

**Creative Writing and Field Trip**  
Dr. J. Elizabeth Clark, English

**"Nature is no sentimentalist"**  
—Emerson, "Fate"

Central Park was the first landscaped public park in the United States, begun in 1853. You can read about the history of Central Park here: <http://www.centralparknyc.org/centralparkhistory>. Today, it is 843 acres and stretches from 59<sup>th</sup> to 110<sup>th</sup> Streets in Manhattan. It is sometimes called an "urban oasis," calling on the idea of peace and tranquility in the midst of the cacophony of the urban landscape outside of its borders. How have humans transformed the natural surroundings? How have humans changed the landscape of New York City? (Remember, once, New York City was primarily farmland!).

Today, we will walk from Fifth Avenue into the park. As we walk, I'd like you to focus on the transition from the "city" into "nature." Your task today is to create a poem, fiction, or creative essay piece that captures the juxtaposition of the urban and the natural. By way of inspiration, I want you to read two poems. The first, "Birches," is by modern poet Robert Frost, a quintessential "nature" poet. The second, "Broadway," is by contemporary poet Mark Doty, a quintessential "New York City" poet. Read both and think about the ways in which each poem is distinctively about "nature" (Frost) or "the city" (Doty).

Next, for your own work, consider how you will put nature and the city together. Also, as you read the two poems, think about the relationship between form and content. Note the ways in which both Doty and Frost use the music of language, and the form, to emphasize the larger meaning of the poems.

We will walk for about 30 minutes and then find a nice place to sit and write. As we walk, take mental notes about the natural world around you and the ways in which the city intrudes on that nature. Think too about Emerson's quote "Nature is no sentimentalist" as a way of triggering your thoughts...