

## *The Spirit(s) of Place*

Emanating from: NEH Eudora Welty Landmarks Workshop  
Laura Young

Grade Level: 4-8

Subject Areas: Language Arts, Social Studies, Visual Arts

Introduction: This lesson is intended to encourage and progress student poetry by using Eudora Welty's photographs as inspiration. This lesson promotes imaginative postulation, lyrical word selection, and an understanding and application of literary and poetic techniques such as mood, figurative language, rhyme, meter, and scheme.

Guiding Questions: What does a picture represent? What do Welty's pictures portray about Mississippi? About the South? How can we create new stories from her pictures?

Learning Objectives: Students will hone their writing skills while learning about Welty and Mississippian and Southern culture. Students will also work to identify the ways in which the written language and visual arts coincide with one another.

Preparation for Lesson:

Welty, Eudora. Photographs. University Press of Mississippi (September 1993)

Internet/library access

Pencil and paper

Dead tree (X-mas ones are great! Cut branches short.), iron bottle tree frame, fake tree, or string (to hang bottles with)

Old bottles (plastic is fine)

Activity 1:

Students can access Welty's photos in her book or at <http://pro.corbis.com/search/searchFrame.aspx>.

Students should choose a picture and make notes about the mood, color, subject, action, etc. After students make notes, they should research the scene depicted in their picture to learn more about Welty, Mississippi, and the South.

Example: "Tomato Packers' Recess"-Labor/Economy of MS in 1930's/tenant farming/Depression

Activity 2:

Using their pre-research notes along with their research findings, students should write short poems (couplets, quatrains, or free verse) Students can work with Yeats' poems (as Welty was a fan) to understand poetic techniques. For instance, her short story "June Recital" uses "The Song of Wandering Aengus."

Example: The packers sit; they're restless for a breeze  
But all the while thank God there was no freeze.

Activity 3:

As a culminating art project, students will make a Mississippian bottle tree. Students should paste and seal (Mod Podge works wells) their poems and photos to a bottle. Students may swirl paint around the inside for color if desired. The more creative/funded the class is, the fancier your students can get with their project. Slip finished bottles over branches and your school/classroom will have a Welty photo inspired bottle tree!

Enrichment/Extension:

Ask students to take pictures around their city/state, contemplating what makes it unique. Students should write inspired poems or narratives about their own photographs. Then, students should choose an object that represents their city/state and incorporate their poems with the object in a culminating art project.

Example: Austin-Live music capital of the world-Mod Podge an old guitar with student pictures/poems.