

ENGLISH 306 • Spring 2009
Paper 3: Writing the Inland Empire

“How to circumscribe and refine a story and how to open up a story are two sides of the same task” (Sontag, “Stress” 21).

How do we use stories to enter into or to make sense of a context--in this case, the Inland Empire? How do you use stories to understand a context or to learn from it? What are the differences between “private” and “public” representations of a place? Whose perspectives or *stories* become “official,” and whose are seen as “unofficial” or “alternative?” Most importantly, how does your own perspective on your location fit into (or not) the accepted understanding of a place? In this paper, you will participate in the representation and understanding of your location by “telling the story” of that location. You should choose the location carefully; some options might be the city you live in, your home neighborhood, your hometown (if you’re from here), or even CSUSB itself.

More than personal narrative or memoir, this paper requires that you (1) research your chosen “place,” putting together private, public, and/or official representations (of it); (2) explain, describe, and synthesize the information about your chosen location so that your readers can understand it; (3) contextualize *yourself* in that place, making your perspective clear (including biases and attachments); and, finally (4) make a case for the importance and/or validity of your perspective.

Some things to keep in mind:

You need to incorporate at least one of our readings from Sontag into your paper. For this unit, those readings are: “Where the Stress Falls,” “A Letter to Borges,” “Afterlives,” and “The Wisdom Project.” You should incorporate your readings intelligently and well; don’t just add a random quotation, but really engage with the perspective on stories, writing, or personal writing that Sontag offers us.

- You need to do additional research for your paper; for this assignment, that means finding newspapers, magazine articles, scholarly work, books, and/or videos and movies that you think best help you make your point.
- You should be as specific as possible; define your terms, quote relevant passages that you relate specifically to your own point, and include specific details and particular imagery.
- Your paper should synthesize your readings, not repeat them. Include summaries of your readings and then show how they fit in to your own discussion.
- You need to include a Works Cited page; refer to an MLA or APA style guide for format.
- *Preliminary drafts due Thursday, June 4.* Bring two copies of a preliminary draft to class and be prepared to discuss your work—and to discuss the ideas you haven’t quite explored yet. Drafts should be typed.
- *Final draft due Thursday, June 11.* This paper will end up being around 1000-1250 words long.

Make sure that the entire paper has 1-inch margins and is typed in a readable, 12-point typeface. At the top of the first page—single-spaced—type your name, the class and section you’re in, the assignment (Essay #3), my name, and the date. Double-space, and then center your title above the rest of your text; the remainder of the paper should be double-spaced. *A special note about titles:* don’t be boring and generic and name your paper “Writing the Inland Empire.” Give it a real title, something that only applies to your paper.

Good luck!