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June/July 2021

WORD ACTIVISTS UNITE!

I want to tell you what forests were like.

I will need to speak in a foreign language.

W.S. Merwin

I barely skim the surface of all the magnificent words available in English when striving to express myself in writing and, for that matter, speaking. It's why I include word-strengthening prompts in my writing practice and in workshops. Landing the word that does justice to what wants to be written, to be said matters, more than we think. English has nearly 172,000 words in the dictionary compared with Russian at 150,000, Spanish at 93,000, and Chinese at 85,000. So many word colors! And I am perhaps only painting with a handful of them. But it's not as though this 172,000 is a constant. Words get bumped, sidelined, and left behind to make way for new ones, according to the vagaries of the shape-shifting world we live in. If you care about words, it's worth paying attention.

I excerpt from a handout that Oregon's former poet laureate Kim Stafford distributed at a writing workshop a few years ago:

When the new edition of the *Oxford Junior Dictionary* was published...A sharp-eyed reader noticed there had been a culling of words concerning nature. Under pressure Oxford University Press revealed a list of the entries it no longer felt to be relevant to modern-day childhood. The deletions included *acorn, adder, ash, beech, bluebell, buttercup, catkin, conker, cowslip, cygnet, dandelion, fern, hazel, heather, heron, ivy, kingfisher, lark, mistletoe, nectar, newt, otter, pasture* and *willow*. The words introduced to the new edition included *attachment, block-graph, blog, broadband, bullet-point, celebrity, chatroom, committee, cut-and-paste, MP3 player* and *voice-mail*.—as reported in "Landspeak" by Robert McFarlane

in *Orion Magazine*.

Kim invited his workshop participants each to list 100 words that we recall but notice are seldom if ever heard or read anymore. I pass his invitation on to you. Naming. Isn't it possible that what ceases being named will cease to exist?

A High Desert float trip, the signature of summer



THIRD ACT

Obit as Writing Prompt

For more information on this unusual writing prompt, check out the May 27th column in "The Source Weekly." Thanks to so many for your encouraging comments on "The Third Act" series on ageing. For the most recent posts [click here](#).

WRITING RANCH WORKSHOPS: IMPORTANT UPDATES!

"Lost in Place"

Writing and Nature Intensive at Summer Lake, Oregon

A Collaboration Between

The Writing Ranch and The High Desert Museum Literary Series

August 12-15, 2021

The **Writing Ranch** and the **High Desert Museum** are offering a unique weekend writing intensive to be held at **PLAYA**, an arts and sciences residency campus located on Summer Lake, Oregon. Daily

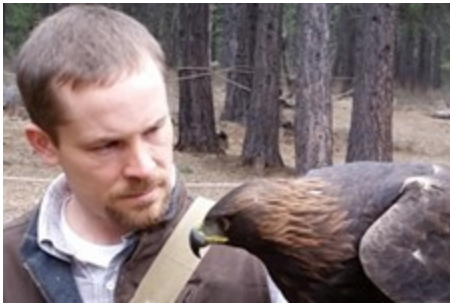
generative writing workshops will be informed and complemented by morning field trips and evening discussions led by guest faculty. Prompts will focus on returning established and emerging poetry and prose writers to the page with renewed commitment and inspiration. [Click here to register!](#)

Cost: \$700 per person all-inclusive.

Register with a deposit of \$350 by July 1, 2021.

Questions can be directed to info@writingranch.com.

FACULTY



Jon Nelson, High Desert Museum curator of wildlife

Jon is a biologist experienced in captive wildlife management, conservation field science, public engagement and natural resources conservation.



Dennis Jenkins, University of Oregon archeologist

Dennis is a research archaeologist, field school supervisor for the Oregon State Museum of Anthropology/Museum of Natural and Cultural History at U of O, and director of the university's Northern Great Basin Field School.

Ellen Waterston, author, founder of the Writing Ranch and instructor at OSU Cascade's Low Residency MFA in Creative Writing.





PLAYA at Summer Lake

Lost in Place

SCHEDULE

Thursday, August 12

5:00 pm – 6:00 pm: Check in

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm: Welcome dinner and packet distribution

Friday, August 13

Breakfast on own in cabins

9:00 am – 9:30 am: Reconnoiter in lodge for writing prompt prior to field trip

10:00 am – 12:30 pm: Jon Nelson leads expedition to the Summer Lake Wildlife Refuge

12:30 pm – 1:30 pm: Lunch in lodge

1:30 pm – 3:30 pm: Writing Workshop with Ellen Waterston

3:30 pm – 5:30 pm: Free time

6:00 pm – 8:30 pm: Dinner and presentation by Dennis Jenkins

Saturday, August 14

Breakfast on own in cabins

9:00 am – 9:30 am: Reconnoiter in lodge for writing prompt prior to field trip

10:00 am – 12:30 pm: Exploration of Paisley Caves with Dennis Jenkins

12:30 pm – 1:30 pm: Lunch in lodge

1:30 pm – 3:30 pm: Writing Workshop with Ellen Waterston

3:30 pm – 5:30 pm: Free time

6:00 pm – 8:30 pm: Lodge Dinner and presentation, reading by Ellen Waterston

Sunday, August 15

Breakfast on own in cabins

9:00 am – 10:30 am: Readings by participants

11:00 am – 12:00 pm: Lunch

12:30 pm: Depart



Peonies

by

Ellen Waterston

Bouquet of living song, pompoms
of gaudy reckless bloom – what fragrant
petticoated pandemonium, what lavish
display of unbounded giving.

Toss your pink mane. Waft your fragrant
jubilee. Sing your anthem of wishes
for all the madcap sweet good
to be...

even as loosed petals
buoyed on a sliver of zephyr
kite briefly high and higher
before drifting to the ground.

The Writing Ranch Presents

Writing Down the Baja 2022



After a long day of writing on Todos Santos.

Left to right: Lori Noack, Jane Delozier, Jillie Richards

Writing Down the Baja is Filling Fast!

February 19-27, 2022

Four of twelve spots are already spoken for at the eleventh annual “Writing Down the Baja”© writing retreat in Todos Santos, BCS, Mexico, so don’t delay! Come make good writing trouble. **Updated information on all 2021 and 2022 retreats is available at www.writingranch.com.**



Photo by Patrick Mitchell

Affrilachian Poet Frank X Walker Featured at Fishtrap 2021

The **34th Annual Summer Fishtrap Gathering July 12-18, 2021** will be anchored by African American award-winning poet Frank X. Walker, who will deliver the event's keynote address in addition to leading a workshop. Walker is the author of eleven titles, his most recent collection released in January, 2021: *Isaac Murphy: I Dedicate This Ride*, written from the perspective of the African American jockey Isaac Burns Murphy (1861-1896). For registration information [click here](#).



Mark your calendars now for the seventh annual Waterston Desert Writing Prize Awards Ceremony, coming September 29 and 30, 2021, 5:30 pm. For information [visit the High Desert Museum website](#).

High Desert Rendezvous



7:00 p.m.

Saturday, August 28, 2021

Sign up now for this fun-filled virtual event and annual fundraiser for the education programs of the High Desert Museum. Info: hdr@highdesertmuseum.org



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PO Box 640, Bend, OR 97709

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