

SETTING

Your reader will feel a part of your story if she has a clear picture of **WHEN** and **WHERE** the events are taking place.

Check out this example from *Night of the New Magicians* by Mary Pope Osborne:

Jack sat on the porch, reading in the summer twilight. Crickets chirped in the Frog Creek woods. The bell of an ice cream truck jingled down the street. Annie stepped out the front door. "Let's go," she said. "Where?" said Jack. "Mom gave us money for ice cream," said Annie. "Cool," said Jack. He pulled on his backpack. Then he followed Annie down the porch steps. As they headed up the sidewalk, the smell of damp leaves and moss wafted from the woods... Jack and Annie hurried across the street and into the dimly lit woods. They walked quickly between the leafy trees, until they came to the tallest oak. A rope ladder dangled from the treetop. The magic tree house sat high in the branches, catching the light of day.

When describing a setting, ask yourself these questions:

- What do my characters see? **Smell? Hear? Feel?**

CHARACTERS

Here are some examples of strong character descriptions from *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson:

His straw-colored hair flapped hard against his forehead, and his arms and legs flew out every which way. He had never learned to run properly, but he was long-legged for a ten-year-old, and no one had more grit than he.

He paused in midair like a stop-action TV shot and turned, almost losing his balance, to face the questioner, who was sitting on the fence nearest the old Perkins place, dangling bare brown legs. The person had jaggedy brown hair cut close to its face and wore one of those blue undershirtlike tops with faded jeans cut off above the knees. He couldn't honestly tell whether it was a girl or a boy.

Here are some questions to help you describe your characters:

- What color eyes? Hair? Skin?
- What does he/she wear?
- What type of body?
- How does he/she walk or run?
- What types of things does he/she do that are unique (i.e. roll eyes, cross arms, talk loudly, etc.)?
- How does he/she talk? What type of voice?
- How does he/she smell?

A Bus Trip to Anywhere

I couldn't believe my ears! My teacher, Mrs. Smith, let me be in charge of the big, yellow bus. I could drive anywhere! I choose Yosemite.

First, I told my friends, Tiffany, Amanda, Hailey, Amy, Gloria, Madisson, and my classmates to bring food and pack. They kept on asking where we were going. I said, "Just pack what you need, and tomorrow we will all go." Then, it was morning on a sunny day. Everybody came to bus where we met yesterday. They asked me where we were going again. I shouted happily, "We are going to Yosemite!"

When everyone got on the big yellow, bus, I started the engine. After that, we rode and, the gigantic, yellow bus got slower and slower. We were stuck in mud in a rain forest! Then, we had to get our jackets and push the bus. After that accident, we rode to Yosemite. We went to a forest to camp for three days. My class and I saw animals and got to pet them. My favorite animals were the bunnies. They all felt very soft. We also had to eat fast or the animals would eat our food. My classmates and I rescheduled to stay for five days at Yosemite. After the five days have gone by, we were back in school.

When I was back in school, everyone gathered around me and said that they would never forget that trip and, they said that it was the best trip ever.

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MY Tutor Content & Development

Revision Goal 1: Create a well-developed setting.

1. Highlight, in **green**, the words that tell when and where your story took place. Add more specific details about where your story took place and when it happened. For example, you can describe the place, the weather, the time of day or year, or the season.
2. Now use your five senses to describe your setting. How does the setting look, feel, smell, or sound? Use your five senses to add more details to your setting. Use the word bank to help you.

Revision Goal 2: Create realistic characters.

1. Highlight, in green, details about your characters. Highlight their actions in **red**. Add details and strong verbs to make your characters come to life!

Example:

Before Revision: My mom and I were going to the beach! We both love the beach.

Annie's Strategy: *I want to use more details to describe my characters. What do the characters look like? How do they feel? How did they act? How are they related?*

After Revision: My mom and I were going to drive to the beach! It was going to be a special day, just me and my mom, and we both love everything about the beach. I was all ready to go dressed in the new bathing suit we picked out together. My mom wore a big straw hat to keep the sun off her face.

Annie's Reflection: *I added more details about how the characters are going to the beach and what they are wearing. By adding "It was going to be a special day," I suggest that the mom and her daughter have a special relationship.*