

Specific Analysis of Setting

Length: 250-350 words

Documentation: must contain one accurately documented quotation from the story

Ordinarily, a paper of this sort would be a five-paragraph essay, in which the first paragraph is an introduction, the fifth a conclusion, and each of the three middle paragraphs make and support a separate point. Since this assignment is quite short, you should write only the three middle paragraphs. Please consider these questions as you write. Begin each paragraph with a topic sentence that answers the question. Then support your topic sentence with details from the story. *However, do not retell the story.* Your paper may be typed or neatly handwritten in ink. Please double space and include the number of words at the end of the essay. I do not accept late papers.

- 1) When does the story take place?
- 2) Where does the story take place?
- 3) What is the theme of the story? How do the “when” and “where” of the story support to this theme?

Sample Paper

“A&P” takes place on a Thursday afternoon in summer. The grocery store is selling a record by Tony Martin, a singer who had his greatest success in the fifties. There is also a character driving a Ford Falcon, a car in production from 1960-1970. John Updike wrote the story in 1961, and it seems likely that it was also set in the early sixties.

The story is set in an A&P grocery store in a nameless town five miles from the beach, where there is a sizable summer resort. Sammy says, “It’s not as if we’re on the Cape; we’re north of Boston and there’s people in this town haven’t seen the ocean for twenty years” (Updike 272). The grocery store is centrally located on the main street with a view of two banks, a church, a newspaper store and several real estate agencies.

Updike makes the point that we define ourselves by the stands we do and don’t take. Sammy might even be called a fool for love, except that he doesn’t love the girl he calls Queenie because he doesn’t know her. He is attracted by her looks, her prosperity, and her defiance of the conservative system which Lengel represents. Sammy may be doing a dead-end job in a conservative small town, but the country is leaving the Eisenhower years and entering the turmoil of the Kennedy era. Assassinations, the civil rights movement, women’s liberation, and the war in Vietnam are just around the corner, and Sammy makes his stand. He quits the job his parents want him to have in protest over Lengel’s treatment of Queenie. He doesn’t seem sure of his future, but Sammy does know he will not become another Stokesie, working for years at the A&P, waiting to become the next Lengel. Sammy rebels against the place in which he lives, but he is in step with his generation, who will make the sixties a time of protest.

Bibliography

Updike, John. “A&P.” Literature, A Portable Anthology. Ed. Janet Gardner, Beverly

Lawn, Jack Ridl and Peter Schakel. Boston: Bedford St. Martin’s, 2004. 271-275.