



Writing America: Literary Landmarks from Walden Pond to Wounded Knee (A Reader's Companion)

Shelley Fisher Fishkin

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American novelist E.L. Doctorow once observed that literature “endows places with meaning.” Yet, as this wide-ranging new book vividly illustrates, understanding the places that shaped American writers’ lives and their art can provide deep insight into what makes their literature truly meaningful.

Published on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the Historic Preservation Act, *Writing America* is a unique, passionate, and eclectic series of meditations on literature and history, covering over 150 important National Register historic sites, all pivotal to the stories that make up America, from chapels to battlefields; from plantations to immigration stations; and from theaters to internment camps. The book considers not only the traditional sites for literary tourism, such as Mark Twain’s sumptuous Connecticut home and the peaceful woods surrounding Walden Pond, but also locations that highlight the diversity of American literature, from the New York tenements that spawned Abraham Cahan’s fiction to the Texas pump house that irrigated the fields in which the farm workers central to Gloria Anzaldúa’s poetry picked produce. Rather than just providing a cursory overview of these authors’ achievements, acclaimed literary scholar and cultural historian Shelley Fisher Fishkin offers a deep and personal reflection on how key sites bore witness to the struggles of American writers and inspired their dreams. She probes the global impact of American writers’ innovative art and also examines the distinctive contributions to American culture by American writers who wrote in languages other than English, including Yiddish, Chinese, and Spanish.

Only a scholar with as wide-ranging interests as Shelley Fisher Fishkin would dare to bring together in one book writers as diverse as Gloria Anzaldúa, Nicholas Black Elk, David Bradley, Abraham Cahan, S. Alice Callahan, Raymond Chandler, Frank Chin, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Countee Cullen, Frederick Douglass, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Jessie Fauset, William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Allen Ginsberg, Jovita González, Rolando Hinojosa, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Lawson Fusao Inada, James Weldon Johnson, Erica Jong, Maxine Hong Kingston, Irena Klepfisz, Nella Larsen, Emma Lazarus, Sinclair Lewis, Genny Lim, Claude McKay, Herman Melville, N. Scott Momaday, William Northup, John Okada, Miné Okubo, Simon Ortiz, Américo Paredes, John P. Parker, Ann Petry, Tomás Rivera, Wendy Rose, Morris Rosenfeld, John Steinbeck, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Henry David Thoreau, Mark Twain, Yoshiko Uchida, Tino Villanueva, Nathanael West, Walt Whitman, Richard Wright, Hisaye Yamamoto, Anzia Yezierska, and Zitkala-Ša.

Leading readers on an enticing journey across the borders of physical places and imaginative terrains, the book includes over 60 images, and extended excerpts from a variety of literary works. Each chapter ends with resources for further exploration. *Writing America* reveals the alchemy through which American writers have transformed the world around them into art, changing their world and ours in the process.

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