

Edit for Place with Patricia Charpentier

Why is setting important?

“Every place has a point—some distinctive identifying trait—that the writer owes it to the reader to find.”
William Zinsser, *Writing About Your Life*

What are some of the ways to establish the setting?

How to evaluate your writing in relation to setting?

- **Do you name the physical location where the story is taking place?**

- **Do you identify the timeframe of this story?**

- **Does most of your description rely on concrete nouns and verbs and less on adjectives and adverbs?**

- **Do you layer in the description rather than dump it all in one place?**

- **Do you describe the setting as part of the action or separate from it?**

- **If necessary, does your description impact the tone of the piece you're writing?**

- **If necessary, have you included background information?**

Excerpt from *Lucky* by Alice Sebold, page 14

Everything slowed down. He stood up and began dragging me over the grass by my hair. I twisted and half crawled, trying to keep up with him. Dimly, I had seen the dark entrance of the amphitheater tunnel from the path. As we neared it, and I realized it was our destination, a rush of fear ran through me. I knew I would die.

There was an old iron fence a few feet out from the tunnel entrance. It was three feet high and provided a narrow space through which you had to walk in order to enter the tunnel. As he dragged me, as I scrambled against the grass, I caught sight of that fence and became utterly convinced that if he brought me beyond this point, I would not survive.

For a moment, as he dragged me across the ground, I clung feebly to the bottom of that iron fence, before a rough pull yanked me clean. People think a woman stops fighting when she is physically exhausted, but I was about to begin my real fight, a fight of words and lies and the brain.

Notes on evaluating Alice Sebold's *Lucky*.

Assignment

- Evaluate your piece for setting as we discussed.
- Highlight all words and phrases related to setting.
- Apply the various tests to determine if you should add, change, or delete anything.
 - How much do you describe the setting?
 - Do you include physical description?
 - Do you relay time and place?
 - Does your description rely on strong nouns and verbs?
 - Is the description of your setting concentrated or spread out?
 - Do you incorporate the setting into the action or is it separate from it?
 - Does the setting reflect the tone of the piece?
 - Has background information been included, if necessary?
- Make changes to your text in response to your evaluation.
- Share a passage from your piece that relates to setting with us on the forum.
- Tell us what you learned about your writing in relation to setting.