Consider your own journal writing as you read the following texts. They will help you to begin thinking about our next writing form, in which, you will explore a place that fills you with feeling. In other words, a place you identify as holy or sacred.

**Holy Place**

*Holy: Worthy of spiritual respect or devotion; inspiring awe or reverence; sacred – deeply personal and subjective to self – fundamental, gut level*

I belong there. I have many memories…
I have learned and dismantled all words in order to draw from them
A single world: Home

~Mamoud Darwish

The following passages reflect examples of “holy place” writing. Read them carefully and annotate the text.

He thought his happiness was complete when, as he meandered aimlessly along, suddenly he stood by the edge of a full-fed river. Never in his life had he seen a river before—this sleek, sinuous, full-bodied animal, chasing and chuckling, gripping things with a gurgle and leaving them with a laugh, to fling itself on fresh playmates that shook themselves free, and were caught and held again. All was a-shake and a-shiver—glints and gleams and sparkles, rustle and swirl, chatter and bubble. The Mole was bewitched, entranced, fascinated. By the side of the river he trotted as one trots, when very small, by the side of a man who holds one spellbound by exciting stories; and when tired at last, he sat on the bank, while the river still chattered on to him, a babbling procession of the best stories in the world, sent from the heart of the earth to be told at last to the insatiable sea.

~Kenneth Graham

I TOUCH TREES, as others might stroke the fenders of automobiles or finger silk fabrics or fondle cats. Trees do not purr, do not flatter, do not inspire a craving for ownership or power. They stand their ground, immune to merely human urges. Saplings yield under the weight of a hand and then spring back when the hand lifts away, but mature trees accept one’s touch without so much as a shiver. While I am drawn to all ages and kinds, from maple sprouts barely tall enough to hold their leaves off the ground to towering sequoias with their crowns wreathed in fog, I am especially drawn to the ancient, battered ones, the survivors.

~Scott Russell Sanders

The lodge is less than I expected. Imagining an enormous log house, I am surprised to see a waist high leather wigwam, barely 10 feet in diameter. I lift the flap and crawl inside, scratching
my knees on the stiff straw meant to keep us off the completely frozen ground. Once everyone is inside, the blazing rocks known as Grandfathers to the Blackfeet, are placed inside a central pit with the help of two deer antlers. The flap to the lodge rolls shut and full light of the outside world is replaced by the dull glow of the Grandfathers. An elder sprinkles sweetgrass and tobacco on the rocks and the air is suddenly thick with a musty aroma. Without warning water is thrown into the central pit, and steam billows up as the world becomes completely dark. A collective dull hum rises as people begin to meditate and pray; the lodge is a grandfather lost in thought.

~Brandon

Part 1: Thinking about structure and content…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do you notice about your own writing?</th>
<th>What do you notice about the holy place writing?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Part 2
With your group, consider what similarities and differences you observed in your own writing and the texts you read. Prepare to report out what all of the writing has in common so that we can create an anchor chart.

Part 3
Find your new group,– read and annotate your assigned text individually and then, revisit the T-chart with your group. What additional observations can be made about the writing? If time allows, read the passage under yours and evaluate again. Share out to update anchor chart.
“My world then – silent, soft, and vegetable-like in its vulnerability, subject to the powerful whims of others, diurnal, beginning with the pale opening of light on the horizon each morning and ending with the sudden onset of dark at the beginning of each night – was both a mystery to me and the source of much pleasure: I loved the face of a gray sky, porous, grainy, wet, following me to school for mornings on end, sending down on me soft arrows of water; the face of that same sky when it was a hard, unsheltering blue, a backdrop for a cruel sun; the harsh heat that eventually became part of me, like my blood; the overbearing trees (the stems of some of them the size of small trunks) that grew without restraint, as if beauty were only size, and I could tell them all apart by closing my eyes and listening to the sound the leaves made when they rubbed together; and I loved that moment when the white flowers from the cedar tree started to fall to the ground with a silence that I could hear, their petals at first still fresh, a soft kiss of pink and white, then a day later, crushed, wilted, and brown, a nuisance to the eye; and the river that had become a small lagoon when one day on its own it changed course, on whose bank I would sit and watch families of birds, and frogs laying their eggs, and the sky turning from black to blue and black to blue, and rain falling on the sea beyond the lagoon but not on the mountain that was beyond the sea. It was while sitting in this place that I first began to dream about my mother; I had fallen asleep on the stones that covered the ground around me, my small body sinking into this surface as if it were feathers.” (17) Kincaid

“Imagine a ruin so strange it must never have happened. First, picture the forest. I want you to be its conscience, the eyes in the trees. The trees are columns of slick, brindled bark like muscular animals overgrown beyond all reason. Every space is filled with life: delicate, poisonous frogs war-painted like skeletons, clutching in copulation, secreting their precious eggs onto dripping leaves. Vines strangling their own kin in the everlasting wrestle for sunlight. The breathing of monkeys. A glide of snake belly on branch. A single-file army of ants biting a mammoth tree into uniform grains and hauling it down to the dark for their queen. And, in reply, a choir or seedlings arching their necks out of rotted tree stumps, sucking life out of death. This forest eats itself and lives forever” (1). Kingsolver
“Maycomb was an old town, but it was a tired old town when I first knew it. In rainy weather the streets turned to a red slop; grass grew on the sidewalks, the courthouse sagged in the square. Somehow, it was hotter then: a black dog suffered on a summer’s day: bony mules hitched to Hoover carts flicked flies in the sweltering shade of the live oaks in the square. Men’s stiff collars wilted by nine in the morning. Ladies bathed before noon, after their three-o’clock naps, and by nightfall were like soft teacakes with frostings of sweat and sweet talcum. People moved slowly then. The ambled across the square, shuffled in and out of the stores around it, took their time about everything. A day was twenty-four hours but seemed longer. There was no hurry…” (10) Lee

“May in Ayemenem is a hot, brooding month. The days are long and humid. The river shrinks and black grows gorge on bright mangoes in still, dustgreen trees. Red bananas ripen. Jackfruits burst. Dissolute bluebottles hum vacuously in the fruity air. Then they sun themselves against clear window panes and die, fatly baffled in the sun. The nights are clear, but suffused with sloth and sullen expectation. But by early June the southwest monsoon breaks and there are three months of wind and water with short spells of sharp, glittering sunshine that thrilled children snatch to play with. The countryside turns an immodest green. Boundaries blur as tapioca fences take root and bloom. Brick walls turn mossgreen. Pepper vines snake up electric poles. Wild creepers burst through laterite banks and spill across the flooded roads…” (1)

Black pebbles and the ancient gray cinders the mountain had thrown poked into his backbone. He closed his eyes but did not sleep. He felt cold gusts of wind scattering dry oak leaves in the grass. He listened to the cowboy collect tobacco juice in his mouth and the squirting liquid sound when he spat. He was aware of the center beneath him; it soaked into his
body from the ground through the torn skin on his hands, covered with powdery black dirt. (201)

The sun was behind the clouds, and the air was cool. There were blue-bellied clouds hanging low over the mountain peaks, and he could hear thunder faintly in the distance. He walked north…only the sky had changed, washed clear of the dust and haze which had swirled off the red clay flats the summer before. He could smell wild flowers growing in the weeds and grass beside the road, and he heard the bumblebees and the smaller bees sucking the blossoms. The flowers were all colors of yellow that day—silky yellow petals like wild canary feathers, and blossoms as dark as the center of the sun. (220) Silko

Holy Place
PART I: Choose a place that fills you with feeling—excitement, awe, dread, joy, and describe—by showing and not telling—what does it look, smell, feel, sound like and why is it so personally significant to you. Map out the location with specific sensory details. When we concentrate on place and describe the world around us we think about our orientation to the world. In so doing, you will reveal something of who you are, your attitudes, your hopes, fears.

Part II: Make a word map of the objects that are found here. Include a minimum of ten items.
Part III: Star the items you want to include in your description. Pair with your writing partner and with their help – think of 4 descriptors for each item you starred. Example: staircase – wooden, steep, rickety, steps too short, descending. If you need to, repeat this process until you have a sense of the place and your connection to it.

Part IV: Draft/create your own composition that represents what is important to you about a place of your choosing. Remember this could be a place of awe and wonder, or of fear, or of another emotion of your choosing, but you should have some connection to the place you are writing about. You can choose to emulate one of the pieces you read if that helps you to get started, but remember that the specifics of your place (setting) should be included. Your piece should be detailed so that the reader can feel a connection to your holy place and understand its significance to you. You might consider this a paragraph that describes a setting, but remember the key is for the reader to grasp the relevance it has to you – for some emotion to be evoked.

Some tips:
1. Be as specific as possible
2. Add a metaphor – your place is _______what?
3. What do you feel when you are in your holy place?
4. Remove any obvious figurative language. Yes, a winter mountaintop is cold but how does that reveal your holy place? What is the cold that you feel?