

Image Journal

by Sari Wilson

Genre(s): Personal Narrative

Grades: 6-12

Common Core Learning Standards: "Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique." (College and Career Readiness Standards for Writing//ELA 6-12)

Workshop Objective: To understand and explore image and symbolism as organic to the writing process.

Guiding Questions:

What makes a resonant image?

What is the difference between image and symbol? How does one become the other?

As writers, how can we gather images from the world around us and from our inner lives (dreams, etc.)?

Lesson:

Direct Teach: Introduce self and talk about how I started writing creatively. Ask them if they have any questions about the short stories they started over weekend. Transition to importance of journals for me in writing. How many keep journals? Why? What kind? 10 min

Introduce image journal idea (see "What is an Image Journal?" below)—to build a bank of images that you can use for your writing.

Introduce image journal as about COLLECTING from life. OBSERVING life in a different way. Discuss how what you can collect can become MATERIAL for your creative writing. (Sculptor analogy) Most of my fiction has grown out of these journals.

Ask them to volunteer some images they collected. Elicit that images are rooted in OBSERVATIONS. What is an image journal? Go over description of image journal.

Guided Practice/Modeling:

Read excerpt of my short story “**The Sightseer**” aloud. Ask students, What images stayed with you? Resonated? Which images seem to carry more weight than others? Given the title of this story, which images might carry more weight?

Independent Activity/Group Activity:

Lead them through writing exercise where they describe their observations in detail. Then, have them read over and underline images. With a partner, have them share some of their observational writing and some of the images that resonated. As a group, which images might make their way into your story? Which have potential to become symbols?

Continuation Practice for Classroom Teacher and/or HW: Have students keep/share Observation/Image journals. Explore ways to have them use these as material for their creative writing.

Sari Wilson is a T&W teaching artist and a creative writer who works in fiction, nonfiction, and comics.

What is an image journal?

An **image journal** is a journal where you record images that you encounter in the course of the day. You can jot them down at the moment or at the end of the day.

Here is the technique:

Write down **observations**. They can be of anything really—person, place, or thing. Even an idea or feeling. Use just a few words, then underline whatever it is you want to observe.

Take 5 minutes to **describe** each of these things in as much detail as possible. What color, shape, texture is it? How does it smell, taste? Etc. If it is a feeling, what are the effects on your body?

When you are finished with your observations, read over what you have written. Underline any **images** that jump out at you. Do you have more questions about it or the images that came out of it? What fictional possibilities does it suggest?

You can write the underlined images in a separate list or just look them over.

Ponder your images. See which ones will float to the surface.

-Which ones stay with you and interest you?

-Which ones do you have questions about?

-Which ones may need more excavating?

-Which ones might make their way into your work? Which ones suggest a possible new piece?

The idea is that you are creating the space between yourself and your lived experience—observing your experience. It's here that writing grows. - *Sari Wilson*