

Write Anywhere!

(by Dan Rosenberg)

The blank page is the perennial terror of the writer. Whether you write by hand, on a typewriter, or on a computer, most often you're staring at a white, rectangular void. But many writers carry around scraps of paper instead of notebooks. There is liberation in unconventional spaces, and where you write has a tremendous impact on what you write. This week I want you to write a poem somewhere other than on a blank piece of paper. Do NOT write a poem as you normally do and transcribe it to a new medium; you must compose the poem on this unconventional space. Note: I'm not condoning graffiti, or any other illegal activity, and for the purposes of this assignment I'm

going to require that the poem be easy to copy for class discussion. (But if you decide to, say, chalk the sidewalk and then take a picture to hand in, that'd be lovely.) Be prepared to discuss how the space you chose to write in impacted your writing process.

I find this exercise to be particularly interesting because it raises young writers' awareness of their own process and assumptions. Students who chose to write around the surface of a CD discovered that they couldn't create lines, and this messed with their customary rhythms. A student who carved a poem into his closet door found revision to be singularly difficult. Lines get longer in wider spaces, and in tight spaces, the poems' endings tended to be more compressed

than the beginnings. The discussions about this process, and what they learned about themselves as writers, proved to be fascinating. And it was fun to see what people came up with. A personal favorite: One student wrote a poem on her bedsheet, and the last line was on her own arm, so she had to spread the sheet on the floor and lay there for the class to read it.