

Assignment: Write about a Place

For Engl 5750 Seminar in American Lit: Environmental Writing, ETSU Spring 2026

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Length: 1,000-1,500 words

Genre: Environmental nonfiction (memoir or narrative; lyrical, analytical; or hybrid)

Point of view: Your choice -- first-person, 3rd-person (or even 2nd-person, if you're in an experimental mood!)

Draft due: Jan 29

Revised version due: Feb 5

Write an essay about a particular place that you know. It could be a town or a region, but more specific is better. Maybe a particular lot or yard or house, or, say, a particular stretch of river, or a particular patch of forest. Then write that location within some kind of context.

Write about why you're writing about it -- that is, say something about what the place means to you. What space does it occupy in your psychogeography? Also include objective description: How does this place appear at a particular time of year, for example.

At the same time, provide broader context. Consider geographical characteristics, for example, such as watersheds, valleys, mountains, etc., as well as climate and weather. Also consider natural resources and ecology. What drew humans to this place, in the first place? And consider travel corridors, regional context, political boundaries.

The challenge here is to come up with a focus or purpose -- perhaps even a thesis -- to unify your writing so that it adds up to something. Give your piece a thoughtful title.

Include pictures, if you have any pictures that complement your writing.