

SETTING

Setting is the time and place an author chooses for a literary work. A setting can be a real time period and geographical location, or a fictional world and unfamiliar time period. Setting also includes the physical landscape, climate, weather, and the societal and cultural surroundings that serve as a backdrop for the action. Setting is revealed through the exposition of a story.

FIVE ELEMENTS OF SETTING IN LITERATURE

In fiction writing, the basic definition of setting is the time and place of a story. But there are different elements that contribute to the creation of a setting, including:

1. **Geographic location:** A story might be set in a real-life, mappable place like a particular city, state, or country, or it might be set in an imaginary world.
2. **Physical location:** the immediate surroundings – luxurious mansion, broken down shack, out in the open, in a dungeon, on a boat.
3. **Climate/environment:** weather conditions, climate, and other forces of nature.
4. **Time period:** set in the past, present or future. The amount of time that elapses over the course of the novel - hundreds of years, a single day. Whether the action occurs during the day or night.
5. **Social and cultural environment:** The influences or expectations that are placed on characters as a result of their background, religion, language, community etc

WHY IS SETTING IMPORTANT?

Setting is more than simply a backdrop to characters' actions. Fictional settings have multiple purposes and effects.

The physical locations of scenes contribute mood and tone. A dark, eerie wood creates a very different sense of danger or mystery compared to a bright, open plain. The time of the setting determines what kind of technology is available – historical fiction often describes old-fashioned tools such as manual clothes washers that most modern city-dwelling readers wouldn't know.

Setting has a big effect on the possibilities for characters' lives and actions. The historical period and culture impacts what types of lives the characters can lead and what choices they can make. Characters living in Victorian England will have very different options available to them compared to characters living in contemporary Finland. Women in particular often led sheltered or restricted lives in many historical periods and had very little 'agency' or control over their own lives. But both women and men are shaped by the culture and society they live in, and this is very dependent on the setting.

Setting can evolve and change as the narrative progresses. This evolution can show the changing circumstances affecting a characters' views and options. A change in the setting opens up new possibilities and can create 'narrative tension' by sparking curiosity – how might things change, now that we are in this new location?