

Handout #1: Identifying Setting (Place)

Setting is the location of a story, such as a room, a house, or a mountain. Simply put, setting is a place. Authors, and Steinbeck in particular, use setting to influence how we, the readers, interpret a character, situation, or mood. Often a change in setting, such as the storm that brews at the ominous ending of “The Fall of the House of Usher”, indicates what direction the plot will take. Also note that setting does not have to be limited to visual descriptions; the smell of apple pie or the crackling of wood in a fireplace is an important part of setting.

In the following selections from *Of Mice and Men*, place an “X” by descriptions of setting.

_____ “Only the tops of the Gabilan mountains flamed with the light of the sun that had gone from the valley” (7)

_____ “I could go off in the hills there” (12).

_____ “Both wore black, shapeless hats and both carried tight blanket rolls slung over their shoulders” (2)

_____ “But in the barn it was quiet and humming and lazy and warm” (84).

_____ “He bent the pup’s head up and looked in its face, and he said to it, ‘Now maybe George ain’t gonna let me tend no rabbits, if he fin’s out you got killed’” (85).

_____ “There was the clang of horseshoe on iron stake outside and a little cheer of voices” (39).

Discuss a movie in which the setting played an important role.

What symbolism is there often found in setting? For example, what is significant about night vs. day in setting, colors, water, etc?