After learning about NWP’s Rural Voices Project, CCWP ISI 2004 fellows brainstormed facets of writing from a “sense of place.” After selecting 4 components: geography, “stuff,” food, and relationships, each response group was asked to develop a collaboratively woven piece describing each person’s own sense of place. The results are shared below. We think you’ll be struck, as we were, by how evocative of place and person just 4 sentences can be.

| Writing from a Sense of Place |
| ~A collaborative oral reading piece by the CCWP ISI 2004 fellows~ |

**Julie**
Geography: Standing by the buckboard, reaching for the boot rail, I pull myself onto the splintered seat and yell, “Ya-a-a ho-o-o-o!”
Stuff: It was 1955 and I stood quivering on the dias of the Ambassador Hotel stage, when Edith Head, MGM’s revered costume designer, announced, “First Place in the Make It Yourself with Wool Contest goes to Tunie Eghoian”
Food: In the summer of 1959 I heard the announcer at the California State Fair shout, “First Place goes to Tunie Eghoian for the Dream Cheesecake.”
Relationship: My second life began September 4th 1967, when Bob and I joined our lives.

**Natalie**
Geography: A thick brown layer of smog through which one could dimly see the Rocky Mountains rising purple and majestic to the west. Mile high country.
Stuff: I had a Monday / Wednesday / Friday dress, and a Tuesday / Thursday dress, but I never knew I was poor.
Food: Artery-clogging glops of creamy gravy pooling in ponds of buttery potatoes, luscious biscuits, & stuffing that stuffed. Atkins would have had a heart attack.
Relationships: More remarkable for the things that never got said. Those indelible bonds held in place by the spaces of silence between us.

**A Sense of Place**
by Team Blue

**Fawn**
Geography: When I was six, I got my tongue frozen to the monkey bars.
Stuff: It takes 20 minutes to take all your winter stuff off when you come back inside.
Food: I had so much salmon I can’t stand it anymore.
Relationships: People really do rub noses as a form of endearment.

**Rob**
Geography: Santa Cruz: Holy Cross. This town sits where the sea and the mountains cross.
Stuff: Santa Cruz: Holy Cross. In my shed, I have a sea kayak for the sea across from my mountain bike.
Food: Santa Cruz: Holy Cross. You can get a good cross section of food in Santa Cruz: from a healthy vegan meal at The Saturn to an obscene deep-fried Twinkie at the Boardwalk.
Relationships: Santa Cruz: Holy Cross. My relationship with my wife of 16 years is at a crossroads.

Erin
Geography: Weathering the harsh winters together gave rise to a jocular solidarity that I have never experienced in California.
Stuff: I lived in the land of mauve and cornflower blue, framed pictures of vegetables and cornucopias, cross-stitched platitudes, wooden cut-out geese with bonnets, cardigans with watermelons appliques sewn on the pockets – no wonder when I took off for California at eighteen, I packed nothing but my journals, my bong and my watercolors.
Food: My mother, who never learned to cook and therefore hated it, or who always hated it and therefore never learned, still had to find a way to put at least two meals a day in front of four children by herself, so our meals were heavy with unspoken accusation and guilt
Relationships: I will never stop being amazed at how completely my sister has forgiven me for all those years of torture.

Michael
Geography: Glyndon, MD with its distinct seasons: spring’s shimmering green spell, summer’s burnished sky, fall’s fading brown duff, barren naked winter.
Stuff: Willow Creek CA Oh how I wish I could still carry my entire world in one backpack.
Food: Arlington, VA was where I recall the warm baked spell of my Grandma’s holiday home.
Relationships: Arcata, CA where my heart was taken into the careful nurturing of my wife’s soul.

Hints of Home

By Team Green

♦ The big orange house with the funky brown shutters towering on the corner of Hillsdale and Cherry.
♦ Green, luxurious fields. Dark, walnut fenceposts. Ducks in the yard around the little green house, the one with see-through holes in the floor my mother covers with furniture.
♦ The North Umpqua River, cascading with trout-filled riffles and rapids, beckons us to come and cast an Elk Hair Caddis Fly.
♦ Six bedroom Victorian on 7439 Church Street where five sisters race up wooden stairs.
♦ 162 Stanton Street. The building next door to the building infested with rats, Lower East Side, NY.
♦ Beer pancakes in the echoey morning at Mount Madonna Park.
♦ Olive oil, garlic, freshly picked basil tossed into a steaming bowl of pasta.
♦ Spicy, salty, savory Putteneasca olives, capers, and anchovy commingle with the red flowing wine.
♦ Eggs, pancakes, bacon, orange juice. Sitting on the counter watching mom cook “breakfast” for dinner.
♦ We gobble down hot, thick stew and buttery French bread.
♦ My shoes! My awesome, amazing shoes, like little candies set up all over my room; colorful, cute, they are the outfit.
♦ I cried when mom put Bunny Boddet in the washing machine, until she came out looking brand new.
♦ My purple bike with the curled up handle bars and cushed-out banana seat riding down Jenkins, with my friend there beside me.
♦ A sixty-year old Douglas fir tree acts as the staging area for fly rods, creols, hip boots, and wet wading shoes.
♦ Clear glass sconces hang from finely wrought iron rings, suspending clusters of scarlet rose buds, deep violet salvia and English lavender.
♦ Steve, my best friend, his dad, Mr. Sumpter, and I sit around the campfire swapping one-liners and fish stories.
♦ 2 fuzzy men: one, little and so cute, black, white, and fuzzy all over; the other much taller. Golden-green eyes smile at me and I know everything will always be OK.
♦ The four of us, each one of the four elements, in conflict and harmony.
♦ Scurrying to my sister’s bed the minute the lights go out.
♦ Scions, wedge and grafting wax in hand, a grandfather walks with his grandson eager to teach an age-old tradition of grafting fruit trees.

A Sense of Place
Team Yellow

Orally choreographed by Shawna
Anissa – Hot pavement under gliding roller-skates
Margie – (PAUSE) Face beaming, hair flying
Anissa – Bikes flying down the bumpy dirt road, skidding to a stop
Margie – at the cool, rocky creek

Susie – (PAUSE) We three kids fought to ride in the backseat of the ’56 mercury
Shawna – With grandma between us, blanket over our laps (PAUSE) the city signs flashing by
Susie – Reading was everywhere
Kimberley – books

Anissa – Magazines
Kimberley – Mail everywhere! You can’t get from the bed to the closet!
Anissa – The messy closet
Margie – (PAUSE) That’s what we called it. (PAUSE) Open its door
Kimberley – To endless treasures
Susie – Contribute
Shawna – Move
Kimberley – And then squash it shut. (PAUSE) Barefoot and open legged

Shawna – How else can we eat sloppy mangoes and liquid watermelon?
Margie – Singing
Anissa – (PAUSE) Strangers under my window
Susie – Residue of a drug trip blending effortlessly with the roar of the train

Kimberley – My train
Shawna – Two little ones (PAUSE) sticky hands, clutching on to the kitchen table
Margie – Eyes open, ears alert, mouth stuffed
Susie – As the banter of four women and one man taught us what life was about

Kimberley – Teatime and Grandma’s
Margie – Grandma, don’t you have chocolate-chip cookies instead of saltines and jelly?
Kimberley – (PAUSE) Grandpa made all the good food of our family (PAUSE) He was its only cook
Susie – Chicken and Dumplings

Margie – Green beans
Shawna – Biscuits
Anissa – Pumpkin pies and peach ice cream
Shawna – Everything had flavor and quality

Margie – (PAUSE) In his food, he could openly demonstrate a love he couldn’t always show his family
Susie – Ice cream was the reward
Anissa – Mountains of it!
Susie – I’d stir and stir it into a milky paste, creating finally a liquid

Anissa – that I fed to my dolls like medicine
Kimberley – (PAUSE) Even at the age of 17
Margie – I had to find refuge in my parent’s bed – losing my memories of a nightmare about death
Kimberley – I caught my breath in between the two warm bodies of my parents

Shawna – (PAUSE) As I’m growing older
Anissa – I’m learning how to say goodbye
Shawna – To the endless pieces of paper that I believed were too valuable to throw away
Margie - Scattered pictures

Kimberley – And half burned incense sticks
Shawna – To remind me of my obligations to people I love
Anissa – (PAUSE) To my baby sister
Susie – (PAUSE) I became a mentor, telling her how beautiful

Anissa – And precious
Susie – Life was
Kimberley – How she should value her mind and body –
Margie – (PAUSE) Even when I didn’t believe this about my own existence

Kimberley – (PAUSE) How beautiful
Shawna – And precious
Anissa – (PAUSE) Life is.

**ISI 2004 Fellows’ Sense of Place**

~by Julie

Nestled around the Monterey Bay, in what has become known as Steinbeck Country, a handful of teachers stepped forward to confront issues of literacy in their classrooms. Traveling to meet together for collaboration and discussion to communicate daily and weekly, this handful of teacher leaders in teams and clusters come from Monterey, Salinas, Santa Cruz, Spreckels, Prunedale, Gilroy, and Aromas to discuss and raise questions about student literacy and ways they can improve the teaching of writing in their classrooms.

Our rhythm is identified by the crops in the field: the strawberries, the lettuce (red leaf, butter and romaine), cauliflower, broccoli, garlic and artichokes. As farm workers gather food for our tables, we gather ideas to sustain our work in the classroom. Their picking and selecting of the fruit and vegetables, a carefully developed science between the earth and nature, ours a careful reading of research about teaching and learning, about theory and practice. Our common goal is to support each other, improve our teaching practice, and improve student performance.