ENGL 253: Region and the Real South
Annotation assignment

As we’ve discussed, place is often an important element of both individual identity and literary construction. For your first writing assignment, you will think carefully about the places that appear in one of the stories we have read. You’ll locate each of the places in a map, and then write annotations for two of those places that demonstrate the role that place plays in the story as a whole. By the end of this project, the class will have generated a map of all the different places that feature in the American regionalist stories we’ve been reading.

Instructions

1. Find the places in your story
Read through your assigned story and find all of the different places that appear. You’ll have to decide what counts as a place—obviously, towns feature as important places, but is the state also an important place in the story? What about places within the town—houses, stores, churches, etc.? What about geographic features like lakes, rivers and forests?

2. Pin each place on the map
Using the form on the course website, fill out a new entry for each place on your list. This will be fairly simple for actual geographic places—places that appear on Google Maps. But if your story contains fictional places—towns, houses, rivers, etc.—or if it contains places that no longer appear on a modern map, you should still pin those places on the map. Use the context clues in the story, as well as in the author’s biography, to make an educated guess about where you should put your pin. In the form, explain why you decided to locate the pin where you did.

3. Pick two places to annotate
Choose the two places that you think are most important to the story. Read back through the story carefully and list all the details you can find about those places. Then take notes about the details in the story that show that these places are important.

4. Write your annotations
Your annotations should describe the role of the place in the story, noting any important details that help us understand how the place functions as part of the story. Each annotation should answer the question, how does paying attention to the specific details of this specific place help us better understand the story as a whole? Your annotations should be structured like mini-essays, beginning with a thesis that answers the main question. Following the thesis, your annotations should make clear claims about the different ways the place functions in the story, provide specific evidence from the text to support your claims, and follow each piece of evidence with analysis of how the evidence proves your claim. Each annotation should be 250-400 words long.

5. Add your annotations to the map
Using the form on the blog, go back and add your two annotations to the pins for each place. For instructions on how to fill out and revise forms on the map, see the “Creating and editing map annotations” in the “Tech Stuff” section of the course website.
Who your annotations should address

Your audience for these annotations is a relatively general, but interested one. Our collaborative map will be public to viewers who might want to know more about American literary regionalism, and you should keep those readers in mind when you write your annotations. You can assume that your reader is familiar with the basics of the story (or if she isn’t, she will follow up by reading the story herself), but you should make sure to be clear and specific about the details in the story that relate to the place you have pinned.

What your project should do

- Pin at least 5 places to the class map
- Include close reading annotations for two places
- Each annotation should:
  - Make an argument about how the details of the place help us better understand the story
  - Use specific textual details to support each claim in the paper, and follow each piece of evidence with analysis explaining how those textual details prove your claim
- Be 250-400 words long
- Be formatted according to MLA style

After your annotations are written

Submission instructions

All pins and annotations should be completed by Friday, Oct. 2. To be eligible for revision, you must complete your annotations by the due date. It is always better to turn an imperfect assignment in on time and then revise it than to worry about perfecting your paper, missing the deadline, and being unable to revise further.

Revision instructions

The last day to turn in a revised paper for comments is Friday, Nov. 20, and the last day to turn in a revised paper for a final grade is Friday, Dec. 11. You should allow for at least a week between submitting a revised paper and receiving it back with comments. This means that to take full advantage of the revision policy, you should plan carefully to meet course deadlines and submit revisions well in advance of the final deadline.