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ENGL 120

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Dr. Newmark

This is a model essay on the “setting” question. The basic structure should be applicable to the other essay questions too, in regard to the approach in first paragraph, placement and style of thesis, and strategies for supporting thesis in subsequent paragraphs. Do not use any of my language here verbatim in your essay. I am hoping to see essays in answer to all of the questions offered; in other words, because I’ve written this model in answer to the “setting” question, I don’t want everyone to choose that one! I am hoping across the number of you in the class, there are students who write about each question. Good luck!

Title: Not a Dumb Title

In Kate Chopin’s short story of 1892 “Desiree’s Baby,” Chopin provides the reader with a richly described setting. This story concerns the birth of a child of mixed ethnic heritage to two parents who are of high social standing and are considered “white.” The baby’s coloration and features raise questions about the “purity” of the parents’ ancestral whiteness. With these plot features in place, Chopin allows the setting to play a role in the story itself. [ESTABLISHED PLOT IN TWO OR THREE SENTENCES. MOVED TO SETTING. NOW, SEGUE TO MAIN SUBJECT]. Chopin sets her story in a carefully rendered Louisiana Cajun community, called _____. This place becomes an important character in the story. [This is an argument, aka THESIS.] Like the characters in her story, it is the setting’s history, present-day conflicts, and indifference to emotion that cause Desiree to be banished by her husband and exiled from this Cajun home with her child at the end of the story.

[Please do not write a five-paragraph essay]

Body paragraph 1: Give a bit more plot detail. Describe characters more fully. Transition to identifying features of setting.

Body paragraph 2: Describe setting fully. Quote from text with details about setting. Like this: Chopin describes Desiree and her husband Armand’s plantation, named L’Abri: “It was a sad looking

place, which had not for many years known the gentle presence of a mistress . . . The roof came down steep and black like a cowl, reaching out beyond the wide galleries that encircled the yellow stuccoed house” (105). [No quote can stand alone. All need attributive tags and “buffering” – leading-in information and leading-out information] As this description of L’Abri indicates, it is a place with a pervading sadness about it, which Chopin allows to resonate in her characters’ lives.

Body paragraph 3: Setting’s history (Item 1 from thesis)

Body paragraph 4: Setting’s present-day conflicts (Item 2 from thesis) Here’s how you would include a secondary source: As Newmark writes in her article “---,” the setting in “Desiree’s Baby” allows the current status of slavery at L’Abri to resonate with a unique power. Newmark writes, “ ---“ (105).

Body paragraph 5: Indifference to emotion (Item 3 from thesis)

Body paragraph 6: Transition to conclusion – summing up ideas, giving them coherence, offering some salient insights.

Conclusion: Driving home final ideas. Reiterating, in a new way, prominent points from introduction. Indicate that you’ve proven what you set out to prove.

Works Cited:

Chopin, Kate. "Desiree's Baby." 1892. *An Introduction to Literature*. 15th Edition. Eds. Sybil Barnett,

William Burto, and William E. Cain. New York: Pearson Longman, 2008. 104-108.

Newmark, Julianne. "A Setting Analysis of 'Desiree's Baby.'" *Modern Language Studies*. 10.4 (Spring

1998): 100-125.