

The importance of setting



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The Importance of the Setting The setting of a story is where the story takes place and its time and in most cases very important to the plot and the success of the story. Oftentimes, the setting can be seen as a character in and of themselves.

In Edgar Allan Poe's "Tell Tale Heart," most of the story takes place in the old man's apartment and the climax of the story occurs in the old man's bedroom. The room in itself is very important. The description of the room is very detailed by the narrator who has an obsession with watching this man sleep and is driven crazy by the man's blue eye. One night the man wakes up and sees the narrator. The narrator becomes so startled by the man's supposed loud heartbeat that he kills the old man, dismembers his body and hides it beneath the floorboards of the room. The sound of the thumping heart drives him mad and once he kills the old man he thinks it to be gone. That is the point where the setting becomes important. The police come to question the narrator about the complaint of the old man shrieking.

He is able to entertain the police and make them believe that everything is okay. That is until the point that the setting comes alive. The floorboards begin to rattle and once again he can hear the sound the pounding heart over and over again. If the author had not put so much detail into the setting such as mentioning the floorboards ahead of time, the reader would not fully grasp the magnitude of the climax. The setting was important to help understand just what exactly drove the narrator mad.

John Updike's "A & P," the story takes place in the grocery store, a place that has become the bane of Sammy's existence. The setting is important in this story because if Sammy had been occupied, he wouldn't have noticed the girls. Since he did not really do much work in the store, he was able to focus on the three girls that walked in and start to fantasize about them.

Since it is in a supermarket, the girls have time to look around thus giving Sammy an extended period of time to determine the personalities of the girls and label one "Queenie." It also allows for there to be a good amount of arbitrary characters that help break up the story so it isn't overdoing the central theme. The supermarket setting allows for the author to set up a culture for the story to be set in. The author shows the reader that this is a time where advertisement and brand names for products were all the rage.

In several instances of the story, Updike refers to products such as HiHo crackers and Kingfish Fancy Herring Snacks in Pure Sour Cream. He wants to show that society at this point in time were high consumers. The setting of the story affects every aspect of the story. If one doubts that fact, the solution is simple enough. Take any great work of literature and change the place and time in which it took place.

For example, if "The Cask of the Amontillado," another short story by Poe was not set in the catacombs but instead set in a green meadow, would it be able to still invoke the fear and horror it was meant to? That does not seem likely. The correct setting is necessary to properly develop the story.