

Portraits of the WKU WP
"San Antonio"

The Student:

Senior in college-prep English, Glasgow High School.

The Teacher:

Bonnie Meyer, English teacher grades 9-12, Glasgow High School. This year I'm teaching two levels of seniors (AP and regular) and two levels of sophomores (regular and at-risk). Writing Project 12, 1997.

The Assignment:

Students and I go through a relaxation exercise. Then with lights out and eyes closed, they listen as I prompt them to consider various memories, including specific prompts to recall each of the senses. Next, they record as many recollections as possible in brainstorming. Then we look at models of poems with various structures, including a couple I have written. Then we all draft, and finally Revise, Revise, Revise. This includes peer and teacher conferences with special emphasis on strategies of poetry—precise language and line breaks.

The Text:

San Antonio

City of cultures, colors, languages

Unfortunate people walking the streets, waiting for buses

Hunger in the eyes of children, parents leaving to find new jobs

Houses dirty and needing repairs that cannot be afforded

People knowing we are scared and haunting us all the way home

Caring people helping others, letting them know we care

Beautiful, exciting, and interesting, lights, shows, and people

City of buildings and entertaining streets

Giving smiles, teaching, developing better people, and expanding horizons—

Offering hope for healing the sadness of the poor

Student Commentary: What about this assignment helped me learn to write.

It helped me take two aspects of the same place and show the contrast in them.

Teacher Commentary: What I do to help students learn writing.

Use models to help students see possibilities and that there is not one "right way" to write. I write with them and share my problems, sometimes taking guidance from them. I try to value their successes and help them see weaknesses to make work more effective.