

Mysteries Explore Southern Beauty, History

The idea for this forum grew from a question that Debbie Battiste did not get to ask at last year's forum: "Could these Southern mysteries take place in some other region of the country, say, New York or the Midwest?" As Debbie explains, "When I started researching the work of these writers, I found a wealth of information about the South - its beauty, its history (good and bad), and its people (who are so often stereotyped). Whether with humor or serious dialogue these writers make the South come alive."

The South is a world of contrasts and a fertile ground for mystery and intrigue. In the Southern mystery, we are lulled by its "come hither" charm, delicately scented flowers, deep Southern draws, and fair, genteel ladies... then find ourselves facing the danger and murder lurking just beneath the legendary Southern hospitality. Or bodies hidden within the kudzu!

The forum explores how writers use the natural beauty, history, traditions, and unique culture of the South - not just as a backdrop for their stories, but as a key ingredient in their novels - and how they use their writing to expel some of the myths about the people of the South, who are so often stigmatized and stereotyped.

Unique Southern Settings

Setting and location are vital to the telling of a mystery - they combine to enhance the believability of the story. The settings for the mysteries by our featured writers include:

- St. Louis Cemetery in New Orleans, just after dark - where centuries-old crypts rise up from the ground like the pyramids of Giza
- Twilight among the moss-covered live oaks on an antebellum plantation in Savannah, with cicadas and crickets singing their nightly lullabies
- Midnight along the black, treacherous waterways of the Florida Everglades where the eerie cries of alligators and waterfowl rise up out of the swamp like mist

How do Southern writers take full advantage of the incredibly rich settings that the South has to offer?

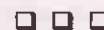
Southern History

Nearly every city, town, and hamlet in the South has its own unique history. Today's modern mysteries are enhanced by various aspects of Southern history - whether the Civil War era, an earlier time when Native Americans freely roamed every state in the South, or the turbulent 1960s when the Civil Rights Movement ushered in social change.

So how do these writers of Southern mystery employ historical events of the past and yet manage to move their stories forward? What role does history play in their mystery stories?

Join Us

Writers of Southern mystery have an almost fathomless reservoir of resources upon which to draw. Preserving and protecting these resources through the written word enhances and enriches our lives - and the lives of all generations to come. We hope you join us on January 24th for this event!



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FOSL Receives GHC Grant for Forum

FOSL is proud to receive a grant from the Georgia Humanities Council (GHC) to sponsor our Murder Goes South forum. This is the first GHC grant for which we have applied - and we received more than \$2300!

The GHC is an independent, nonprofit organization that provides support for educational programs which are developed and carried out in local communities. Among GHC's goals is to support projects "...which bring Georgians together in learning and discussion..." The Murder Goes South forum is such an event: its focus is Southern setting and history in mystery novels. And seven of nine featured writers hail from Georgia.

For more information about the GHC, see www.georgiahumanities.org.