

Fiction

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Learning Outcomes

This unit addresses the following learning outcomes:
OL8, R1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9; W1, 3, 7, 8, 9.

In your Final Assessment Examination, you may be required to answer questions on Unseen Fiction and Studied Fiction.

The marks for each question will be clearly indicated on the paper and the space provided for your answer will give you an indication of how much you should write.

Guidance will be given to help you with your time-management and you should pay careful attention to time-limits in order to finish the entire paper within two hours.

In order to do well in this area of the course, you need to have read a wide variety of short stories and novels and to have studied two novels and a selection of short stories in depth.

You will need to use an appropriate critical vocabulary while responding to texts.

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Key Skills for Answering on Fiction:

When you respond to fiction texts, you must display an ability to understand and interpret what you read. You are expected in your response to make relevant points, which you can support with reference to the text.

You need to understand each of the following key areas:



- Characters
- Setting

- Plot
- Theme

A. Characters

1. Creating Characters

Characters must be credible and interesting in order to engage the reader. Remember that characters are not real people in fiction. They have been created by the writer. Your task is to explain how this is done. Pay very careful attention to the author's word choice in descriptions.

Writers use different methods when creating fictitious characters:

- The reader can be given **direct information** about the character, e.g. 'Mrs O'Connor was a mean-minded, irritable woman, who revelled in causing trouble for the children of the neighbourhood'. Here, we are told what we should think of Mrs O'Connor. There is no room for any doubt, due to the use of specific adjectives 'mean-minded', 'irritable' and the use of the verb 'revelled'.



- **Implied information** can be given through the character's actions. In this case, the writer does not tell us directly, but allows us to form our own opinion of a character based on how they act and/or react in situations. This is the most reliable indication of what a character is like. Look at the following description from *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens. The characters of both Estella (the girl) and Pip (the child) are suggested to the reader, rather than directly described:

She came back, with some bread and meat and a little mug of beer. She put the mug down on the stones of the yard, and gave me the bread and meat without looking at me, as insolently as if I were a dog in disgrace. I was so humiliated, hurt, spurned, offended, angry, sorry – I cannot hit upon the right name for the smart – God knows what its name was – that tears started to my eyes. The moment they sprang there, the girl looked at me with a quick delight in having been the cause of them. This gave me power to keep them back and to look at her: so, she gave a contemptuous toss – but with a sense, I thought, of having made too sure that I was so wounded – and left me.

The words and phrases underlined suggest that Estella is a cruel and haughty individual, who enjoys humiliating another child. Pip's reaction to this treatment shows his sensitivity and passionate nature. Although he is deeply offended by Estella's actions and attitude, he maintains his dignity by refusing to cry and by looking straight at his tormentor.

- Many descriptions use a **combination of direct and implied information** to bring the character alive on the page and to stimulate the interest of the reader. We want to know more about them because they intrigue us.

Tasks



1. In each of the following character descriptions identify examples of direct and implied information and comment on the effectiveness of the writer's use of language.
 - (a) He was a big, beefy man with hardly any neck, although he did have a very large moustache. Mrs Dursley was thin and blonde and had nearly twice the usual amount of neck, which came in very useful as she spent so much of her time craning over garden fences, spying on the neighbours. (Extract from *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* by J.K. Rowling.)
 - (b) Her skin was a rich black that would have peeled like a plum if snagged, but then no one would have thought of getting close enough to Mrs Flowers to ruffle her dress, let alone snag her skin. (Extract from *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou.)

- (c) Lord Asriel was a tall man with powerful shoulders, a fierce dark face, and eyes that seemed to flash and glitter with savage laughter. It was a face to be dominated by, or to fight; never a face to patronise or pity. (Extract from *Northern Lights* by Philip Pullman.)
2. Imagine that you are writing a novel. Write a short description of each of the characters pictured below, using direct and implied information.



2. Dialogue

What characters say, and the way that they say it, can reveal their attitudes and certain aspects of their personalities. Take, for example, this piece of dialogue from the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. Atticus Finch is speaking to his young daughter, Scout:

‘First of all’, he said, ‘if you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you’ll get along better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view . . . until you climb into his skin and walk around in it’.

This short excerpt from the dialogue is very revealing. It shows us his attitude to other people and how he is both just and wise. He speaks to Scout in language which she can understand and uses a simple image of walking around in another person’s skin to illustrate how to understand other people.

We can also learn about characters from **what others say about them** and from how they relate to other characters. Ask yourself if characters are liked by others and try to explain the reasons why or why not. Are they sincere, friendly, open, cunning, nasty, devious, etc?

What characters say about themselves and their feelings can give us an insight into their personalities, attitudes and motives.

3. Questions on Character

When discussing character, highlight or underline anything which you can use to support your points. Then, jot down a few words to describe the character. Remember that you are looking at qualities or traits of the character – keep that as the central focus. Don't just summarise.

The following pages contain examples of extracts and questions to explore character. Extracts 1–3 are written from the perspective of an individual who is a part of the narrative. We call this **first-person narration**. It is easily recognisable by the use of the pronoun 'I'. When a story is written from the point of view of the narrator, the information the reader gets is based only on the narrator's viewpoint. The reader's understanding of other characters, conflict and plot development are based on what we learn from the narrator.

While this has some limitations, there are also major advantages to the first person point of view. The reader experiences being inside the mind of the narrator, which creates a direct link between them. As the narrator reveals emotions and thoughts to the reader, a personal intimacy is created. It is almost as if the reader is a best friend in whom one can confide. A lot of fiction for young adults use the first person for this exact reason; it creates an immediate connection with the reader.

Extracts 4 and 5 are written from the **third-person** point of view. When writing fiction, **third-person narration** uses 'he', 'she', 'they', 'them', 'his', 'hers' etc.

Extract 1.

Read the edited extract from the novel *Slam* by Nick Hornby and then answer the questions that follow.

Background information

In this edited extract, from the opening of the book, we are introduced to Sam, a skateboard-loving teenager. Sam tells us about himself in his own words. He reveals that he holds imaginary conversations with his skateboarding hero, Tony Hawk.

If I'm going to tell this story properly, without trying to hide anything, then there's something I should own up to, because it's important. Here's the thing. I know it sounds stupid, and I'm not this sort of person usually, honest. I mean, I don't believe in, you know, ghosts or reincarnation or any weird stuff at all. Anyway. I'll just say it and you can think what you want. I talk to Tony Hawk, and Tony Hawk talks back.

Some of you probably won't have heard of Tony Hawk. Well, I'll tell you, but I'll have to say that you should know already. Not knowing Tony Hawk is like not knowing Robbie Williams, or maybe even Tony Blair. It's worse than that, if you think about it, because there are loads of politicians and loads of singers. But there is only one skater, really, and his name's Tony Hawk. Well, there is not only one. But he's definitely the Big One. He's the J.K. Rowling of

skaters, the Big Mac, the iPod, the Xbox. The only excuse I'll accept for not knowing Tony Hawk is that you're not interested in skating.

When I got into skating, my mum bought me a Tony Hawk poster off the Internet. It's the coolest present I've ever had, and it wasn't even the most expensive. And it went straight up onto my bedroom wall, and I just got into the habit of telling it things. At first I only told Tony about skating – I would talk about the problems I was having or the tricks I'd pulled off. I pretty much ran to my room to tell him about the first rock'n'roll* I'd managed, because I knew it would mean much more to a picture of Tony Hawk than it would to a real-life mum. I'm not dissing* my mum, but she hasn't got a clue, really. So when I told her about things like that, she'd try to look all enthusiastic, but there was nothing really going on in her eyes. She

was all, 'Oh, that's great'. But if I'd asked her what a rock'n'roll was, she wouldn't have been able to tell me. So what was the point? Tony knew,

though. Maybe that was why my mum bought me the poster, so that I'd have someone else to talk to.



rock'n'roll = skateboarding term
dissing = disrespecting

1. Which of the following sentences best describes Sam's relationship with his mother? Explain your choice using support from the extract.
 - (a) They have no understanding of each other.
 - (b) Sam loves and respects his mother.
 - (c) Sam and his mother love and care about each other although they have different interests.
 - (d) Sam finds his mother annoying and clueless.
2. From your reading of the passage, what do you learn about the character of Sam? Support your answer with reference to the extract.
3. What do you think Sam means when he says, 'He's the J.K. Rowling of skaters, the Big Mac, the iPod, the Xbox'?
4. In the extract Sam tells us that he sometimes holds imaginary conversations with his skateboarding hero, Tony Hawk. Based on information from the extract, write out the conversation that might take place between Sam and Tony.
5. From a novel you have read, select a character whom you found particularly unusual or interesting. Write three paragraphs about this character, commenting on the role played by the author's use of description and dialogue. You must name the novel and the author.

Extract 2.

The following extract is taken from the novel *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio. Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

Background information

The story is narrated by August, a ten-year-old boy born with a terrible facial abnormality, who longs to be accepted as an ordinary child.

I know I'm not an ordinary ten-year-old kid. I mean, sure, I do ordinary things. I eat ice cream. I ride my bike. I play ball. I have an Xbox. Stuff like that makes me ordinary. I guess. And I feel ordinary. Inside. But I know ordinary kids don't

make other ordinary kids run away screaming in playgrounds. I know ordinary kids don't get stared at wherever they go.

If I found a magic lamp and I could have one wish, I would wish that I had a normal face that

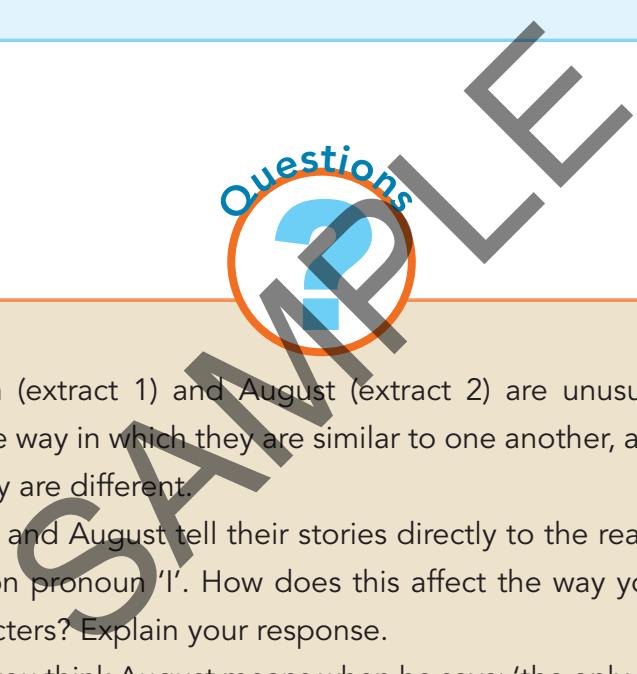
no one ever noticed at all. I would wish that I could walk down the street without people seeing me and then doing that look-away thing. Here's what I think: the only reason I'm not ordinary is that no one else sees me that way.

But I'm kind of used to how I look by now. I know how to pretend I don't see the faces people make. We've all gotten pretty good at that sort of thing: me, Mom and Dad, Via. Actually, I take that back: Via's not so good at it. She can get really annoyed when people do something rude. Like, for instance, one time in the playground some older kids made some

noises. I don't even know what the noises were exactly because I didn't hear them myself, but Via heard and she just started yelling at the kids. That's the way she is. I'm not that way.

Via doesn't see me as ordinary. She says she does, but if I were ordinary, she wouldn't feel like she needs to protect me as much. And Mom and Dad don't see me as ordinary, either. They see me as extraordinary. I think the only person in the world who realises how ordinary I am is me.

My name is August, by the way. I won't describe what I look like. Whatever you're thinking, it's probably worse.

- 
- Both Sam (extract 1) and August (extract 2) are unusual characters. Name one way in which they are similar to one another, and one way in which they are different.
 - Both Sam and August tell their stories directly to the reader, using the first person pronoun 'I'. How does this affect the way you respond to the characters? Explain your response.
 - What do you think August means when he says: 'the only reason I'm not ordinary is that no one else sees me that way.'?
 - Based on the extract, what do you consider to be the strongest aspects of August's character? Explain your response.
 - From a novel you have studied, select a character who had to overcome some obstacle or deal with a personal problem. Briefly describe the obstacle or problem and comment on the attitude of the character to his/her situation and how he/she felt about it. You must name the novel and the author.

Extract 3.

Read the following extract, adapted from the short story *No Place Like* by Gene Kemp, and answer the questions which follow.

Background information

In this extract, Pete, an accident-prone 16-year-old, discovers that he has forgotten about the toast which he had placed under the grill.

I must have fallen asleep for I came to suddenly woken by the sound not of the universe but loud banging and roaring going on somewhere. I heaved myself off the bed in time to see Dad filling the doorway. Speaking.

'I come home early,' he was saying in a voice loud even for him, 'having spent my lunchtime beavering away on your behalf...'

'You needn't have bothered...' I began and then sniffed the air. 'Dad, what's that terrible smell?'

My father did a dance up and down in the doorway. For a big man he's light on his feet.

'Aha, so you noticed, did you? You're quick, I'll say that for you. In fact you amaze me. I never fail to be amazed at you through life, but today you have surpassed even yourself.' "What's that smell?" you ask, standing there like a great goop. That smell, my boy, is the smell of the house burning.'

"The house burning?"

"You heard me. That's what I said. And you understood did you? Clever boy."

I managed to peer past him to a blue and

smoke-filled landing. A strong pong of grilled grill was floating up the stairs.

'Hadn't we better do something?' I tried to push past him.

'Don't worry,' he said soothingly. 'It's all under control. But only because' his voice started to get louder until it beat into my skull like hammer blows, 'I arrived home early full of peace and goodwill towards men, to find what? What indeed?' he bellowed, lowering his face close to mine. 'You might well ask. Half a dozen people crowding round the front door, its bell out of action, telephone engineers trampling all over the garden because the line's been reported out of order, and a fire engine screeching to a halt outside the house. Didn't you even hear that?'

I shook my head.

'The kitchen full of smoke and about to burst into flames?'

I tried to speak and couldn't.

'But don't worry about it. Don't give it a thought. It was just someone who shall be nameless, had left the grill on with toast under it, or what had been toast in earlier times...'





1. What impression of Pete's father do you get from reading this extract? Support your answer with reference to the extract.
2. In your opinion, what kind of character is Pete, based on his reactions to the incident described in the extract? Explain your response.
3. Do you think the author meant this to be a serious or a funny incident? Explain your response.
4. Imagine that you are Pete. Write a diary entry, based on the incident.
5. From a novel or short story which you have studied, select two or more characters who engage in conflict (serious or funny) with each other. Explain how the conflict arose, how it developed and how it concluded. Pay particular attention to the role played by the writer's use of dialogue. You must give the title of the novel or short story and name the author.

Extract 4.

Read the following extract from *A Game of Thrones* by George R.R. Martin and answer the questions which follow.

Background information

Here, the point of view is known as **third person or omniscient** (all-knowing) narration because the narrator is 'all-knowing'. He/she has created the characters and plot and can see into the minds and thoughts of different characters, presenting the reader with various angles from which they can view events.

Fifteen years past, when they had ridden forth to win a throne, the Lord of Storm's End had been clean-shaven, clear-eyed, and muscled like a maiden's fantasy. Six and a half feet tall, he towered over lesser men, and when he donned the armour and the great antlered helmet of his house, he became a veritable giant. He'd had a giant's strength too, his weapon of choice a spiked iron war-hammer that Ned could scarcely lift. In those days, the smell of leather and blood had clung to him like perfume.

Now it was perfume that clung to him like perfume, and he had a girth to match his

height. Ned had last seen the king nine years before during Balon Greyjoy's rebellion, when the stag and the direwolf* had joined to end the pretensions of the self-proclaimed King of the Iron Islands. Since the night they had stood side by side in Greyjoy's fallen stronghold, where Robert had accepted the rebel lord's surrender and Ned had taken his son Theon as hostage and ward, the king had gained at least eight stone. A beard as coarse and black as iron covered his jaw to hide his double chin and the sag of his royal jowls, but nothing could hide his stomach or the dark circles under his eyes.

**direwolf* = now extinct species of wolf



1. The writer skilfully shows the changes brought about by time in this description of the Lord of Storm's End. Identify four examples of direct contrast in the extract.
2. Explain the meaning of the following words in the context of the extract:
 - (a) Donned
 - (b) Veritable
 - (c) Girth
 - (d) Coarse
3. What is meant by each of these images?
 - (a) Muscled like a maiden's fantasy
 - (b) Now it was perfume that clung to him like perfume
4. Judging by the above extract, which of the following best describes the genre of *A Game of Thrones*? Give reasons for your response.
 - (a) Science fiction
 - (b) Fantasy
 - (c) Detective story
 - (d) Thriller

Extract 5.

This extract (slightly edited) is taken from, *The Necklace*, a short story by Guy de Maupassant (1850–1893). Read the extract and answer the questions which follow.

Background information

The story begins by immediately introducing the character of Madame Loisel.

She was one of those attractive pretty girls, born by a freak of fortune in a lower-middle-class family. She had no dowry, no expectations, no way of getting known, appreciated, loved and married by some wealthy gentleman of good family. And she allowed herself to be married to a junior clerk in the Ministry of Public Instruction.

She dressed plainly, having no money to spend on herself. But she was as unhappy as if she had known better days.

She always had a sense of frustration, feeling herself born for all the refinements and luxuries of life. She hated the bareness of her flat, the shabbiness of the walls, the worn upholstery of the chairs, and the ugliness of the curtains. All these things, which another woman of her class would not even have noticed, were pain and grief to her. The sight of the little Breton maid doing her simple house-work aroused in her passionate regrets and hopeless dreaming. She imagined hushed ante-rooms hung with

oriental fabrics and lit by tall bronze candelabra, with two impressive footmen in knee-breeches dozing in great armchairs, made drowsy by the heat of the radiators. She imagined vast drawing-rooms, upholstered in antique silk, splendid pieces of furniture littered with priceless curios, and dainty scented boudoirs, designed for teatime conversation with intimate friends and much sought-after society gentlemen, whose attentions every woman envies and desires.

When she sat down to dinner at the round table



covered with a three-days-old cloth opposite her husband, who took the lid off the casserole with the delighted exclamation: 'Ah! hot-pot again! How lovely! It's the best dish in the world!', she was dreaming of luxurious dinners with classical figures and exotic birds in a fair forest; she dreamt of exquisite dishes served on valuable china and whispered compliments listened to with a sphinx*-like smile while toying with the pink flesh of a trout or the wing of a hazel hen.

sphinx = a sphinx is an ancient Egyptian statue, having a woman's head and a lion's body

- SAMPLE**
- Questions**
- What impression of the character of Madame Loisel do you get from reading the extract? Give reasons for your answer.
 - What details in the extract suggest that this story is set in the nineteenth century rather than in a modern setting? Support your answer with specific details from the passage.
 - Explain the meaning of each of the following phrases:
 - born by a freak of fortune
 - littered with priceless curios
 - with a sphinx-like smile
 - What kind of person is Madame Loisel's husband, based on the evidence of the extract?
 - Name a character from a novel or short story you have studied who is disappointed or disillusioned for some reason. Explain what the reason for the disappointment is and how the character dealt with their situation. You must give the title of the novel or short story and the name of the author.

Using the PQE method to discuss a character from a studied novel:

Sample Question and Answer on Character

Select a character from a novel which you have studied who undergoes a change in the course of the narrative. Explain how this character changes.

The novel which I have studied is *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. Scout Finch, who is the narrator and one of the main characters, undergoes a journey of discovery about herself and her society in the course of the plot. At the start of the novel, Scout is only six years of age and has a naive and childish view of life. However, throughout the next three years of her life, she learns many important lessons which help her to grow up and become more mature.

One of these lessons is that people should be accepted for who they are and not treated with disrespect because they do things differently. [P] Calpurnia, the cook, insists on Scout treating Walter Cunningham with respect, even when he eats differently to the Finch family. She tells her crossly that she 'aint called on to contradict 'em . . . if he wants to eat up the tablecloth, you let him, you hear?'. Calpurnia will not tolerate Scout acting as if she were 'high and mighty' and accuses her of disgracing the family by commenting on Walter's request to pour molasses on his vegetables. This is an important lesson for Scout and one from which she learns. [Q+E]

Atticus also teaches Scout important lessons which bring about a change in her outlook on life and which make her change and grow up. [P] He encourages her to remain calm in heated situations and to avoid fighting as a means of venting her anger. He encourages her to try to see things from the point of view of others, telling her that she will 'never really understand a person' until she climbs 'into his skin' and 'walks around in it'. Although Scout has many problems heeding the advice of her father, she does learn these lessons and matures as the story progresses. [Q+E]

One of the most important lessons which Scout learns is that her society has the 'disease' of prejudice. [P] Scout learns that this prejudice is 'as much Maycomb as missionary teas' and comes to realise 'the simple hell people give other people.' She is not as insightful as her brother Jem, who is older than her, during the trial of Tom Robinson, naively believing that Tom must have been treated fairly. However, we see her growing maturity in the way that she understands that Boo Radley is not the monster that local ignorance and superstition have made him out to be. She learns that it would be 'sort of like shootin' a mockingbird' not to allow Boo the right to his privacy, although the local people would treat him like a hero for saving the lives of herself and Jem. [Q+E]

Throughout the novel, Scout learns many important lessons that help her to become more of a 'lady' and to behave with true courage and dignity. She still has a long way to go though and I found it very amusing when she remarked, at the end, that there wasn't much left for herself and Jem to learn, 'except, possibly, algebra'.



B. Setting

1. The Importance of Setting

The **setting** of a piece of literature is **the world** of the narrative; **a time and place** which provide a backdrop to the story. Setting can also include weather, historical period, a social environment and physical details about immediate surroundings. Settings can be realistic or imaginary (e.g. fantasy) or a combination of both real and imaginary elements. Most novels and short stories include more than one setting as the narrative progresses.

The function of the setting is of great importance in any narrative.

- It can have a huge effect on **plot** and **characters**.
- It can establish **mood** or **atmosphere**.
- It can add **realism** to a narrative.
- It can be **symbolic** in nature and related to central **themes**.
- It can help the reader to **engage imaginatively** with the characters and plot.

An author can bring the setting alive by using **descriptive details**. You need to ask yourself the following questions about setting:

- **Where** is this story taking place?
- What is the **importance** of the setting to the story?
- How does the writer use **language** to create the setting?

It is usually quite easy to establish the time and place of the setting. Sometimes writers give neutral, factual details which **convey objective information**:

The town of Ballygarbh has a population of three thousand people. Many of the present inhabitants have lived in the town for most of their lives and can trace their roots back several centuries. Very few outsiders come to live in

Ballygarbh, as it does not have much to offer as regards employment or opportunity. The old square, where people once congregated on fair days, is now home to a few small shops, a couple of pubs and a small filling station.

However, it can be more challenging to create a setting which **contributes to the narrative**. When commenting on setting, it is a good idea to ask yourself the following: What can I **see, hear, taste, feel, smell**? Writers can **appeal to the senses** to create a vivid sense of reality and invite the reader into the imagined world. Take, for example, the description of Maycomb in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*:

Maycomb was an old town, but it was a tired old town when I first knew it. In rainy weather the streets turned to red slop; grass grew on the sidewalks, the courthouse sagged in the square. Somehow, it was hotter then; a black dog suffered on a summer's day; bony mules hitched to Hoover carts flicked flies in the sweltering shade of the live oaks on the square. Men's stiff collars wilted by nine in the morning. Ladies bathed before noon, after their three o' clock

naps, and by nightfall were like soft tea-cakes with frostings of sweat and sweet talcum.

People moved slowly then. They ambled across the square, shuffled in and out of the stores around it, took their time about everything. A day was twenty-four hours long but seemed longer. There was no hurry, for there was nowhere to go, nothing to buy and no money to buy it with.

Here the writer appeals to several of the reader's senses and captures the slow pace of life in an American small town in the 1930s. The description enables the reader to experience the world of the narrative which later helps in understanding the thoughts, actions and feelings of different characters.

Word choice can help establish setting and mood. In the extract from *To Kill a Mockingbird* we can see some excellent examples of well-chosen words. Notice how the courthouse 'sagged', how men's collars 'wilted', how people 'ambled'. These verbs help to create the atmosphere of a place which could be unpleasant in both rainy and in 'sweltering' weather. The town is captured as being 'old' and 'tired', the people behave in a predictable manner and are set in their ways. All of these aspects become crucially important as events unfold because they influence the behaviour of the characters.

When you comment on how a writer creates setting, pay careful attention to **small details** and be prepared to comment on the writer's **word choice**.

2. Questions on Setting

Extract 1.

Read the opening lines from the novel, *The Picture of Dorian Grey*, by Oscar Wilde and answer the questions which follow.

The studio was filled with the rich odour of roses, and when the light summer wind stirred amidst the trees of the garden, there came

through the open door the heavy scent of the lilac, or the more delicate perfume of the pink-flowering thorn.

Questions



- Identify three phrases which appeal to our sense of smell and comment on the specific word choice in each phrase.
- What details of the physical setting are revealed in this short extract?

Extract 2.

Read the extract from *A Farewell to Arms* by Ernest Hemingway and answer the questions that follow.

In the late summer of that year we lived in a house in a village that looked across the river and the plain to the mountains. In the bed of the river there were pebbles and boulders, dry and white in the sun, and the water was clear and swiftly moving and blue in the channels. Troops went by the house and down the road

and the dust they raised powdered the leaves of the trees. The trunks of the trees too were dusty and the leaves fell early that year and we saw the troops marching along the road and the dust rising and leaves, stirred by the breeze, falling and the soldiers marching and afterward the road bare and white except for the leaves.



1. Which of the following sentences best describes the setting in this extract? Explain your choice.
 - (a) The setting is in a remote and lonely place.
 - (b) The setting is in a rural village.
 - (c) The setting is near an army barracks.
 - (d) The setting is in a house.
2. The author repeats the word 'and' very often in this description of the setting. In your opinion, what effect has this on the extract as a whole? Explain your response.
3. What senses are appealed to in this extract? You must support your answer with quotation from the extract.
4. What role does colour play in this description? Explain your answer.
5. How would you describe the atmosphere created in this extract? Give reasons for your answer.
6. Choose a description of a place from any novel or short story which you have read. Explain how the author created a sense of place and atmosphere. You must give the title of the text and name the author.

Extract 3.

Read the two extracts taken from the opening chapter of the novel *Wuthering Heights*, by Emily Brontë and answer the questions that follow.

'Wuthering Heights' is the name of Mr Heathcliff's dwelling. 'Wuthering' being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather. Pure, bracing ventilation they must have up there at all times, indeed: one may guess the power of the north wind blowing over the edge, by the excessive

slant of a few stunted firs at the end of the house; and by a range of gaunt thorns all stretching their limbs one way, as if craving alms of the sun. Happily, the architect had foresight to build it strong: the narrow windows are deeply set in the wall, and the corners defended with large jutting stones.



1. Which of the following phrases best describes the location of 'Wuthering Heights'? Explain your choice of phrase with close reference to the descriptive details and language used by the author.
 - (a) Remote and isolated
 - (b) Rural and pretty
 - (c) Fresh and invigorating
 - (d) Harsh and bleak
 - (e) Welcoming and friendly
2. What is the meaning, as used in the extract, of each of the following words:
 - (a) Provincial
 - (b) Atmospheric
 - (c) Tumult
 - (d) Bracing
 - (e) Ventilation
 - (f) Stunted
 - (g) Jutting
3. Emily Brontë describes how the house is suited to its location: 'Happily, the architect had foresight to build it strong: the narrow windows are deeply set in the wall, and the corners defended with large jutting stones.' If this house is symbolic of Mr Heathcliff himself, what would you expect his main character traits to be?

The description continues as follows:

One stop brought us into the family sitting-room, without any introductory lobby or passage: they call it here 'the house' pre-eminently. It includes kitchen and parlour, generally; but I believe at Wuthering Heights the kitchen is forced to retreat altogether into another quarter: at least I distinguished a chatter of tongues, and a clatter of culinary utensils, deep within; and I observed no signs of roasting, boiling, or baking, about the huge fireplace; nor any glitter of copper saucepans and tin cullenders on the walls. One end, indeed, reflected splendidly both light and heat from ranks of immense pewter dishes, interspersed with silver jugs and tankards, towering row after row, on a vast oak dresser,

to the very roof. The latter had never been under-drawn: its entire anatomy lay bare to an inquiring eye, except where a frame of wood laden with oatcakes and clusters of legs of beef, mutton, and ham, concealed it. Above the chimney were sundry villainous old guns, and a couple of horse-pistols: and, by way of ornament, three gaudily-painted canisters disposed along its ledge. The floor was of smooth, white stone; the chairs, high-backed, primitive structures, painted green: one or two heavy black ones lurking in the shade. In an arch under the dresser reposed a huge, liver-coloured bitch pointer, surrounded by a swarm of squealing puppies; and other dogs haunted other recesses.



- Comment on each of the five underlined words or phrases in the above extract and suggest reasons why the author may have included them.
- Identify descriptive details which appeal to our senses of sight (visual), hearing (aural) and touch (tactile).
- What details suggest that the room is very large? Explain your response.
- Basing your answer solely on these two extracts from *Wuthering Heights*, what do you think will be the major theme/themes of this novel? Give reasons for your answer.

Extract 4.

Read the extract from *White Fang* by Jack London and answer the questions that follow.

Dark spruce forest frowned on either side of the frozen waterway. The trees had been stripped by a recent wind of their white covering of frost, and they seemed to lean toward each other, black and ominous, in the fading light. A vast

silence reigned over the land. The land itself was a desolation, lifeless, without movement, so lone and cold that the spirit of it was not even that of sadness. There was a hint in it of laughter, but of a laughter more terrible than any sadness

— a laughter that was mirthless as the smile of the Sphinx, a laughter cold as the frost and partaking of the grimness of infallibility. It was the masterful and incommunicable wisdom of

eternity laughing at the futility of life and the effort of life. It was the Wild, the savage, frozen-hearted Northland Wild.



1. Find an example of each of the following techniques in the above paragraph and explain the effect of each in creating the setting:

(a) Alliteration	(d) Simile
(b) Contrast	(e) Personification
(c) Repetition	
2. Give a definition of each of the following words as used in the extract:

(a) Ominous	(d) Infallibility
(b) Mirthless	(e) Incommunicable
(c) Grimness	(f) Futility
3. How would you describe the atmosphere of this setting? Pay careful attention to sensual imagery and specific word choice in your answer.
4. Comment on the effect of the three underlined verbs in the extract.
5. Would this opening paragraph encourage you to read the entire novel?
Give reasons why or why not.

Extract 5.

Read the extract from *The Haunting of Hill House* by Shirley Jackson and answer the questions that follow.

No live organism can continue for long to exist sanely under conditions of absolute reality; even larks and katydids* are supposed, by some, to dream. Hill House, not sane, stood by itself against its hills, holding darkness within; it had stood so for eighty years and might

stand for eighty more. Within, walls continued upright, bricks met neatly, floors were firm, and doors were sensibly shut; silence lay steadily against the wood and stone of Hill House, and whatever walked there, walked alone...

katydids = a type of insect found in North America



- How does the writer create a tense atmosphere in the description of the setting for this novel? Explain your response with detailed reference to the paragraph.
- You have been asked to design a cover for this novel. Describe in detail what you would include in your design and why.
- What do you think the author means when she describes Hill House as 'not sane'?
- What do you think are the most important features of a good ghost story? Explain your choice of features.
- Write the opening paragraph for a ghost story of your own. You might like to use some of the techniques used by Shirley Jackson in the extract.
- The images below show the settings for three different stories. Choose one of the images and write a descriptive paragraph in which you create a picture of the place and give the reader a sense of the mood or atmosphere of that place.



1. 'The Journey Home'



2. 'The Wishing Lamp'



3. 'First Performance'