

MLA Sample Paper

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The heading of your MLA paper should include: your name, the instructor's name, the course, and the date. The date should be formatted with the day first, then the month, and finally the year.

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Dr. Kennedy

ENGL 206

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General formatting note: the paper's heading, title, and body text (including block quotes) should be written with 12 point Times New Roman font and be double spaced. The paper should also have 1.0" margins all around.

The paper's header should include your last name and the page number.

Depicting Power: Landscapes of *Anthills of the Savannah* and *The House of the Spirits*

In both Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and Isabel Allende's *The*

House of the Spirits, the landscape depicts more than just mere scenery. Both novels

portray political power struggles among the native people after European colonization

has ended, and both use the landscape to illustrate the effects that colonization has had on

the people and politics in those territories; however, the landscape in each novel works to

represent different aspects of political power. In *Anthills of the Savannah*, for instance,

greenery and water illustrate power through wealth. In contrast, the landscape of *The*

House of the Spirits demonstrates the façade of the powerful—nothing is as it seems on

the outside. Although there are differences in the symbolism of the landscape in both

novels, Achebe and Allende effectively use the landscape to enhance the portrait that they

paint of the power structures left behind by European colonization: Power only seeks to

retain power, and all those who are not of the same class and means as the powerful,

although ignored, will never go away.

In Achebe's fictional nation of Kagan, the intellectuals and powerful live among

green grass and flowing water while the poor Abazonians live in dry, desert land without

water. According to Paoi Hwang, the green landscape and abundance of water “[denote]

The title should be centered. There should be one double space between the title and the introduction paragraph, but there are no extra spaces. The title should not be bolded, underlined, or italicized.

The thesis of the paper should be a position or argument that will be developed and supported throughout the paper.

modernization, development, and higher standards of living,” in *Anthills* (168). At the building of the Council Chamber, for example, a “low hibiscus hedge outside the window and its many brilliant red bells stood still and unruffled” (Achebe 8). Also at the presidential retreat, there is a “great shimmering expanse of the artificial lake waters [. . .]” (67). The powerful elite are surrounded by plants and water, and, especially notable, an artificial water source. However, the home of the poor people of Abazon has no such luxuries; in fact, there is very little plant life or water:

In-text citations should typically include the author’s last name and the page number in parentheses. They should be placed before the end punctuation of the sentence containing the information from an outside source.

The only green things around now were the formidably spiked cactus serving the shelter around desolate clusters of huts and, once in a while in the dusty fields, a fat-bottomed baobab tree so strange in appearance that one could easily believe the story that elephants looking for water when they stilled roamed these parts would pierce the crusty bark of the baobab with their tusks such the juices stored in the years of rain by the tree inside its monumental bole. (194)

Their terrain is barren and dusty. The elephants that at one time came to the region for water that was stored inside the tree have left because there is no more water. Yet, the Abazonians are still there. According to Hwang, “greenery is temporary and water is not always present to sustain one way of life [. . .] the African people have always been sufficiently adaptable to make the best of what is theirs—that is until the belief that green is a better was introduced” (172). Because the Abazonians have been ignored, they do not know the concept precipitated by European colonization that “green is better;” therefore, they are able to adapt to the desert environment in which they have

If the name of the source’s author is used in the sentence before the quote, then only the page number is included in the parentheses at the end of the quote.

always lived. This contrast in living conditions between the two groups demonstrates not only the political power structure in Kagan, but also the resilience of those without power.

In *The House of the Spirits*, Allende, however, uses the description of the Trueba house in the city and the landscape of the city after the military coup to represent the hidden truth of the powerful. Estaban Trueba beautifully constructs his house to reflect his power. It has a “French garden with topiaries fit for Versailles, deep wells of flowers, a smooth perfect lawn, jets of water” as well as “several statues of the gods of Olympus and [. . .] two courageous Indians” (Allende 93). It has “rows of columns,” “a majestic staircase,” and “white marble;” the house gives “the overall appearance of order and peace, beauty and civilization, that was typical of foreign peoples” (93). However, the house does not stay majestic, especially on the inside. Over time, the staircases lead to nothing, “doors [hang] in midair,” the hallways become crooked (93), and the “rear garden [is] a tangled garden” (225). Although the outside of the house never changes, the inside deteriorates. The façade of the house reveals the façade of Estaban’s power. In the same way, when the military gains power, they construct façades to hide the existence of civil war and the poor:

Block quotes should begin on a new line and be indented 0.5” from the left margin. They should not use quotation marks and should have an in-text citation *after* the period.

→ Cement walls were erected to hide the most unsightly shantytowns from the eyes of tourists and others who preferred not to see them. In a single night, as if by magic, beautifully pruned gardens and flowerbeds appeared on avenues; they had been planted by the unemployed to create the illusion of a peaceful spring. (381)

These cement walls only mask the situation created by the coup. The violence has not stopped; the poor are still there; the “illusion of a peaceful spring” is only that, an illusion. The chaos inside Estaban Trueba’s gorgeous house and the mirage of peace and prosperity constructed by the fascist regime demonstrate that power is fleeting. There will always be those who will challenge power, and there will always be those who remain powerless.

Both Achebe and Allende create landscapes that symbolize the propensity of the powerful to remain in power. Achebe’s contrasting depictions of the environment of the elite class of Kagan and the poor class of the Abazons is striking. While the elite class is surrounded by vegetation and water, the Abazons live in a desolate environment and struggle for water to survive. However, the Abazons will survive because they can adapt to any environment in which they live. In Allende’s novel, the landscape shows beautiful façades hiding ugly truths. Inside Estaban Trueba’s home, it is chaotic and unruly, yet this is hidden behind a magnificently structured house. In the same way, the cement wall constructed by the military to hide the poor, and the flowers planted to provide an illusion of peace are only mere illusions. The poor are still there; the opposition is still fighting against the military’s fascist regime. Although the two authors use landscape to depict power in different ways, both authors show the enduring will of the powerless to adapt and fight long after the powerful have fallen.

The Works Cited list begins on a new page. The title "Works Cited" should be centered on the page.

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Works Cited

The list of Works Cited should be arranged in alphabetical order. Any of the Works Cited citations that have two or more lines should have a hanging indent.

Achebe, Chinua. *Anthills of the Savannah*. Anchor Books, 1987.

Allende, Isabel. *The House of the Spirits*. Translated by Magda Bogin, Dial Press, 2005.

Hwang, Paoi. "Language and Landscape: Conflict in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*." *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, vol. 2, no. 2, June 2004, pp. 161-174. *MLA International Bibliography*, doi: 10.1353/pan.0.0067.

Additional Resources

For further information about MLA Citation Style, please refer to the Academic Center for Excellence's handouts [MLA Format](#), [MLA Formatting in Word 2020](#), [MLA Formatting in Word for Macs](#), and [Formatting an Academic Paper in Google Docs](#).

Additionally, the Academic Center for Excellence offers a variety of MLA tutorials. To register for an on-campus workshop, contact the Academic Center for Excellence at the Locust Grove Campus at **(540) 423-9148**, the Fredericksburg Area Campus at **(540) 891-3017**, or the Barbara J. Fried Center at **(540) 834-1993**. To view an online workshop, please visit our website at <https://www.germannna.edu/academic-center-for-excellence/>.