

**Establishing Time and Place**

*Lizzie and The Lost Baby* by Cheryl Blackford, HMH Books for Young Readers, 2016

“Below her the dale stretched for miles in a patchwork quilt of fields. Miniature animals, like toys in a farm set, dotted the land. Pencil scribbles of smoke drifted up from cottage chimneys. But up on the moor, there wasn’t a single dwelling or tree, just a vast windswept expanse of empty land.”

*Cloud and Wallfish* by Anne Nesbet, Candlewick, 2016

“They left the ordinary gray light filtering through the sooty gray glass of the S-Bahn station windows and went down a set of steps, down under the ground, where dozens of fluorescent tubes in the low ceiling cast a light that was probably actually quite bright but felt dark somehow, it was so much unlike sunlight or the sort of brightness that came from the friendly old-fashioned light bulbs that Noah was used to. And the walls were covered in slightly glossy tiles, on the yellow side of yellow-brown, vertical rectangles everywhere reflecting the unwarm light.”

*The War That Saved My Life* by Kimberley Brubaker Bradley, Puffin Books, 2015

“The house looked asleep.

It sat at the very end of a quiet dirt lane. Trees grew along both sides of the lane, and their tops met over it so that the lane was shadowed in green. The house sat back from the trees in a pool of sunlight, but vines snaked up the red brick chimney and bushes ran rampant around the windows. A small roof sheltered a door painted red, like the chimney, but the house itself was flat gray, dull behind the bushes. Curtains were drawn over the windows and the door was shut tight.”

*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl, 1964

“Charlie bucket found himself standing in a long corridor that stretched away in front of him as far as he could see. The corridor was so wide that a car could easily have been driven along it. The walls were pale pink, the lighting was soft and pleasant.

“How lovely and warm,” whispered Charlie.

“I know. And what a marvelous smell,” answered Grandpa Joe, taking a long deep sniff. All the most wonderful smells in the world seemed to be mixed up in the air around them — the smell of roasting coffee and burnt sugar and melting chocolate and mint and violets and crushed hazelnuts and apple blossom and caramel and lemon peel ...”

“They were looking down upon a lovely valley. There were green meadows on either side of the valley, and along the bottom of it there flowed a great brown river.

What is more, there was a tremendous waterfall halfway along the river — a steep cliff over which the water curled and rolled in a solid sheet, and then went crashing down into a boiling churning whirlpool of froth and spray.

Below the waterfall (and this was the most astonishing sight of all), a whole mass of enormous glass pipes were dangling down into the river from somewhere high up in the ceiling.”

**Creating/Enhancing a Mood**

*The Lie Tree* by Frances Hardinge, Harry N. Abrams, 2016

“The boat moved with nauseous, relentless rhythm, like someone chewing on a rotten tooth. The islands just visible through the mist also looked like teeth, Faith decided. Not fine, clean Dover teeth, but jaded, broken teeth, jutting crookedly amid the wash of the choppy sea.”

*Heart of a Samurai* by Margi Preus, Harry N. Abrams, 2010

“Earth. Sky. Wind. Sea.

Sometimes it seemed as if that was all there were. All there ever had been. All there ever would be.

There was this scrap of earth – just a big rock really. And there was a cave in the rock, which offered shelter. Not warm shelter, but shelter.

There was sky, plenty of sky, all the sky you could want. Day after day it hung like a swath of blue silk, and at night like a black velvet cloak studded with cold jewels. It gave little warmth. And barely any rain.

There was the wind. Howling, growling, moaning, roaring.  
And there was the glittering sea.”

*Esperanza Rising* by Pam Munoz Ryan, Scholastic Press, 2000

““Our land is alive, Esperanza,” said Papa, taking her small hand as they walked through the gentle slopes of the vineyard. Leafy green vines draped the arbors and the grapes were ready to drop. Esperanza was six years old and loved to walk with her papa through the winding rows, gazing up at him and watching his eyes dance with love for the land. “This whole valley breathes and lives,” he said, sweeping his arm toward the distant mountains that guarded them. “It gives us the grapes and then they welcome us. He gently touched a wild tendril that reached into a row, as if it had been waiting to shake his hand”.

*The Graveyard Book* by Neil Gaiman, Harper Collins, 2008

“It was a perfect spring day, and the air was alive with birdsong and bee hum. The daffodils bustled in the breeze and here and there on the side of the hill a few early tulips nodded. A blue powdering of forget-me-nots and fine, fat yellow primroses punctuated the green of the slope as the two children walked up the hill to the Frobisher’s little mausoleum.”

Contrast with: “One grave in every graveyard belongs to the ghouls. Wander any graveyard long enough and you will find it – waterstained and bulging, with cracked or broken stone, scraggly grass or rank weeds about it, and a feeling, when you reach it, of abandonment. It may be colder than the other gravestones too, and the name on the stone is all too often impossible to read. If there is a statue on the grave it will be headless or so scabbed with fungus and lichens as to look like fungus itself.”

*The Underneath* by Kathi Appelt, Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2008

“In front of her sat a shabby frame house with peeling paint, a house that slumped on one side as if it were sinking into the red dirt. The windows were cracked and grimy. There was a rusted pickup truck parked next to it, a dark puddle of thick oil pooled underneath its undercarriage. She sniffed the air. It was wrong this place.”

### **Reflecting a Character’s Personality/Experience**

*The Watson’s Go To Birmingham* by Christopher Paul Curtis, Delacorte Books for Young Readers, 1995

“The toilets in Ohio weren’t anything like Michigan toilets. Instead of a white stool with a seat there was just a seat on a piece of wood with a great big, open, black hole underneath with the sound of flies coming out of it. No flusher, no water, no nothing. It looked like if you sat on the seat you might end up getting sucked down under Ohio somewhere!”

“What Dad was calling “just the mountains” were the scariest things I’d ever seen. On every side of us were great big, black hills, and behind these were even bigger, blacker hills, and behind these were the biggest blackest hills. It looked like someone had crumpled up a pitch-black blanket and dropped the Weird Watsons down into the middle of it.”

*The Underneath* by Kathi Appelt, Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2008

“But once she found the great pine forest, this pine forest she slipped out of the brackish water and slithered onto the boggy ground. She looked around at the deep and lazy bayous filled with turtles and fish, the giant palmettos, and abundance of rodents, perfect for hunting. She loved the darkness provided by the welcoming trees, the oaks and cedars, the shumards and willow.”

*Hattie Big Sky* by Kirby Larson, Delacorte Books for Young Readers, 2006

“To say the land was flat was not quite true, though that would be the quick and easy assessment. No, it more resembled a giant’s quilt — white, of course, because of the several feet of snow — spread out over an enormous bed. Here and there were the bumps made by the giant’s toes or knees. In the distance, his covered head raised up a larger

bump in the bedding. As I studied longer I could see the creases where the quilt fell away from between his arm and sides.”

“House was a Charlie term — kind and generous. Aunt Ivy’s chickens had much better accommodations. The structure wasn’t much bigger than Uncle Holt’s tool shed and was put together with about as much care. Gaps in the siding revealed black tar paper, like decay between haphazard teeth. Two wood-block steps led up to a rough-hewn door. A small window — the only window I was to find out — left of the door stared dully at me.”

### **Setting as Character**

*The Girl Who Drank the Moon* by Kelly Barnhill, Algonquin young Readers, 2016

“Despite the odd beliefs of the people of the Protectorate, the forest was not cursed at all, nor was it magical in any way. But it was dangerous. The volcano beneath the forest – low-sloped and impossibly wide – was a tricky thing. It grumbled as it slept, while heating geysers til they burst and restlessly worrying at fissures until they grew so deep that no one could find the bottom. It boiled streams and cooked mud and sent waterfalls disappearing into deep pits, only to reappear miles away. There were vents that spewed foul odors and vents that spewed ash and vents that seemed to spew nothing at all – until a person’s lips and fingernails turned blue from bad air, and the whole world started to spin.

### **Destruction in Setting**

*The Girl Who Drank the Moon* by Kelly Barnhill, Algonquin young Readers, 2016

“There had been a circle of stones in the courtyard of the castle, once upon a time. They had surrounded the central, older tower like sentinels, and the castle had wrapped around the whole of it like a snake eating its tail. But the tower was gone now (though Xan had no idea where) and the castle was rubble, and the stones had been toppled by the volcano, or swallowed up by the earthquake, or crumbled by fire, and water, and time. Now there was only one, and it was difficult to find. Tall grasses surrounded it like a thick curtain, and ivy clung to its face.”

*The Watson’s Go To Birmingham* by Christopher Paul Curtis, Delacorte Books for Young Readers, 1995

“I looked into the church and saw smoke and dust flying around like a tornado was in there. One light from the ceiling was still hanging down by a wire, flickering and swinging back and forth, and every once in a while I could see stuff inside. ... I could see Bibles and coloring books thrown all over the place, then they’d get covered by the smoke. I could see a shiny, shiny black shoe lying halfway underneath some concrete, then it got covered with smoke, and then the light bulb flickered out again.”