

Bonus Setting Exercises: Settings that Reinforce Characters

Another great, sophisticated writing trick is to use setting to reinforce your characters. For example, if you are writing about a mysterious person, you might place him or her in a dark mansion on a hill outside of town. Or, if one of your characters is feeling trapped in his or her life, they might live in a small town in the middle of nowhere.

Here's us just telling you about Larry:

Larry was having a hard time. He felt sad and trapped. He was once a famous author, but he hadn't written a word for years.

And here's us telling you about Larry, but through the space that he is living in:

Larry's apartment was less of a living space than a glorified closet. The bathroom was just big enough to sit on the toilet without having his knees touch the sink, and the window was more like a ship's porthole. The bed was so small his feet hung over the edge, and there was really not much to do but watch static on the television.

The place did not have a kitchen, so he bought a camping hotplate to make his single-serving meals. He ate the same thing every night, but like a house cat, he did not seem to mind the monotony of his repeated dinner of rice, wilted spinach, and baked beans.

Nothing hung on the walls of Larry's place, but old framed photos of family members he no longer spoke to cluttered his small desk. An old dusty typewriter and a stack of blank paper took up the rest of the space there.

He hadn't written a word in years.

Larry doesn't even have to speak for himself; his apartment speaks for him!

For each of the following characters, try to come up with a setting that will reflect or reinforce what you imagine about them. As you write, try to be as detailed as possible. Don't forget colors, sounds, and even smells.

The shy new girl in town

A criminal on the run

A rebellious teen with nothing to lose

Your protagonist

Your antagonist

(Supporting character's name)

(Supporting character's name)

(Supporting character's name)

Awesome. Not only do you have *mood* enhancing settings for your novel, you also have *character* enhancing settings. Again, before you move on and forget all about all the amazing settings you just created, keep this page close at hand so in November you can access it easily.