

THE WAY TO RAINY MOUNTAIN:
Place-Based Memories and Native American Literature

Introduction:

N. Scott Momaday's central chapters in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* are divided into three intertwined voices or dimensions (mythical/imaginative, historical/anthropological, personal/familiar). These voices overlap, interact with each other, blend, and challenge traditional Western divisions that have traditionally set apart history, imagination and memory as separate fields of knowledge while often condemning oral stories, oral histories and personal remembrance to an inferior epistemological level. For the Kiowa all of these dimensions interconnect in complex ways and constitute complementary modes of interpretation and remembrance.

Objectives:

- To build meaningful connections between memory, landscape and literature from a socio-cultural and personal perspective.
- To inter-relate several areas of knowledge: geography, history and literature.
- To establish literary and personal connections through ideas or motifs.
- To strengthen our awareness of and empathy towards minority cultures in the United States (and worldwide) while learning about Native American literature, history, and thought.

Steps:

Using Momaday's tryptic model of thought and his concept of storied landscapes:

1. Think of a place that functions (for you) as a site of memory, a place that can trigger ideas, thoughts or revelations, and that you associate with particular hi/stories. You should have a deep connection with this place (it can be physical but also mental).
2. Write three short interrelated pieces (non-fiction, prose or poetry, one paragraph each) that are connected thematically or that establish an association through an idea or motif. You should include a place-based story that is more imaginative, a personal or familiar anecdote, experience or insight, and some historical and/or cultural information that pertains to this idea or place. You can also add an illustration. See where it leads you and have fun with it. You can use Momaday's famous quote on "the remembered earth" as a source of inspiration:

“Once in his life a man ought to concentrate his mind upon the remembered earth. He ought to give himself up to a particular landscape in his experience; to

**look at it from as many angles as he can, to wonder about it, to dwell upon it.
He ought to imagine that he touches it with his hands at every season and
listens to the sounds that are made upon it. He ought to imagine the creatures
there and all the faintest motions of the wind. He ought to recollect the glare of
the moon and the colors of the dawn and dusk."**

Bibliography:

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