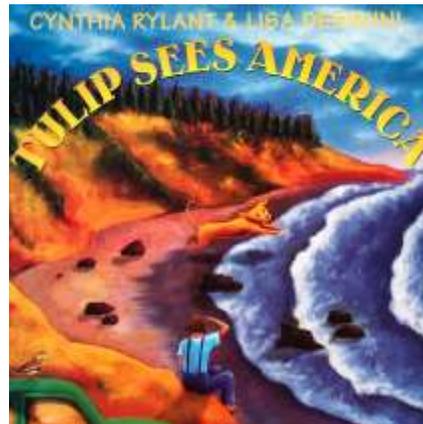


Writing Recipe: There is No Place Like My Favorite Place



Cynthia Rylant's picture book, *Tulip Sees America*, is the inspiration for this writing recipe. It's a story about a young man and his dog who travel across the United States, seeing our country with fresh eyes. The illustrations, by Lisa Desimini, are amazing and vibrant.



Rylant is one of my favorite writers, and she often repeats one golden line her picture books. In this book, the main character visits amazing places, describes the place, and ends the descriptions with a repeated sentence structure like this:

"There are no farms like Iowa's."

"There are no skies like Nebraska's."

"There is no wind like Wyoming's."

Right away, I had an idea. Somehow, I wanted to use Rylant's sentence structure in a piece of my own. I knew her sentence would get me started fast. I asked myself, "What are some of my favorite places?"

Right away I thought of my big favorite places. Tuolumne Meadows and Mammoth and the Grand Canyon and Zion National Park, but for some reason, on the day I picked up my pen to write about a favorite place, I thought of Snapper Jack's Taco Shack. What? I was surprised.

Maybe I was hungry for tacos? Maybe I was missing my friend and remembered all our Friday visits to Snapper Jack's when we were teaching together? I've learned to let the surprise take me where I'm supposed to go. That's one of the best things about writing.

And so here's my piece about Snapper Jack's, inspired by Cynthia Rylant's *Tulip Sees America*:

Snapper Jack's Taco Shack in Ventura

Beach Boys blaring.

Surfboard tables. Salty chips.

Cool sodas. Crispy tacos.

Breeze coming off the ocean.

Once a week lunchtime treat.

Twenty minutes before lunch, I'd call in the order. I made the phone call from my classroom. Telling my students, "Don't listen. This is a very private and very important phone call." Of course, that got every fifth grader's attention. "We'd like two potato tacos. Two fish tacos. Two Diet Cokes. For Lorrie and Barbara." Before our students reached the cafeteria, we were already buckled up and on the road.

One week I'd snag our favorite table while Barb got the food. The next week, we'd switch jobs, doing whatever we could to squeeze precious time out of our too short lunch.

Finally, time to relax. Two friends, close as sisters, called to teach, sharing dreams and challenges and stories and lives over tacos. Conversations too big for one short lunch.

There is no place like Snapper Jack's in Ventura.

If this is a recipe you'd like to write, here are the fast and easy instructions:



From the Kitchen of Mrs. Tom

There is No Place Like My Favorite Place

1. Think of a favorite place.
2. Write a list of phrases that describe your place.
See my sample above.
3. Then, write a micro-story about a memory from that place.
4. End your piece with...**There is no place like....**

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If you or your kids try this recipe, I'd love to read your masterpieces. Feel free to share them in the comments, or email me, LorrieTom@lorriet.com. I promise to write back and let you know what lines I love the most.

Happy writing and happy thinking about places *you* love the most.