

Setting

Definition of Setting

Setting is an environment or surrounding in which an event or story takes place. It may provide particular information about placement and timing, such as New York, America, in the year 1820. Setting could be simply descriptive, like a lonely cottage on a mountain. Social conditions, historical time, geographical locations, weather, immediate surroundings, and timing are all different aspects of setting.

There are three major components to setting: social environment, place, and time. Moreover, setting could be an actual region, or a city made larger than life, as James Joyce characterizes Dublin in *Ulysses*. Or, it could be a work of the author's imagination, such as Vladimir Nabokov's imaginative place, space-time continuum in *Invitation of a Small Evening*.

Types of Setting

There are two main types of setting:

Backdrop Setting

Backdrop setting emerges when it is not important for a story, and it could happen in any setting. For instance, A. A. Milne's story *Winnie-the-Pooh* could take place in any type of setting.

Integral Setting

It is when the place and time influences the [theme](#), [character](#), and action of a story. This type of setting controls the characters. By confining a certain character to a particular setting, the writer defines the character. Beatrix Potter's short story *The Tail of Peter Rabbit* is an example of integral

setting, in which the behavior of Peter becomes an integral part of the setting. Another good example of this type of setting can be seen in E. B. White's novel *Charlotte's Web*.

Examples of Setting in Literature

Example #1: *Wuthering Heights* (By Emily Bronte)

In Emily Bronte's novel *Wuthering Heights*, its setting plays a vital role, as it reflects the mood of major characters and their actions, while contributing to its overall [atmosphere](#). The novel has three main settings:

The Moors
Wuthering Heights
Thrushcross Grange

The Moors symbolize wilderness and freedom, as nobody owns them, and everyone can freely move about anytime. *Wuthering Heights* depicts weather around this house, which is stormy and gloomy. The characters are cruel and extremely passionate. Thrushcross Grange, on the other hand, is contrary to *Wuthering Heights* because its weather is calm, while its inhabitants are dull and weak.

Example #2: *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love* (By Christopher Marlowe)

Christopher Marlowe's poem *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love* is set in the countryside in the springtime. The springtime has a double purpose, as it refers to baby animals and budding flowers, and the fifth month of the year. Then the month of May sets the scene as well as emphasizes fertility and new life linked with springtime. Thus, the poet has idealized the image of rural life in the background of his personal emotions, while time is stationary in the poem.

Example #3: *Heart of Darkness* (By Joseph Conrad)

In Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*, the leading character Marlow goes to different places and settings that influence his imagination. which

adds to the themes of the story. The title, *Heart of Darkness*, refers to the center of the jungle on the African continent, where Marlowe travels to find Kurtz. The darkness not only applies to the shadowy jungle, but also to the behavior and actions of the civilized people it affects, and they become savage like Kurtz. The setting is also symbolic of imperialistic forces that have made black men their slaves.

Example #4: *Lord of the Flies* (By William Golding)

In William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies*, weather plays a very important role, as it represents mood, behavior, and attitudes of young boys throughout the storyline. During the day, the beach looks bright, while the ocean is calm, and there is no [conflict](#). The author describes the dense areas of the jungle as scary and dark. One night, when Simon is killed, there comes a violent storm, and the ocean looks very rough in the black night. Thus, its setting includes weather conditions, and the ocean representing dark forces of nature present in human nature.

Function of Setting

The function of setting in a fictional, poetic, and [prose](#) work is of great importance. It has immense effect on plots and characters, as it could act as an [antagonist](#), post a conflict that characters need to resolve, or shed light upon characters. It can also present symbolic persons, objects, place, action, or situations. Setting can establish the mood or atmosphere of a scene or story, and develop the plot into a more realistic form, resulting in more convincing characters. By establishing mood, setting also helps the [audience](#) relate themselves to the characters in a story.

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