Write an essay in which you describe and analyze a place of some significance to you. When writing an effective description of a place, it is essential that you not only describe it, but say something meaningful about it—that you make a commentary that helps your audience to understand this place in the larger culture, its symbolism and relevance. Your description and analysis should also help us to understand a little bit about ourselves. Most writers write about place from two perspectives: direct observation and memory. For this assignment, you can choose one of these perspectives. For some excellent place description examples, read the famous essays linked below.

Choose one:

A. Describe a place that you have gone to recently or that you would be willing to go to again to observe and take notes of the details of this place. (e.g. a mall, a hospital, a preschool, a supermarket, an park, a museum, an well-known restaurant, Grand Central Market, an airport, etc.) The best essays will be those based on direct observation. You may want to provide a bit of history of this place and some details about how many people visit it, etc. I recommend visiting this location for the purpose of writing your paper to get the freshest details.

B. Describe a place from your memory—a place that has a great deal of importance to you. This place might be a place from your childhood or a place from you recent past. In describing it, you will also need to incorporate narrative techniques telling about the story or stories that you associate with this place, what happened there, how it has changed. Make sure to focus on one particular place (a beloved soccer field; a church; a grandmother’s house; a cemetery, a school)

Tips:

--the “I” is essential in both types of place descriptions. Don’t hesitate to include yourself as a narrator in your essay.

--Make sure you have a clear thesis. You might allow yourself to free-write a first draft in order to “discover” your thesis, or you might begin with a thesis. Either way, the details of your place description should support your thesis and stay focused on a central idea, even somewhat loosely, as does E.B. White in his essay “Once More to the Lake,” the thesis being that time moves forward without us, that places change and we will die.

--If you consult outside sources for factual information, make sure that you cite all sources and add a works cited list. Research is optional for this paper, but you may find it to be useful and necessary.

Length: 750-1000 words, MLA, typed.

Deadlines:

First completed draft: April 5 (10 points). Bring one typed copy to class for workshop. Only completely finished drafts will receive credit. You must attend class to get points.

Final completed draft: April 7. Please staple rough draft to the back of your finished, clean copy. (100 points)

Model essays: “Marrying Absurd” by Joan Didion; “A Wind Storm in the Forest” by John Muir; “On the (nearly lethal) Comforts of a Luxury Cruise” by David Foster Wallace