

## Exploring Our Places: Preparation for February 9, 2007

Background: reflect back on the earlier reading from *Place Value*, and then read Ferris's "A Sense of Place." Ferris, who chairs the National Endowment for the Humanities, discusses a "ten-point lesson plan for America"; ideas like his are part of the rich pedagogical tradition behind Our Place in History.

When we gather, we will tell and listen to stories of each other's places. For this experience, the "place" we will focus on are the places in which you, and your students' families, live and work.<sup>1</sup> Make time before our February meeting to develop some talking points so that your story (10 minutes maximum) has narrative depth: it ought to be responsive to the meanings you are drawing from the reading, and also illustrative or evocative of the place you will begin to tell about. This is not a presentation or a speech; it is a personal narrative or story of place.

Show and tell: in telling our stories, each person will also share one "artifact" with the group that holds special significance for your connection to your place. It could be anything, but you need to bring it (or a representation of it) to our meeting on Wednesday. Your entire story might revolve around this artifact, or it may just serve as a prop for opening or closing.

Also, and this may provide some structure for those who want it, please make sure that your story responds to the following questions:

What is the history of the place (a) in terms of culture and community? (b) in terms of geography and environment?

What are the critical issues facing the communities in which you and your students' families live and work?

What "texts"<sup>2</sup> do you know of, or can you discover, that describe or represent the cultural and/or ecological history (including living history) of your community?

What connections can you draw between the study of your place and the larger story of American history?

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<sup>1</sup> If the place you commute to for work is very unlike the community in which *you* live, then focus on and begin to learn about the places where your *students* come from.

<sup>2</sup> Think broadly about texts, e.g., writing, art, artifacts, and other media and forms of expression.