

# The Power of Place in Writing and Art

## Mary Hall Surface Sample Writing Prompts



Jasper Francis Cropsey, *Autumn on Hudson*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

### **Exercise Two:**

- Imagine a character walking through this landscape.
- The character can be you or someone else, real or imagined.
- Give your character a place to start with a destination in mind.
- Write in third person.
- Write in present tense.
- Capture the setting through the **action** of the character **experiencing the place**.
  - “She balances on the sharp edge of the boulder, longing to break the glass of the still pool with her toe.”
  - Rather than:
    - “Rough-edged boulders line the glassy pool.”
- Include specific and varied sensory details.

- Be **in the moment** of **this place**. Try not to get caught up in plot or back- story.  
*While your character can encounter the other humans, I encourage you, for the purposes of this exercise, to focus on their interactions with the physical and natural world.*
- Explore how **the setting** impacts the character – emotionally and physically.

**Exercise Three:**

- Your character has returned to this place.
- It is now 10, 20, or 30 years later.
- You decide the last time s/he was there. Could be 30 years, could be yesterday.
- S/he is remembering the walk from your first story, focusing on the three specific interactions you identified.
- Write in third person.
- Write in past tense.
- Include their relationship to autumn

OR

- You are a completely different character (go as opposite as possible in age, gender, class, experience, world view from your first character.
- Now this character encounters all of the same aspects of the setting as character #1.
- How do those interactions change?

OR

- Focus on character's relationship to the ideas of transcendentalism – relationship of humanity to nature – to nature as an expression of the divine and a means to understanding it.