
EDU 626: Writing Development and Instruction Department of Literacy, Language, and Culture

Spring 2024

EDU 626: Writing Development and Instruction

EDU 626, University of Southern Maine

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Teachers as Writers

In the Masters of Science in Literacy Education at USM, we offer EDU 626: Writing Development and Instruction. During the seven modules for this asynchronous course, practicing teachers, literacy interventionists, and instructional coaches read peer-reviewed research, discussed best practices in writing education, and kept a field notebook of their own writing. Graduate students composed poems, personal narratives, and other writing based on provocations in our text: Keri Smith's *How to be an Explorer of the World: Portable Life Museum*. It is important to note that the graduate students were given a choice in their topics and they each selected their favorite piece for publication.

Mindy Butler, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor of Literacy Education

Cathy Adamo

The Turtle Shell

In a mountainous Appalachian forest amid the dappled sunlight, nestled among the pines and the dogwoods and the towering kudzu creatures, I found a discarded treasure—the shell of an Eastern Box Turtle. It fits in my hand. Its surface is dark and weathered. Intricate yellow lines and shapes and patterns are painted upon its domed canvas. It whispers reminders of walking through life slowly, paying attention, listening, breathing in, noticing beauty. It tells a story of a life. A quiet existence among the rich vegetation, under a lush canopy of trees, beneath a vast blue and foggy sky. It conjures memories of the forest itself. The earthy fragrance of pine resin, crisp air, and the musty damp leaves and twigs underfoot. It brings to mind solace and peace and the mysteries of nature. My mind returns to that special, beautiful land where a piece of my heart remains.

Megan Allen

'Joe'

I am a part of most people's everyday life, and very much routine. There are stores dedicated to the sales of me. I can be flavorful, bold or weak. I give a boost, invoke happiness, provide energy. I begin as a bean, become grinds and end up as a liquid. I take the form of whatever is holding me and I will often provide warmth to my consumer. I also can be chilled, served over ice and provide refreshment on the hottest of days. I am a drug, but am widely accepted. People joke about injecting me as they would an intravenous drug. I can be the connection on a first date, or an easy way to say goodbye. I can be enjoyed in solitude, or with a crowd. I am versatile in a way that many items strive for, but will never accomplish.

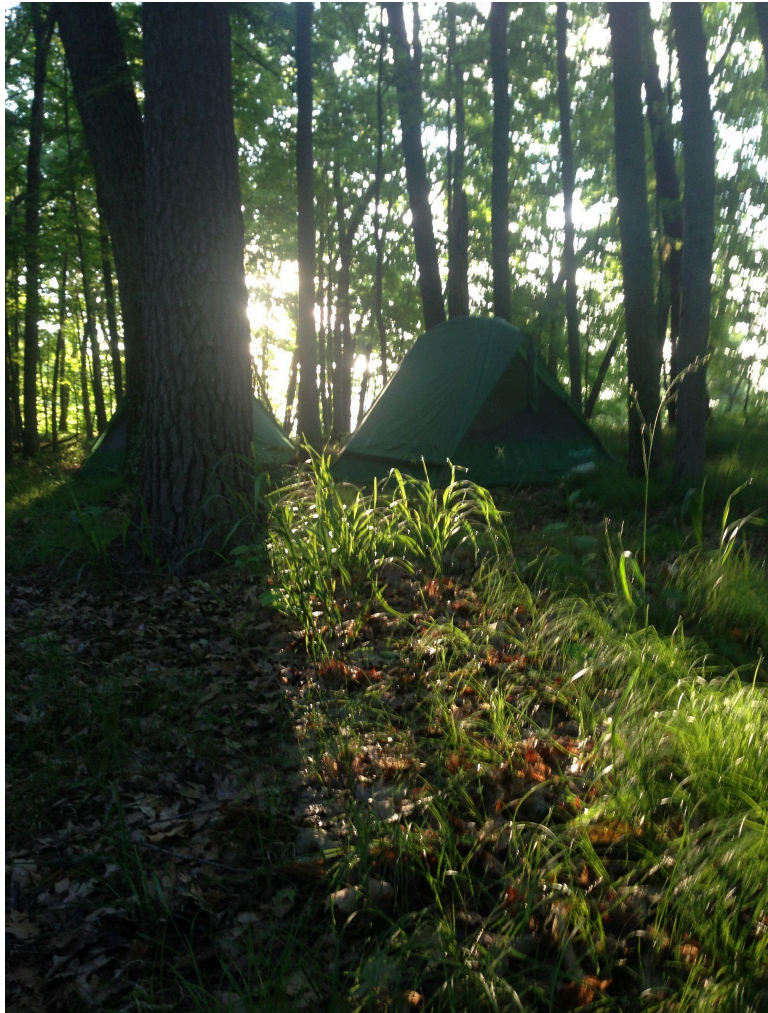
Jessie Bennhoff

The Bones

The sage floats sweetly, carried on the air that swirls around you, settling dust between your grooves. Did it smell as sweet when it hit your nose and swam through your lungs? A life spent learning and conforming to the rhythm of the land; a wild existence in harmony with the world building up around you. A world that marches, marches, marches on in search of more. Always more. But you were born with an understanding of your role in it all. An understanding that many so desperately seek and many more choose to ignore. Days spent burrowing into the red dirt where your bones now rest. Creating spaces where others may find safety. Offering your body to those that needed you to survive. A willing participant in a cycle that favors no one and benefits all.

Susannah Boersma

All the currents of
light cannot approach the throne:
fresh fount at seven



A giggle breaks up
the punctual quiet. It's
time to crack some eggs

Carmen Caterina

This Morning

I measure time by my dog's first barks. The first one, the quietest one, is the shy reacquaintance of noise with the night's fading silence: 6:37am. The next is more guttural, a tenor clearing his throat on stage before the first act: 6:37:08 am. Then a pause— *Did you hear me?* A quick yap, piercing and dry and urgent, breaks the pause: 6:37:53 am. Next comes the thwack of his tail on the ribs of his metal crate as I rise from the couch and walk to him, hushing him as I go. How perverse, the message behind this silencing: *You can not start your day until you show you aren't excited for it.* Still, he quiets. Crate open, the nails of his front paws tap the wooden floor. His eyes are wet with sleep; black trails of moisture map his dreams, mat his fur. Three seconds with his chest to the floor and his back hips in the air are all he needs to start his day. Here, mouth wide, something like a yawn escapes. A high pitched sigh, a quick release: 6:40:02am. And then he is off, and fast. First to the toys left on the floor when the sky turned black, then to the couch. How nice to find everything exactly as it was, the remains of the everyday right where we left them, beckoning us to play, taste, touch, chew, bark, worship.

Becky Champagne

“Sunset”

The sun sets slowly
Painting the sky in soft pink
Dripping on the pond

Cristal Christensen

The Trip

An adventure never imagined. A place I never thought of visiting. New bands glittering. Holding hands ready to celebrate. Warmth poured down over me. Eyes closed soaking it in. Sandals dangling from my fingers. The first touch causes tingling with happiness. A softness never felt before. Bluest blues lapping gently in front of me, whispering come closer. Toes dipping. No shock of freezing like home. Only a calm embrace. Lulling you into a dream-like state. The tiniest fish jumping and nibbling on my legs. Hiding beneath the powder I spy a delicate treasure. A twisted tail with an opening full of promise. Smooth and rough all at the same time. Pinks, purples, and the purest white draw me in. All noise from the surrounding chairs ceases to exist. Gently holding it up to listen. The waves calling out, an echo brought to life. A fortune more valuable than gold. Wrapped securely to travel home. Days pass quickly. Full of exciting adventures. Atv's racing down a dune. Laughter and screams mingle. Ruins, hundreds of years old, next to a hot spring, brought to life by a storyteller. Light shone through the stained glass windows of the smallest church. Visited for its calming presence. Horses galloping along the shoreline. Days passed in a flash. A plane ready for takeoff. Memories unpacked and put on a shelf. Months and then years go by. Bands no longer sparkle but are thrown away. Daily reminders of what once was. Bringing the past into the present. Listening for what the future will hold. A new beginning. A new adventure calling.

Sheila Conlan

The Uke

Wrapped up with a big red bow
Eagerly waiting to be given
And received.

An unwrapping, an unveiling
An anxiously anticipated arrival
A welcomed acceptance.

YouTube videos accompanied by
turning of knobs and listening to the tuner.
sounds are matched
each string is given a green light to GO
Simple strums,
halting fingers fumbling into place
turning into simple songs.

Life and love vibrating on each string.
Songs learned and repeated and shared.
Kids singing and dancing and clapping and laughing.
A singular instrument jam session.
It is joyful.
Repeat,
Repeat,
repeat.

Until-
Caught up in the joy, the energy, the improvisation
The uke gets passed around and lands in little hands.
Little hands bang and pluck too hard and too long and too far.
Too much.
Ouch.

The strings fail to be tuned.
The songs fail to be carried.
The uke sits and waits.
Days, weeks, months and years.

A birthday surprise
Googly eyes.
Now, it sees and waits and hopes.



And watches the kids grow up
And forget.

Angie Green



Family

Shared laughter and love,
Moments cherished, happy hearts,
Family, treasure.

Church Camp — Emily Hanna

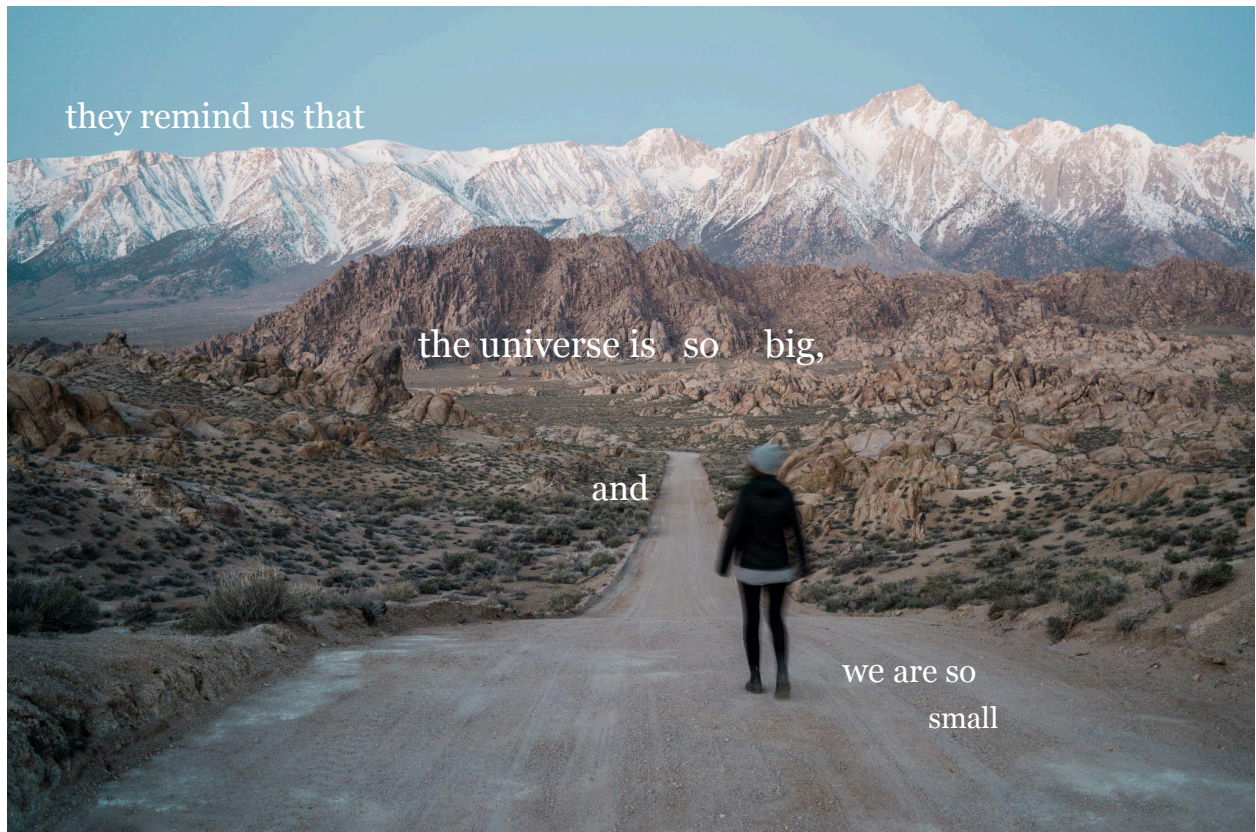
Blue ripples run through
dreams and nightmares of summers
long past but present

Greatest Place on Earth
my Elysium, heaven
your memory rests

Exiled from the land
mountains behind my eyelids
eternal in my veins

We can never truly leave.

insignificant?
emily harriman



Lavender Sea Glass

Nicole Hartwell

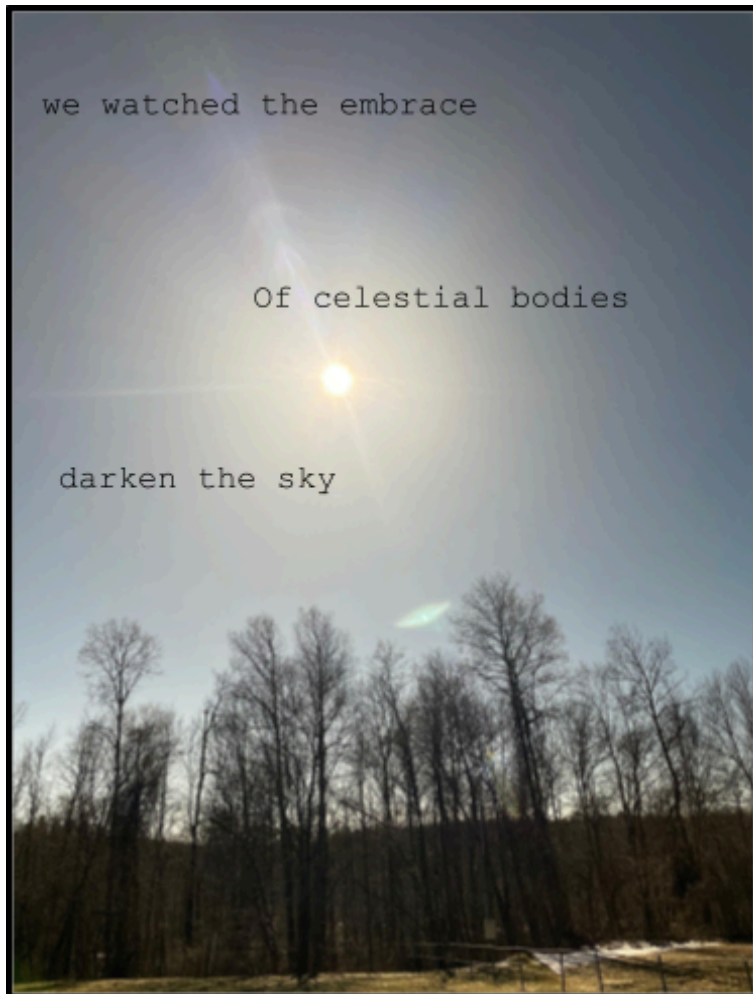
Up, down, up, down, tumbling through salty water. Darkness and somber. The restless tide is abandoning the shore. Down the lavender sea glass floats through abundant, grassy waters. Swiftly, everything is still. The gem lands amongst a divine collection of nature's finest elements. The precious lavender is the perfect shade to complete the rainbow of beach treasures. Its curved edges plant themselves between a tiny snail and a broken clam shell. Brightness fills the atmosphere. The sun shining above illuminates the lavender sea glass. Lifting up towards the bright sky, the lavender sea glass is encompassed by darkness once more. Warm darkness, not cold. It is now meant to treasure and to hold. Traveling through a sea full of life, unknown broken glass is to blame. A girl's lavender good luck gem is found at a sandy point in Maine.

Julianna Kiley
"The Truth About a Bowl"

I was born from the water
And just like the water
I am made to hold.
Made to hold soup
Steaming with care and affection,
Made to hold oatmeal

On a cold rainy morning,
Made to hold the words
Shared between two people,
Said just over my head.
Your lips form questions
That bloom outward:
“Do you want some more?”
“Are you full?”
“Are you happy?”
“Is anyone?”
My blue is flecked with light,
And my light reflects your truth,
When you decide you’re full,
And leave me out to dry.
I don’t remember exactly when
You decided that you loved me,
But I remember the feeling of warmth
As you held me
Between your palms—
That glowy December morning,
When I was given over to you
Forever.
I hold,
And I am held,
And that cycle will continue,
Like the tides,
For the rest of my days.

Madison Lecowitch



Rainbow Fishing

It is quiet here and a comfortable breeze passes rocking me from side to side without me ever noticing at all, although my knees are weary. Leaning over the edge, I see my reflection staring back at me as I search below the surface. I can't see it, but I can feel the fly on my line making a swimming motion despite not yet having felt a tug on my pole to indicate I have caught anything. Not yet anyway. I cast out again trying to sit in the moment, enjoy the process and give thanks for all that has been laid out before me. I have been given all I need and yet I try again, and again for a rainbow. Until, finally there is a lasting tug on the line. I rear back before jerking my whole body forward and nearly tipping over. As I bring it closer to the surface I am once again met with my own reflection. This time though, I'm not alone. Just beneath the water's surface, beyond my reach but in clear viewing the boldest rainbow emerges accompanying my reflection. Gratefully rejoicing for this most precious gift I finally take my first breath into a new chapter.

Written By: Danielle Lizotte
Photography By: Bridget Sawyer, B. Webber Photography

In memory of my angels,
thank you for choosing me to be your mother.
Your memory will forever be a blessing.

Ellen Lowery

The Truth About My Dog Treat Bag

I always thought patience was the easiest thing. Just hang out. You be you, and someone will want this snap, this zipper, this army green coolness. In fact, here she comes. Snap, zip, yes. She loves me. And we're off. Last night we danced, today it's the beach. I've got it all. Hand sanitizer? Sure. Chapsticks? Every flavor. Money? Heaps. And more and more and more phone numbers. This girl does not stop. Hold on, what 's this? A little silver bag, and she likes it more than she likes me. Snap.

Hanging out at the thrift store now. Patience. Hang on. You be you, and, yes! Snap, zip, my snap is getting rusty but here we go! I'm ready for anywhere, waiting right beside the door. No more money, now it's treats and plastic bags. But the air is just as fresh.

The walks are getting short now. And slow. I always thought patience was the easiest thing, but...snap.

Laura Nichols

Nanny

Smiling and Caring
Bird Lover, Politics, Bright
I Love You, Nanny



Kelsey Orestis

POEM

Tears of Joy

The contents spiral in a conical plunge, diving down, down, down, while deep beneath the surface it erupts skyward like whirling dervishes spinning tales of love and light and joy. Ethereal waves flow through the air, buoying divine freedom and release. Pyramids of light usher us into a tranquil and meditative maze and from above is a third eye shining back down, showering meteors of purity and goodness. Explosions of teal and ruby pinks waves pulse through space connecting us in a secret language that we are blessed enough to know. This vessel holding the sacred lexicon is a cherished well that every time it is depleted, fills again. The elixir within is wrapped up in an ocean breeze, pulsating with melodies that are cradled in an orange translucent moonlight. The sun shines and reflects on the still water, illuminated hues play, and serve as a reminder of the unknowing gifts that have come, a sanctuary deep in my soul that I am forever grateful for. May the well be a reminder that this is always here and it lives in you, then, now, and again. Like birds gliding overhead offering serendipitous salutations. Close your eyes and feel the molecular fibers weaving together as they tell a story of unbridled release and tears of joy.

Where I Sit When it is Quiet

Alan Raymond

Where I sit when it is quiet is a seat on the far side of the meeting room. I say meeting room but it has not been set up as such in a long time. No tables, mostly wide empty space. Quiet is a word we don't utter for at the Rescue it is a jinx. A jinx to invite chaos to the shift. But at the moment the ambulances sit quiet in their bays, wheels ready to turn at the drop of a tone however for the moment it is quiet. A quiet in which I sit and contemplate.

As I sit here I hear the back and forth tick tock of two dueling clocks. Though they are apart they sound as if they are in sync, one pausing for the other. In the background is the snoring of the third EMT on shift. A slow rhythmic sawing of wood. A device pops on with a voice from behind on the other couch. In the distance across the semi dark room is the red glow of the LED on the emergency light and phone. I look down at the old worn blue frazzled carpet trod on for ten to twenty years or more. The seam is being held from fraying by blue painters tape.

The floor lamp is tall and thin, the only light in the room. Two recliners occupy the front of the room; one is reclined though there is no one in it. They are old and used. There are three chairs scattered around the room each a different style all cast offs from a former life all unoccupied. In the back corner of the room there is a stack of neatly symmetrical black and chrome chairs, a stack seldom used nowadays since days have changed from grange-like monthly meetings of willing volunteers to a schedule of paid employees. Finally there is a soft yellow glow of the radio waiting to announce the next call.

Caitlin Snyder

Messages on a Screen

It began with AOL
Maybe sooner...
No longer needing to call your house,
Ask your mom if you're home
You became
Messages on a screen
"What's up?"
"What are you doing?"
"Meet me at the playground."
We had
A basketball baby
Staring at the stars
Rides home
In your junky car
Your mom's convertible,
If we were lucky
Summer nights
Sneaking into the pool, or
Legs dangling in the water
All day
Watching you work
Girls at school: "you're lying."
But still you were
messages on a screen
Why was it so confusing?
Snow day messages:
"Let's hang out."
"Meet me on the hill."
Hiding from the wind
In the tunnel
under the dead end
Felt like it took forever to walk home

We kept sliding back down
Into each other
Laughing so hard
It hurt to breathe
Holding my breath
Hoping you'd notice me
Man hunt in the dark

“Let’s be on a team”
But still...
You were mostly
messages on a screen
Then,
A new neighbor moved in
He always knocked on the front door
Asked my mom if I was home
Threw wood chips
at my window
to get
my attention
at night
To distract me
from my screen
He’d take me to
new places
Drive around
new neighborhoods
Till we ran out of gas
He’d wait by
my locker
To take
me home
Told me that he loved me
Gave me my first kiss
Why was it still confusing?

No sneaking
No lying
No hiding
Instead
More stars
More laughs
More adventures
You were only
more messages
on a screen
More maybes
When he was certain
Why was I not?
Why couldn’t I give up a dream?
When I was only
Messages on a screen.

Taylor Robinson

Maine Beach Haikus



Lobster

Yellow cage trapping
Innocent clawed crustaceans
So red so yummy

Pebble Beach

Smooth shaped rocks
Ocean sculpted perfectly
Lay to be sun bleached

Water

Ice cold pure deep blue

Secrets hiding safely
Never seeing day

Beached Lobster Trap

Crunched and beaten mess
Forced out of its deep water home
Left to be removed again

Nikki Tibbetts

horseshowlife#





It's horse show season
New England Morgan Horse Show
Always been my dream

Bonding time with friends
We are all a family
So much happiness

My heart is so full
We all support each other
Memories are made

Summer nights are full
Of laughter and smiling friends
Nothing beats horse shows

Jordan Vining

The Birch Tree

In my front yard reaches out a giant from centuries past. A silent sentinel, its powder white bark is stripped, weathered, and cracked. While cracked, it is not broken. It is a stripping away of the past. Revealing new white and silver strands. Like pearls of laughter, scrolls winter bark roll up and out to reveal the story of events fleeting and consequential. Shiny threads knit together a new story, until the time is right to end, and begin a new narrative.

The ancient birch tree stands tall and proud. While the land it stands on has changed again and again, it has remained a constant. In winter, its branches are bent in an arch, like ballet dancers on the stage. Smaller branches are splayed like fingers reaching out as if to touch the ground. In summer, it raises its arms high, praising the sky. Fingertips, painted green, catch the sun's warm smile.

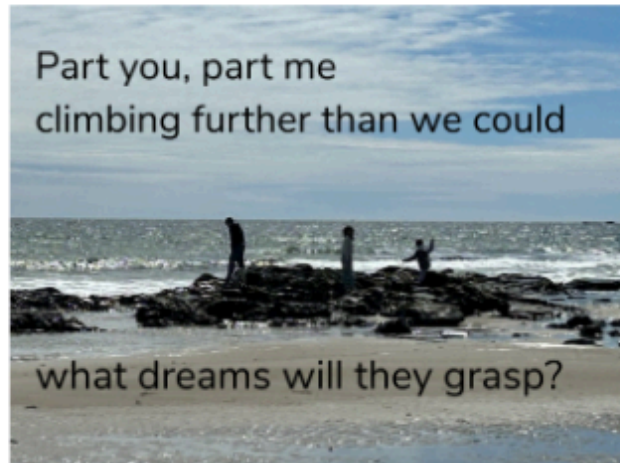
Sarah Wiley

Wells Beach Haiku



Where ocean meets sky
a hesitant blur of blue
my mind wanders there
|

Squishy, squelching, sand
sharp, slimy, stubbing, stout, stones
satisfying sea



Cotton candy skies
sun streams through wispy tendrils
lighting the sweet days

- Sarah Wiley

