S1 Creative Writing Unit



The Package

In this unit we are going to explore how to:

* Build convincing settings which come to life
* Create interesting and convincing characters
* Write a story which is interesting and engaging

Setting

The setting of a story helps the reader to **imagine the place** where the story is set.

It is the **backdrop** against which the action of the story takes place.

It is easy to show setting in pictures and movies, but it is **much harder to do with words** in stories.

What can you describe to create a setting?

1. What the place looks, sounds, smells, & feels like
2. Time and place
3. Temperature and weather

All writers let their readers know where and when the story takes place by describing the setting. This usually happens at the beginning of the story, to set the scene.

**INDIVIDUAL TASK**

Working on your own, write down as many descriptive words and phrases which describe the setting as you can see in the following paragraph:

*“It was a strange and rambling house, full of old oak stairways. Long and narrow corridors seemed to hold dark and evil secrets. Windows gave no warming sunlight, only gloomy views of shadowed courtyards at the back and the blank, blind faces of houses at the front. After sunset a shroud of darkness seemed to wrap itself around the house before creeping slowly inside.”*

**WRITING TASK**

You are now going to practice creating your own setting by writing a **descriptive paragraph** about one of the following settings:

**A graveyard**

**An abandoned hospital**

**A dark forest**

Make sure that you use as much **descriptive language** as possible, and use your **word bank** to help you. Remember that to create a setting you can describe:

* What the place looks, sounds, smells, & feels like
* Time and place
* Temperature and weather

Atmosphere

**What is atmosphere?**

Atmosphere (or mood) refers to the feeling the reader gets about the story based on the details the author uses.

Atmosphere is created by the description of backgrounds and settings, and sometimes by description of characters and events.





What would the **atmosphere** be like in these pictures?

**How can we create atmosphere in our stories?**

To create atmosphere we can:

* Choose **words or phrases** to create a mood
* Use **similes** and **metaphors**
* Use sound techniques like **alliteration** and **personification**

**TASK 1**

Match the positive descriptions of the things in bold in the first paragraph with the negative descriptions of them in the second paragraph.

*Overhead* ***the trees arched****, and water birds* ***called out softly****. There were trout in the* ***warm water****. I could feel the water* ***brush gently*** *against my bare legs every n0w and then as I waded knee-deep along the course of the brook.*

*And then, suddenly: fear. Cold fear was all around me – in the dark arch of the trees, the tunnel they made (into which the stream vanished), the sharp croak of birds, the icy grip of the water on my calves, the gritty scour of mud on my scraped hands.*

**TASK 2**

Change the phrases in bold in the paragraph below to change the atmosphere from a cosy, friendly one to a dark, creepy one.

*The little house was* ***cosy and friendly.*** *It smelt of* ***woodsmoke and apples*** *when you walked in and* ***little squares of sunshine fell through its tiny windows.*** *It offered no sound apart from the* ***crackle of logs on the fire****, or* ***sigh of wind in the chimney.***

**TASK 3**

Complete the ‘Vampire’s Grave’ worksheet.

**SETTING AND ATMOSPHERE - TASK**

Rewrite the description below to make it more interesting and engaging. Use all of the setting and atmosphere techniques you have learned about.

*I entered the café on a Saturday afternoon. I walked in to the café and sat down. A T.V. was on in the background. I strained to hear what had happened, but then a waitress approached and I ordered my coffee.*

Creating Characters

**The Central Character**

* In your ghost stories you will have a main character (**protagonist**) who will be the focus of your story.
* The main character is very important. As the writer, you will have to give your readers an impression of your character’s **appearance and personality** by the way you describe them.

**Bringing a Character to Life**

For our short stories we are going to learn two very important ways we can bring our characters to life. These are:

* **Descriptions of appearance**
* **Descriptions of how the character behaves and acts**

**Task – Creating a Monster**

Write a paragraph describing the appearance of a monster. Use your imagination; the monster can look however you want it to look, but you must use lots of descriptive language.

Once you have completed your monster, you will swap your paragraph with your partner and then you will try to draw each other’s monsters – keep this in mind as you are writing.

**Describing Character**

* Sometimes the writer just gives a **physical description** of the character – what they look like.
* But often the writer will give us details about the character which **reveal their personality** – these details can be about the way they move, the way they talk, and the way they act around other characters, for example.

**Individual Task**

Read the following paragraph and then discuss in your pairs and write down what this paragraph tells us about the character of **Jamie’s mother.**

“Jamie winced as his mother grabbed him, pulling him into the house as she carried on nagging him. In the space of the next ten minutes Jamie had his entire face, neck, cheeks and ears scrubbed. His shirt was pulled from him and a clean one replaced it. A fresh handkerchief was stuffed in his pocket; his teeth were re-brushed, clean socks thrust on his feet, and his trainers sprayed with scuffguard.”

**Task – Creating a Protagonist**

You are now going to plan out a possible protagonist (main character) for your story. Under each of the following headings, describe your character in as much detail as you can in your jotter.

* Appearance
* Personality
* Likes/dislikes
* What motivates your protagonist?
* What would other people say about your protagonist?

Turning Points and Climax

**What is a Turning Point?**

Most stories are written in **chronological order**. That means that the events take place in order of time. There is **a beginning, a middle, and an end**.

The beginning of a story usually introduces the reader to the place and situation in which the main character finds himself. The story then takes off from there. But for the story to be interesting and maintain a reader’s interest and attention, **something has to happen**.

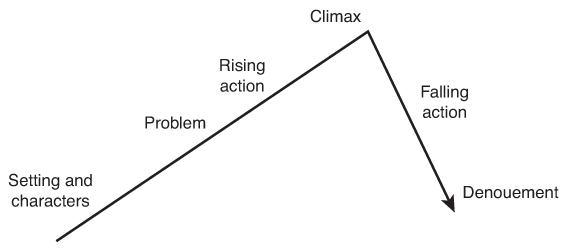
This could be an **event** or a **problem**. This event or problem **pushes the action forward**. These events and problems which push stories forward are called **turning points**.

So, turning points are events in a story which **push the action forward, or push the story in a new direction**.

Turning points help push us towards the **climax** of our stories.

What is a climax?

A climax is **the part of the story where the tension or the action reaches its highest point**.



**Individual Task**

Below are two plot points – the beginning of a story and the end of a story.

Beginning: **A circus comes to town.**

Ending: **A clown gets arrested.**

Create a plot-line on your A4 paper and add turning points which will take you from the beginning point to the end point. Be creative with the turning points – what happens in between the beginning and the end? It’s totally up to you.

**Writing Task**

You are now going to practice writing a climax. Copy the following paragraph into your jotter and then continue the story, working to build it to a climax.

*The masked man stood in front of the glass window, pointing his gun at the bank teller behind it. She sat there, frozen in terror. The people who had been queuing in front of her moments earlier were now lying on the ground, shaking and sobbing. The man lifted up his mask to reveal his mouth and said…*

Main Task – The Package

You are in a Glasgow café on a Monday morning.

You are lost in your own thoughts when a mysterious stranger enters. This person comes over to you and asks you to look after a package, promising to return. However, after an hour, the person has not returned and your curiosity gets the better of you. After much deliberation, you decide to open the package.

This will be the basic structure for your story. You will need to decide what is in the package and what the consequences are of opening it.

**Structure of your Story**

* Paragraph 1: The setting (A café)
* Paragraph 2: A mysterious stranger enters
* Paragraph 3: They are holding a package which they ask you to look after for them
* Paragraph 4: After an hour, they have not returned. Should you open the package?
* Paragraph 5 -: You open the package. What happens next?

**TASK**

Before going any further, take a minute or two to think about what might be in the package.   
  
Be as imaginative as you can – remember it could be something really silly, sinister or unexpected.   
  
As it is a SHORT story, the package is unlikely to contain a map to the lost treasure of Egypt. Deciphering the map, travelling to Egypt, digging up the treasure and so on, would take up a whole novel.

Make a list in your jotter of possible objects which could be inside the package.

**Direct Speech – The Rules**

You will end paragraph two with the stranger asking you to look after a package for them. In order to do this you must know how to use Direct Speech.

1. **Direct Speech** is used to show when someone is speaking.
2. **“Inverted Commas”** are put round **ONLY** the **WORDS** **SPOKEN**, to show when someone is speaking.

*“Hello” said John*.

1. You must start the first word inside the inverted commas with a capital letter.

*“****H****ow are you today?”*

1. You must separate what is spoken from the person speaking the words by a punctuation mark. Only one of these can be used at any one time and they must come inside the inverted commas.

*“John is over there****,****” said Jane.*

*“Where?” I asked.*

1. Take a new line for a new speaker.

**TASK**

Add speech marks to the sentences below to make them grammatically correct.

1. The conductor announced the bus is full
2. Helen said I dislike going to the dentist
3. The farmer shouted close the gate after you
4. Sally whispered it is hidden under the stone
5. The doctor asked have you ever had the measles
6. Ann enquired where is the new museum
7. Jimmy asked when are we going on holiday
8. You have broken my new pen sobbed Mark
9. I am the best footballer boasted Harry
10. When did you arrive asked her mother

**The Package – Story Structure**

**Paragraph 1**

You are in a Glasgow café on a Monday morning. Write about the café.

1. What does the café look like?
2. What noises can you hear in the café?
3. What is the weather like?
4. How do you feel on that morning?

**Paragraph 2**

A mysterious stranger enters.

Write about the stranger.

1. Describe what the person looks like.
2. Describe what clothes they are wearing.
3. Describe how the character speaks.

At the very end of this paragraph, the person will ask you to look after a package for them.

**Paragraph 3**

Describe the package.

1. What does the package look like? (dirty brown, sparkling silver wrapping)
2. What does the package feel like? (rough, smooth, dry)
3. If you shake it, does it make a noise? (rattling, ticking, rustling)
4. How do you feel about looking after the package?

By the end of this paragraph, some time has passed and it has become clear that the stranger is not returning.

**Paragraph 4**

Open it! This is when your essay will really become exciting. What is inside?

Once you open it you next have to describe your reaction to its contents. Remember adjectives can be used to add to your description of your feelings:

shocked amazed tentative terrified

petrified overjoyed stunned

moved frightened speechless

**Paragraph 5**

It is one year later.

Your last paragraph will open with where you are and what you are doing.

You should now write in the PRESENT tense. That means using “I am...” not “I was”.

How have the contents of the package changed your life?

Has your life changed for the better? Are you rich? Have you met a long lost relative? Have you moved to a sunnier climate? Do you know something now you didn’t know before you opened the package?

Has your life changed for the worse? Perhaps you are in jail? Or on the run? Maybe you lost something? Were you tracked down by anyone? Are you in hiding or with a new identity? How did your life change? What can you no longer do that you could before? Do you regret opening the package?

*Remember:*

*All good writers read over and revise their work.*

*Read over what you have written to check that it makes sense and is punctuated correctly.*

*Review your work to see if there are areas for improvement (E.g. could better word choice be used? Could your setting be better described? Could your characters be more convincing?)*

* *Are all words spelt correctly?*
* *Did I use full sentences?*
* *Have I used capital letters and full stops?*
* *Have I built convincing settings?*
* *Have I created interesting and convincing characters?*