

Scriptwriting Skill Module

Setting

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Identify setting and the details that convey it
- Analyze the influence of setting on conflict, characters, and plot
- Use knowledge of setting to write stronger scripts

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION

- *You Try It!* Student Worksheet – Setting and Its Roles

Additional Online Support:

- www.holtmcdougal.hmhco.com
- www.BlueNoseEd.com

Teach the Skill

1. Introduce Setting: Explain that **setting** is the time and place within a story, drama, poem, or other work—including a TV or movie script. It is where and when a script takes place. Since television and movies are such visual media, setting plays a large role in establishing the atmosphere of a story. Even more importantly, a setting also defines what sort of plotline and characters a script can have.

2. Teach Setting:

- Ask the students to recall a scene from a recently-viewed film. Working as a class, fill in the following table. Have the students be as precise as possible in their descriptions.

EXAMPLE

Title of Film	Where Did Film Take Place?	When Did Film Take Place	How Did Setting Affect Conflict, Characterization, and Resolution of Plot?

- As a class, read the excerpt from the film script below. When the class has read the script, have the students volunteer answers to fill out the table below the script.

FADE IN:

EXTERIOR: ENORMOUS OIL PLATFORM IN THE GULF OF MEXICO DURING A CATEGORY 5 HURRICANE - NIGHT

Wind whips the ocean into a frenzy. Towering waves pound the platform, making it look fragile, like a toy.

On the platform, GEO and PARK, dressed in yellow slickers, gaze into the air.

Above the platform, buffeted by the winds, a helicopter descends to rescue them. The wind pushes it almost into the sea. With a gesture of regret, the helicopter pilot turns his craft around. In seconds, it is gone.

GEO

That's the last helicopter.

PARK

Oh, they'll be back.

GEO

Want to bet?

PARK

Absolutely! It's not that bad out here, really. Five bucks says they come back for us in the next two minutes.

As if to answer Park, a huge wave crashes over the side, and almost washes them into the water. Only their safety lines keep them from going overboard.

GEO

Looks like I'm going to be five bucks richer.

PARK

We didn't shake on it.

Geo smiles, but the wind howls. The waves crash into the platform. The two men make sure each other's lifelines are safe. Then, pulling themselves hand over hand against the wind, they make their way to a more sheltered portion of the rig.

EXAMPLE

Setting	
<i>When</i> does the action take place? How do you know?	
<i>Where</i> does the action take place? How do you know?	

<p><i>How</i> does the setting affect the conflict? <i>How</i> does the setting affect the characterization? Describe these effects in a sentence or two.</p>	
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3. Apply Setting: Distribute copies of the You Try It! Worksheet: “Setting and Its Roles.” After reading the directions and going over the characterizations that have been provided, have the students work in small groups to imagine how each setting will affect the way the characters behave.

QUICK CHECK Ask students to identify and explain what setting is. Make sure that they understand the opportunities for plot and characterization that are associated with each particular setting.

YOU TRY IT!

Setting and Its Roles

GOAL

Setting can be one of a scriptwriter’s best friends. Each setting brings with it a range of exciting narrative possibilities. Each setting also provides an opportunity for characters to react to things in distinctive ways. As you compete in the Blue Nose Scriptwriting Contest, seize the opportunity to make setting work for you!

DIRECTIONS Different settings call for different plotlines. They also can allow scriptwriters to bring out different aspects of their characters’ personalities. In this exercise, start with three characters (the “Team of Outsiders”) who are all on the run, yet who have vowed to stick together. Take them through different settings, and imagine how each setting affects what will happen, and how each character will react.

The Team of Outsiders

Veronica Van Dorn: A Manhattan socialite, Veronica has run away from her billionaire husband, after finding out about his long-time affair with the president’s wife. Her husband, afraid of scandal, has bribed the chief of the FBI to find her.

Pete (“Omar the Magnificent”) Cardin: A small-time magician in Las Vegas, Pete is on the run from the mob, who—based upon his appearance—wrongly suspect that he is the hit-man who has murdered their boss.

Amy Martinez-Patrick: A math genius at age ten, Amy has run away from her controlling parents. Her parents are pushing her to go to MIT, but she wants to go to Carver Elementary School, in Hays, Iowa, and grow up with her friends. Distraught, her parents have sent a pair of ruthless bounty-hunters to retrieve her.

Setting One: The Bonny Bush Country Club, Scarsdale New York

How Does This Setting Affect the Plot? _____

How Does Each Character React to the Setting? _____

Setting Two: The Iowa State Fair, Des Moines, Iowa

How Does This Setting Affect the Plot? _____

How Does Each Character React to the Setting? _____

Setting Three: The Daytona 500 NASCAR Race, Daytona Beach, Florida

How Does This Setting Affect the Plot? _____

How Does Each Character React to the Setting? _____

Setting Four: The Boardwalk in Atlantic City, New Jersey

How Does This Setting Affect the Plot? _____

How Does Each Character React to the Setting? _____

Self-Check

Look back over the way you have imagined different settings would affect the way these characters behave? Think about the characters in the scripts you are working on? How would they act if you put them in different settings? What new things would you learn about each of them?