

It's time to really nail down some of your novel's settings. The setting is where and when your novel takes place. Of course, many novels have more than one setting, ranging from the general (a city, country, or world 100 years ago) to the specific (a character's house or room during the Super Bowl). What's great about setting is that you can use it to mirror or reinforce your characters.

For example, if you are writing about a mysterious person, you might place him or her in a dark, creepy mansion on a hill outside of town. Or, if one of your characters is feeling trapped in his or her life, he or she might live in a small town in the middle of nowhere.

Here's us just telling you about Larry:

Larry was having a hard time. He felt sad and trapped. He was once a famous author, but he hadn't written a word for years.

And here's us telling you about Larry, but through the space that he is living in:

Larry's apartment was less of a living space than a glorified closet. The bathroom was just big enough to sit on the toilet without having his knees touch the sink, and the window was more like a ship's porthole. The bed was so small his feet hung over the edge, and there was really not much to do but watch static on the television. The sound of that static often kept Larry company late into the night.

The place did not have a kitchen, so he bought a camping hotplate to make his single-serving meals. He ate the same thing every night, but he did not seem to mind the monotony of his repeated dinner of rice, wilted spinach, and baked beans or the peculiar odor that the beans left on his sheets.

The only item on the wall of Larry's apartment was a framed, yellowed copy of the New York Times Best Seller list from 16 years ago. Larry's name was at the top of it. Below the newspaper clipping, on Larry's desk, sat an old, dusty typewriter and an even dustier stack of blank paper.

Larry doesn't even have to speak for himself; his apartment speaks for him.

For each of the following characters, try to come up with a setting that will reflect or reinforce what you imagine about them. You'll start by thinking about characters we made up, and then move into writing about some of your own.

As you write, try to be as detailed as possible. Don't forget colors, sounds, and even smells.

- A shy teenage girl who's starting to come out of her shell:
- A superhero who has lost his or her powers:
- A corrupt politician:
- An old, lonely woman:
- Your protagonist:
- Your antagonist:
- One of your supporting characters: