

Place Research: Example

Below is a sample of the research questions you will answer on page 3, to help you build out the concrete details and relevant facts of this place.

What place are you researching? Is this place urban, rural, or suburban?

Saint Paul, Minnesota - urban

Briefly describe the people who live here. Use census data to provide facts about the population's age, racial makeup, etc. and your own experiences to inform this description.

Saint Paul is a large-sized city, with roughly 311,000 people living here. Almost $\frac{1}{4}$ of the people who live in Saint Paul are aged 25 - 44. 51% of the people in Saint Paul identify as White; 45% identify as "of Color" (Mn Compass). A big part of the culture in Saint Paul and the overall state is "MN Nice," which is the idea that someone will be pleasant to you during small talk, but they won't necessarily go out their way to help you.

What is the climate like in this place? How do the people that live here interact with it?

The most notable part of Saint Paul's climate is our very cold, very snowy winters. Sometimes we get a snow storm as early as October and as late as April. Because of this long season, people really take advantage of the warmer summer months as much as possible. People across the state of Minnesota like to hike, bike, go swimming, fishing, canoeing, etc. Some people also like to spend time outdoors in the winter by snowshoeing, skiing, snowboarding, and ice fishing.

Who were the first, Indigenous people to live in this place?

Saint Paul is on the ancestral lands of the Dakota people, and Mni Sota (Minnesota) itself is considered the birthplace for the Dakota people. The name "Minnesota" is derived from the Dakota phrase, "Mni Sota Makoce" or "Land Where the Water Reflects the Clouds" (MN Historical Society).

Describe the physical landscape of this place.

The Mississippi River is the main feature of downtown, along with the rocky bluffs. It is relatively flat, without too many hills—except for one big hill that leads to downtown—and the streets are lined with big, old trees.

Place Research

Choose a place and perform basic research on the concrete details and relevant facts of the place. Answer these questions in your writing journal.

What place are you researching? Is this place urban, rural, or suburban?

Briefly describe the people who live here. Use census data to provide facts about the population's age, racial makeup, etc. and your own experiences to inform this description.

What is the climate like in this place? How do the people that live here interact with it?

Describe the physical landscape of this place.

Who were the first, Indigenous people to live in this place?

How do the neighboring towns influence your place?

Are there any historical events that have affected or shaped this place?

Your Protagonist: Example

Below is an example of how to fill out the worksheet on page 4. It utilizes the information on page 1.

What is your protagonist's relationship to this place?

My protagonist grew up in Saint Paul, but they moved to North Carolina college. They are now returning home for summer break.

What is your protagonist's opinion or perspective of this place?

My protagonist loved growing up in Saint Paul. They've lived in the same house their whole life, and they've had the same friends their whole life. They have found memories of spending time outdoors, going to bbqs at their neighbors' houses, and having sleepovers with their friends. They remember their hometown as being a welcoming place. However, living in a completely different region of the country for a few months has shifted their perspective a little.

Which part(s) of your research will be most important to your protagonist?

The physical elements of my place will be very present: the climate, the Mississippi River, storefronts in the neighborhood. My protagonist will also be aware of the cultural differences between their hometown and North Carolina. They will experience a little bit of culture shock.

Your Protagonist

Answer the questions below to develop your protagonist and their relationship to the place you chose.

What is your protagonist's relationship to this place?

What is your protagonist's opinion or perspective of this place?

Which part(s) of your research will be most important to your protagonist?

Your Narrative: Example

Below is an excerpt of an example narrative that combines the telling details you researched and the protagonist you brainstormed. Complete your narrative in your writing journal.

My plane landed at MSP about an hour ago, and now I'm on the bus. It feels good to be back in Minnesota again, now that first year of college has ended. I really like North Carolina, but I miss home. On the bus, I watched the Mississippi River from my window seat. It was most a brown, murky blur, but it was a blur I was excited to see. Small mounds of snow, peppered with dirt and debris, remained on the river bank. It's early May, I thought. It must have been a bad winter.

I pull the chord on the bus, signaling to the driver that my stop is coming up. I gather my suitcase and exit the bus. I'm surrounded by the familiar: the dark red awning of the tailor's shop, the houseplants and colorful bouquets in the window of the florist. When I turn the corner, I'm greeted by the sweet smell of waffle cones and chocolate as customers come and go from the ice cream shop. I continue down the street, and I see PJ and his friend outside, working on an old car in the driveway, just like always. As I walk past the house, I wave and the men and say hello.

They stare at me briefly before providing a weak smile and a nod in return. Weird, I thought. Maybe they just don't remember me, since I've been away for a while.