

Heather Hardaway

Instructor's Name

ENGL 1013

Date

### My Secret Place

When I was a child, there was a special path that led to a place that, to me, rivaled Alice's Wonderland. I called it my secret place.

Not far from my parents' house, on the edge of the horse pasture, there was a forbidding path which was overgrown with sticker bushes and spider webs, but which, for me, meant another afternoon of adventure and magic. Every day I would stand at the open jaws, take a deep breath, and run, as the thorny teeth gnashed at my face and legs. Not too far down, the path would start to curve, and I could finish my journey at my leisure.

As I continued my journey, I could feel the gentle warmth of the sun as it peeked through the towering pine trees. A soft breeze whistled in and out of the trees, and they danced to the happy tune. Off to my left were several hills, and to my right began the downward plunge to the creek trickling below. Behind me I could hear the squirrels scampering along; occasionally, they stood on their hind legs to smell my sack lunch in the breeze.

Up ahead, the path opened up like a lazy grin, as if happy to see my return. Then, only steps away from my secret place, dogwood trees seemed to bound out of nowhere, and the sweet smell of honeysuckle filled my nostrils. After ten more paces I was standing on the threshold of the world, where Huck Finn was a lunch guest and Brer Rabbit stopped by to tell of his latest episodes with Brer Bear and Brer Fox.

In the center of my secret place was a small pond with an old fishing dock and cattails

along the bank. To the far side of the pond, in a shady little nook, was a creaky old shack with a porch that leaned to one side. The tin roof of the shack had long since rusted but offered a safe haven from summer showers. The inside of the shack was musty and full of dust. An old table sat next to a window without glass, and a chair with a broken leg lay askew in the corner.

On the opposite side of the bank was a small rowboat with a hole in the bottom that kept it from being seaworthy but made a great hiding place from the likes of Captain Hook. About four paces away was a big oak tree suitable for climbing with gnarled roots peaking just above the dirt. This was a place that at one time I believed to be the rabbit entrance in *Watership Down*.

Whether on the porch of that old shack or lying on the dock, I could spend hours skipping rocks, reading books, listening to the bullfrog chorus, or just watching the clouds float by. My secret place was a world of summer dreams, imaginary people, and make-believe places.