LIGHTBOX

This exercise was developed in conjunction with Lightbox interviews with Rickey Laurentiis and Maurice Manning. For more information, please see www.lightboxpoetry.com.

The Language of the Landscape

Part I:

Discuss, as a class, what attributes of a landscape might be important details for a writer. How is a landscape evoked on the page? Generate a class list of these items to help guide the rest of the activity.

Part II:

Think of one landscape that was important to your childhood. It might be your hometown, a particular region of the country, or a neighborhood in a city. Write a list below of some of the attributes of that place, using the class list as a guide. Try to appeal to as many senses as possible. The more specific you are, the better.

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Part III:

Now that you've generated some words that describe this important place, think about the language that is specific to that landscape. Are there any words that are only known to those in that environment, to the people who live there, to the culture those people participate in?

You might think about nicknames, local phrases, food items, abbreviations, or private family language. Are there any words other people wouldn't know who are not from there, that you'd find yourself explaining?

Part IV:

Reflect on the lists you have generated today. Brainstorm about how you might weave some of that specific language into a poem. Does this place-specific knowledge suggest any poems that might be useful in exploring the landscapes in your life?