

PROMPT #2

Place and Identity



“Summer at Blue Creek, North Carolina”

Time and place fuse in memory into an identity that often feels specific, limited in time and contained. Who were we in middle school? In our first apartment?

In his short poem, “Summer at Blue Creek, North Carolina,” poet Jack Gilbert explores the mysteries of time and place in his recall of a single task that time has rescued, left to stand alone and represent that entire chapter of his life.

As time passes, we can be left with snippets of memory, cinematic remnants of an age, grounded in place. As more time passes, those memories may lose brilliance and intensity, become an album of old photos in our heads. Still, like Jack Gilbert, they are something to hold onto, even if only one memory reel remains, even if it is limited to an observation of the exterior world/place and unable to access one’s internal experience.

Prompt:

Write a poem that selects a single memory as a stand-in for a time and place (even if you have more than one memory of that experience – pick the one that’s most vivid.) Share it and characterize it. Is the memory a tease? Are you puzzled about why your brain has chosen *that* memory and forgotten others? Do you cherish the memory? Or are you haunted by it?

Length:

Allow the length of the poem to develop organically.

READ “Summer at Blue Creek, North Carolina,”