

Toolkit Focus: Creating a Setting

Creating settings should be a creative process. Here is a chance for children to invent new and unusual descriptions which tell of tempting and unknown places, and to create atmospheres that set readers anticipating what might be about to happen e.g. in the calm before a crisis. Children need to have spent time on the 'reading like a reader' phase of the 3 I's model, collecting ideas, vocabulary, turns of phrase and noticing how writers can hint and lay clues when creating settings – like the background music in films; how they are able to show settings subtly by looking at the world through the eyes of a character or, even more subtly, by depicting how characters feel or react. A good setting, combined with good characterisation colour in the sketch of the plot. Everything you write into a setting should be relevant in some way to telling of the story. Working on settings often flows naturally from poetry writing; this is a great opportunity to explore and use figurative language – alliteration, personification, similes and metaphor etc. The ideas in the poetry guidance above are particularly relevant to this toolkit.

Year R,	Year 1, 2	Year 3, 4	Year 5, 6
<p>Building on YR work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use pictures, experience and common places to choose a familiar or well-known setting. - Imagine being the character in the setting. Use what you could see and what you could hear. - Use a list of three to build a picture. e.g. trees, flowers and a bench. - Use adjectives to describe. e.g. Tall trees, bright flowers, wooden bench. 	<p>Building on YR work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Picture it; use well-known places and imagination to create a setting. - Imagine being the character in the setting. Use the senses to describe what you could see, hear, touch, smell and feel. - Use adjectives to describe the setting in detail. e.g. Tall trees, bright flowers, wooden bench. - Use a list of three to build a picture. e.g. blue curtains, red carpet and a blazing fire. - Use similes to create an image for the reader. e.g. like an icicle - Use adverbs to describe how and create movement. e.g. Angrily, the wind whirled - Use prepositions to describe different positions. e.g. above, below, to the side, underneath, inside, outside, behind. 	<p>Building on Year1/2 work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Choose an interesting name for your setting. e.g. Hangman's Wood; Sandy Cove; Crystal Castle - Think about the time of day and the weather e.g. An electrical storm at night = scary and dangerous. Sun illuminating on the horizon = happy/hopeful. - Use an interesting detail as a 'hook'. e.g. Only one window was broken. His window. - Change the settings to change the mood/atmosphere. e.g. comfy – the warm kitchen; scary – the dark, cold alley. - Use the weather to help you create the mood e.g. scary setting – rain and thunder. - Use figurative language to bring the setting to life and create an image for the reader (you do not need to pick all of these at once!). e.g. Sounds – alliteration/ onomatopoeia. Images – similes, metaphor/ personification 	<p>Building on Y3/4 work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Show the setting through the main character's eyes. e.g. Zak could see a bright speck in the sky which grew bigger and bigger. What could it be? - Describe the character's reactions to show how the setting is making them feel. e.g. His hand gripped the banister till his knuckles turned white. - Use unexpected detail as a 'hook' e.g. It was then that he noticed it. Something had been crawling in the fine, red dust beneath the largest tower. Zak stopped and stared at the marks. They were not like anything he had ever seen. - Change the settings to change the mood/atmosphere. e.g. comfy – the warm kitchen; scary – the dark, cold alley. - Vary sentence lengths to alter the pace. e.g. use short sentences to create tension and excitement – balance these with longer sentences containing detail. - Use figurative language to bring the setting to life and create an image for the reader (you do not need to pick all of these at once!). e.g. Sounds – alliteration/ onomatopoeia. Images – similes, metaphor/ personification