

HU/DV English 2200, Introduction to Literature

Dr. Michael Wutz, Spring 2017

Eudora Welty, “Whey I Live at the P.O.” (1941)

In preparation for class, write an exploratory notebook entry (of about 300 words) on one of the questions below, or please feel free to come up with a question of your own. Keep in mind the strategies of interpretation we have been developing in class, as well as our emerging vocabulary as good readers.

- (A) As with every first-person narration, you have to be on guard about the narrator's reliability. What is Sister's motivation for telling her story? How would you characterize her narrative style? What evidence can you come up with that Sister is, and/or is not, reliable? (Both possibilities, and more, might apply). Then, speculate as to why Welty may have chosen a narrator like that of Sister.
- (B) Sister, the narrator of the story, appears to be engaged in kind of rivalry with her younger sister, Stella-Rondo. What kinds of tensions do you recognize between the two? How might they have come about?
- (C) Welty's story (obviously?) takes place in the rural South, probably in the late 1930 or early 1940s. Find those passages that identify the story's location and historical time frame and discuss their importance for the story.
- (D) Assuming that the story's geographical and historical location is important—as you, no doubt, agree—what do you think Welty wants to say about the American South, its attitudes and life styles? What do you know about the South (either from history books, literature, or the media)? How do your notions about the South correspond, or not correspond, to the South presented in the story? Does the fact that Sister tells the story—as say, opposed to Stella-Rondo—make a difference in terms of portraying the South?
- (E) Locate and analyze—in as much detail as possible—the passages that refer to the P.O.? What is its significance for the narrator and/or perhaps for the story as a whole? – This is a speculative question.