

# More Than Details: Working Your Setting

## 1. Sensory toolbox

In creating your setting, remember you have the full sensory toolbox to work with: sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste.

**Consider:** What do you notice when you enter a space? How might each of your five senses come into play?

**In-session exercise:** brainstorming sensory info about a place

Sight:

Sound:

Smell:

Touch:

Taste:

## 2. Setting reveals character

What your character notices in a given place, how s/he responds to it and interacts with it, tells us about that character's personality.

**Consider:** An adult and a child enter the same place. How might the adult's observations, interactions, and responses to the setting *differ* from the child's?

**In-session exercise:** describing a setting from the perspective of two different characters

\*Note: you can keep your setting description *active* by telling us about the place *as* the character moves through and interacts with it.

### 3. Setting reveals conflict

Story = Character + Conflict

Your character's response to a setting can *also* change depending on how s/he is feeling in the moment. Those feelings might depend on the conflict your character faces in your story.

**Consider:** Imagine visiting a particular place on a day when you're in a good mood. Think about how you react to the place and what you notice about it. Then imagine visiting the *same* place on a day when you're in a bad mood. How do your perception and experience of it change?

**Consider:** Depending on the situation your character is in when s/he goes to a particular place, how do you think s/he will experience that place? How do you think s/he will describe or think about it?

### 4. Setting as character

Story = Character + Change

Setting can have a powerful impact on your characters. In some cases, setting can create change, drive conflict, and stand out as a distinct "personality."

**Consider:** What gives a place a powerful sense of identity or personality? In your reading, have you encountered settings that also seemed to act like characters?

**In-session exercise:** Think of a place you've known that has a strong "personality" or sense of character. Write a short description of this place from your own perspective, particularly mentioning what gave it that sense of identity, and how it affected you when you were there.