

Place is a narrative device paramount to effectively helping the plot progress but also conveying ideas about mood, themes and time-period. Rossetti, Fitzgerald and McCarthy are three writers with three very different writing styles however the one constant is the importance of location in their writing.

Christina Rossetti was a notoriously religious poet known for her writings which often feature bohemian re-makings of literary archetypes. One poem which features heavy use of place is 'the Convent Threshold, rather than expected Rossetti's references to place are not actual physical locations but allegories for her christian worldview. In the poem the protagonist states 'I choose the stairs that mount above, stair after golden sky-ward stair' this shows that the unnamed narrator has chosen to live a moral life which reflects in her ascent to paradise; this contrasts with her lover whose 'eyes look earthward'. Presumably the protagonist's lover's choice to maintain 'worldly' wants results in his condemnation to hell as opposed to her salvation. Through descriptions of not only places but character perceptions of them Rossetti is able to write an engrossing narrative with implicit suggestions about morality. A second poem in which place plays a considerably large role is the famous 'Goblin Market' which charts the exploits of two sisters which results in a fall from grace, descriptions of the 'brookside rushes', 'the glen' make the area seem comparable to paradisaical Garden of Eden with the 'goblin men' fulfilling the role of the serpent who coaxes the well-meaning protagonist(s) into consuming forbidden fruit: this relates to Rossetti's connection with nature because the juxtaposition of enticing appearance with sinister undertones further reiterates her idea that nature is beautiful and admirable but at the same time dangerous. Overall the significance of place within the writing of Rossetti is largely symbolic with the aim of conveying ideas only obvious when looked at in context.

Similarly to Rossetti but in a more metropolitan context McCarthy and Fitzgerald also make great use of place in their writing. In the novel 'The Great Gatsby' the antithesis to the beacon of upper-class living is the drab, grey 'Valley of Ashes' and in McCarthy's 'the Road' ash is one of the few constants in the novel. In terms of symbolism relating to the substance, the most obvious of which is seeing ash as destruction physically manifest. Ash can only be produced by the burning of a material, within the context of 'the Road' the situation suggests that the ash may be the by-product of some sort of conflict or major natural disaster but as with 'the Great Gatsby' the ash may also be symbolic of the breaking down of morality, societal conventions and society itself. Furthermore both of the novels are based in the USA, a nation famous for promises of opportunity however the contrast

between excessive wealth and disadvantage in Gatsby; and the swift decline from global superpower to lawless state are a more 'warts and all' depiction of the country in two different time periods.

Ultimately whilst in differing contexts the writings of Rossetti, Fitzgerald and McCarthy all make use for descriptions of place as not only a plot device but a discreet means of conveying ideas.

Band 3 (18)

You begin to create some interesting arguments about the use of place in the texts. This is particularly strong at the start of the essay, with the examination of the Rossetti poems. You use some strong critical vocabulary.

Targets:

There need to be more examples from the texts; there are not enough specific examples from "Gatsby" or "The Road". You also need to look more closely at aspects of language and structure.