to the ocean's awful toll on the young, none is more mythic in proportion than the salmon's mighty journey to the mountain streams: a journey that brings life to meet death at a point on a perfect circle, a return through miles of narrowing waters to the exact gravel-bedded streamlet of its birth. A journey to spawning and death, so clear in its resemblance to the migrations of the sperm to the egg as to entwine their meanings in a single reflection.

On every continent of the northern hemisphere, from the temperate zone to the arctic, there is hardly a river that hasn't teemed with the salmon's spawn: the Thames, the Rhine, the rivers of France and Spain, Kamchatka and Siberia, Japan (which alone has more than 200 salmon rivers) and the arctic streams of Greenland. From the Aleutians to Monterey Bay, through the broadest byways to the most rugged and narrow gorge, the salmon have made their way home. There are many journeys for which the salmon endure more than 1000 miles.

As soon as the ice melts on the Yukon, the king salmon enter the river's mouth, and for a month, the fish swim against the current, 50 miles a day for a total of 1500. And like every other salmon on its run, the king salmon fasts completely along the way. In other rivers, salmon scale vertical rocks up to 60 feet high, against hurtling waterfalls.

The salmon gets to spawn once in life, and maybe that's reason enough. The salmon's instinct to return to the place of its birth is so unmodifiable and of such purity as to have inspired hundreds of spiritual rites in as many societies of human beings.

The salmon arrives battered and starved, with a mate chosen along the way, and never has passion seemed less likely from two more wretched-looking beings. But, there in the gravel of the streamlet, the female fans out a nest with the sweep of her powerful tail and the male fends off intruders. The nest done, the two fish lie next to each other suspended in the water over the nest; their bodies quiver with intense vibrations, and simultaneously they throw the eggs and the sperm. Compared with millions of eggs thrown by a cod in a stream, the salmon need throw only 2000 to 5000. Despite the predators and other hazards of the stream, these

cold mountain waters are a sanctuary compared with the sea. For the next two or three days, the pair continue nesting and spawning until all the eggs are laid. Then the salmon, whose journey has spanned the ocean and the stream, lies by the nest and dies.

Soon the banks of the streams are stacked with ragged carcasses, and the animals of the woods come down for a feast. The stream lies quiet in the winter's deepening cold. But within a month two black eyes appear through the skin of each egg. And two weeks later, the water is again alive with the pulsing of millions of small fish feeling the first clumsy kicks of their tails. The fingerlings stay for a while, growing on the insects and larvae that have been nurtured by the forest. Then, one day, they realize what that tail is for and begin their descent to the sea, a journey mapped in their genes by the parents they left behind.

The young salmon arrive in the estuary facing the sea, where they linger again and learn to feed on shrimp, small crustaceans and other creatures of the brine. Here, also, their bodies complete an upheaval of internal and external changes that allow them to move on to the saltier sea. These adaptations require such extraordinary body transformations that when the same events occur on the stage of evolution they take millions and millions of years. In the life of the salmon, the changes take place in only a matter of months. One of life's most prohibitive barriers—that between fresh and salt water—is crossed, and the salmon swim back and forth, in and out of the sea, trying it on for size.

Then one day, the youngsters do not return. The stream is only a distant memory drifting further and further back in the wake of time, only different—a memory that will resurrect and demand that its path be retraced.

So accessible is the salmon's life in the stream that more is known about the reproduction of this fish than any other ocean animal. With the ease of placing cameras underwater, there isn't any aspect of this dramatic cycle that hasn't been captured in full color in some of the most spectacular film footage ever made.

But once the salmon enters the sea, the story of its life is a secret as deep and dark as the farthest reaches of the ocean it roams. The human eye with its most sophisticated aids, from satellite to sonar, has never caught more than a glance of the salmon at sea. Extensive tagging programs have been carried out, but they tell us little more than that the salmon is likely to be found anywhere within

thousands of miles of its origins, and even this is only a sliver of the picture because the tags are recovered only when the salmon is caught by fishermen, who work solely within the narrow coastal zone. Along with a few other pelagic fishes, like the tuna, that claim vast stretches of sea for their pasture, the salmon's life remains one of the most mysterious on earth.

Collaborating

With your partner or in a small group:

1. Analyze how this one example of the salmon may have larger implications for other environmental issues.
2. Make a list of what each of you believes are the most important environmental issues facing our country or the world in the next generation. Discuss ways in which you think we have begun or should begin to work on some of the issues you include. What do you think are the sources of tension that lead to conflict about how to preserve resources?
3. Research the most controversial environmental issues in your community. Identify sources of conflict and recommended actions. Describe how these local conflicts fit or do not fit into the environmental issues that are most controversial for the entire country.
4. Share your list with the class.

Taking Action

What does the future hold for the United States and the entire globe? We've asked you to examine this question by exploring two of the issues that will be of central concern as we move toward that future. As a culminating project for this unit, you'll have the opportunity to help younger students face some of these same questions and consider how to look at some of the issues that will affect their

futures. There are probably many ways that you can reach younger children. One of the most accessible will be through writing and drawing, so we ask that you write a story that raises some issue or combination of issues about the future. You might choose to illustrate your story as well. The readers of your story could be preschool, elementary school, or middle school children. Your story should raise the consciousness of these younger students and help them imagine possibilities or suggest actions to consider as ways to protect future landscapes.

There are many possible ways to present your stories, but you might consider fables, picture books, a short story, or a comic book. Science fiction stories are big winners with middle school children. You have many choices, and this might be a collaborative project. The following steps suggest how you might proceed.

Collaborating

In a small group:

1. Decide which future landscapes you want to present to younger students.
2. Determine the genre for your presentation (that is, picture book, short story, comic book) and the age group of the students you hope to reach through your writing.
3. Discuss possibilities for a story in whatever genre, including setting, plot, characters, conflict, and point of view. In what time period will your story be set? Consider possibilities for illustrations, photographs, or other appropriate art.
4. Have individual members of the group draft versions of the story. Come together for group discussions, work on revisions in a collaborative fashion, and proceed with each section of the story in the same way. Write individually, share, piece together, and fill in details. At times, you may prefer to draft collaboratively and have a group member make notes.
5. Share your early drafts with other groups for revision suggestions. If members of the group have younger brothers or sisters, someone might try out the story on the children and get their

advice. When you are satisfied with revisions, type and illustrate the final version.

6. Send or deliver your stories to an elementary or middle school classroom or library. If you can make arrangements to do so, read your stories to the children in their classrooms. Donate the stories to the class library so other children can read them.

A Future in the Making

In another fifty to one hundred years, what stories will be told about the physical and spiritual landscapes of the United States? What songs will be sung? We'd like to end with two poems that will emphasize the richness and diversity of the places we call home. Our hope is that these two poems will help you reflect on all that you have read, discussed, written about, photographed, or sung during this chapter.

I Hear America Singing

Walt Whitman

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong.
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deck-hand singing on the steamboat deck,

The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands,
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown,
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or of the girl sewing or washing.
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,
The day what belongs to the day—at night their party of young fellows, robust, friendly,
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

I, Too

Langston Hughes

I, Too, sing America.
I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll sit at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed,—

I, too, am America.

Building Your Course Portfolio

Review your various projects or pieces of writing from this chapter to choose which piece or pieces you want to revise for your portfolio. Refer to Building Your Course Portfolio at the end of Chapter 1 as you work with your teacher and your group to revise and edit your work.