

Extracts: Setting

Let's look again at the extracts we used to see how some writers show you characters. Let's see how those same extracts show you the setting. We'll also look at a poem that makes an interesting use of setting.

'Cooking with Salt Water' from the Fiji Islands

Despain, Pleasant. "Cooking with Salt Water." In *A River of Stories*, compiled by Alice Curry, 18. London: Commonwealth Education Trust Books, 2011.

"Long, long ago, when the islands were ruled by the great chiefs Sun and Sea, an old woman named Amara excelled at growing and cooking vegetables. Amara's village was located near the top of a steep volcanic mountain overlooking the ocean. Each day the old woman cooked savoury dishes while gazing out upon the blue and green water far, far below."

Did you notice how much we're told about the setting – the time and place? It's 'long, long ago.' There are 'islands... a village... a steep volcanic mountain overlooking the ocean... blue and green water.' We get a clear picture early on. Telling us a little about your setting at the start can give the reader a strong picture.

'Si Perawai, the Greedy Fisherman' from Brunei Darussalam

Read MacDonald, Margaret. "Si Perawai, the Greedy Fisherman." In *A River of Stories*, compiled by Alice Curry, 71. London: Commonwealth Education Trust Books, 2011.

"Si Perawai threw out his long fishing line, then pulled it in. Threw out his long line, then pulled it in. But each time he pulled in the line, there was not one fish on it."

The setting is the sea or maybe a river. How do we know? The author never says those words. We know because of what Si Perawai does. As we've said, making your characters do or say things is a good way of showing the setting.

'Mawa of the Waters' from Ghana

Busia, Abena. "Mawa of the Waters." In *A River of Stories*, compiled by Alice Curry, 137. London: Commonwealth Education Trust Books, 2011.

"I am Mawu of the waters.

With mountains as my footstool

And stars in my curls

I reach down to reap the waters with my fingers

And look! I cup lakes in my palms.

I fling oceans around me like a shawl

And am transformed

Into a waterfall.

Springs flow through me

And spill rivers at my feet

As fresh streams surge

To make seas."

The setting seems huge – mountains, stars, lakes. The poet shows this just by naming them. And he doesn't spend time describing the setting; he makes it part of the action.

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