

SETTING



The **SETTING**

Setting is the time, place and social context in which a story takes place. Setting can have a great effect on plot and character, and it can contribute to mood and atmosphere.



The **ATMOSPHERE**

Atmosphere refers to the feelings or **MOOD** evoked by the setting or use of particular objects.



The SETTING

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 . . . [s]omehow it was hotter then . . . 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 teacakes with frostings of sweat and sweet talcum. . . . There was no hurry, for there was nowhere to go, nothing to buy and no money to buy it with, nothing to see outside the boundaries of Maycomb County. But it was a time of vague optimism for some of the people: Maycomb County had recently been told that it had nothing to fear but fear itself.

~Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*



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- it's the 1930's, the Depression
- in the Southern US
- it's hot, things move slowly
- a small town that doesn't look outside itself often



The **SETTING**

The ground beneath them was a bank covered with sparse grass, torn everywhere by the upheavals of fallen trees, scattered with decaying coconuts and palm saplings. Behind this was the darkness of the forest proper and the open space of the scar.

~and~

Towards midnight the rain ceased and the clouds drifted away, so that the sky was scattered once more with the incredible lamps of stars.

Then the breeze died too and there was no noise save the drip and tickle of water that ran out of clefts and spilled down, leaf by leaf, to the brown earth of the island. The air was cool, moist, and clear; and presently even the sound of the water was still.—

~William Golding, [Lord of the Flies](#)



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- School boys have crashed on a deserted island
- There are no grown ups
- The 1st passage shows destruction and darkness
- The second is more peaceful — dual nature to the island



The **ATMOSPHERE**

The intense horror of nightmare came over me: I tried to draw back my arm, but the hand clung to it, and a most melancholy voice sobbed, 'Let me in - let me in!' 'Who are you?' I asked, struggling, meanwhile, to disengage myself. 'Catherine Linton,' it replied, shiveringly (why did I think of LINTON? I had read EARNSHAW twenty times for Linton) - 'I'm come home: I'd lost my way on the moor!' As it spoke, I discerned, obscurely, a child's face looking through the window.

Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*



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SCARY



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SCARY
SUSPENSEFUL



The **ATMOSPHERE**

Our house is almost at the edge of the Seam. I only have to pass a few gates to reach the scruffy field called the Meadow. Separating the Meadow from the woods, in fact enclosing all of District 12, is a high chain-link fence topped with barbed-wire loops. In theory, it's supposed to be electrified twenty-four hours a day as a deterrent to the predators that live in the woods—packs of wild dogs, lone cougars, bears — that used to threaten our streets. But since we're lucky to get two or three hours of electricity in the evenings, it's usually safe to touch. Even so, I always take a moment to listen carefully for the hum that means the fence is live. Right now, it's silent as a stone. Concealed by a clump of bushes, I flatten out on my belly and slide under a two-foot stretch that's been loose for years. There are several other weak spots in the fence, but this one is so close to home I almost always enter the woods here.

Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games*



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GLOOMY

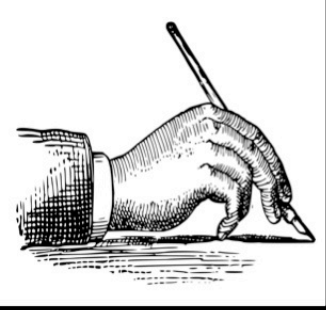


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**GLOOMY
DESOLATE**

STYLE



Author's **STYLE**

Style refers to the way an author uses words. There are many elements that define an author's style, such as word choice, tone, sentence structure, use of figurative language, etc.



Author's **STYLE**

He told me what had happened to him and his companions.

The train with the deportees had crossed the Hungarian border and, once in Polish territory, had been taken over by the Gestapo. The train had stopped. The Jews were ordered to get off and onto waiting trucks. The trucks headed toward a forest. There everybody was ordered to get out. They were forced to dig huge trenches. When they had finished their work, the men from the Gestapo began theirs. Without passion or haste, they shot their prisoners, who were forced to approach the trench one by one and offer their necks. Infants were tossed into the air and used as targets for the machine guns. This took place in the Galician forest, near Kolomay.

~Elie Wiesel, *Night*

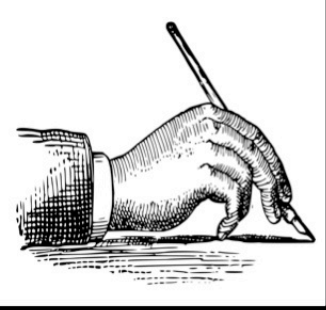


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How would you describe Wiesel's style, based on this passage and why?



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- Detached, objective tone
 - Sparse description
 - Direct, short sentences



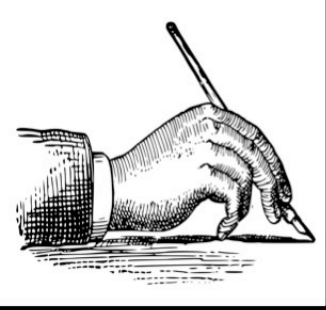
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- Wiesel, as first person narrator, detaches himself from the horror
- Objective tone lets the readers judge the horror for themselves
- He wants the facts laid bare without any fancy figurative language to confuse things.

The Poisonwood Bible uses multiple first person narrators. Each one has a very distinct voice, as Kingsolver adopts a different style for each one.

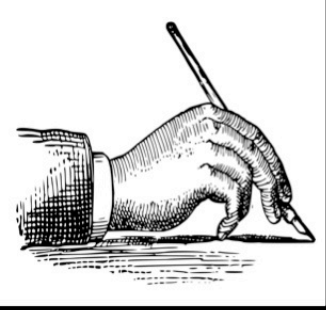
The first example was from the mother; this next one is from one of her daughters:



Author's **STYLE**

"As long as I kept moving, my grief streamed out behind me like a swimmer's long hair in water. I knew the weight was there but it didn't touch me. Only when I stopped did the slick, dark stuff of it come floating around my face, catching my arms and throat till I began to drown. So I just didn't stop."

~Barbara Kingsolver *The Poisonwood Bible*



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How would you describe Kingsolver's style, based on this passage and why?



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- Good variety in sentence structure—mixes up types of sentences
 - Detailed and descriptive
 - Serious, reflective tone
 - Uses an extended simile



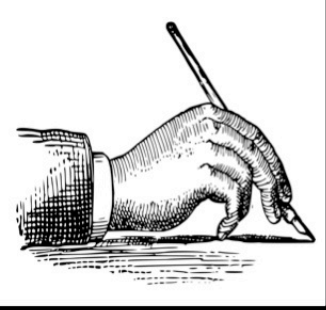
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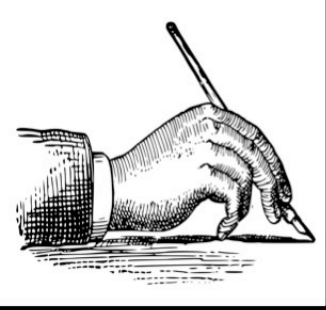
- The sentence variety makes the writing flow; it's easy to read
- The simile effectively captures the feeling of grief, how heavy and incapacitating it can be
 - Her tone reflects the seriousness of the topic



Author's **STYLE**

ON CONGO EASTER SUNDAY there were no new clothes for the Price girls, that's for sure. We tromped off to church in the same old shoes and dresses we'd worn all the other African Sundays so far. No white gloves, it goes without saying. And no primping, because the only mirror we have in the house is my faux-ivory hand mirror brought from home, which we all have to share. Mother set it on the desk in the living room, propped against the wall, and every time Mama Tataba walks by it she yelps like a snake bit her. So: Easter Sunday in dirt-stained saddle oxfords, charmed I'm sure. As far as my sisters are concerned I have to say they didn't care. Ruth May is the type to wear rolled-up Blue Bell jeans to her own funeral, and the twins too, they've never cared a hoot what they looked like. They spent so much time staring at each other's faces before they were born they can go the rest of their lives passing up mirrors without a glance. While we're on the subject, you should see what the Congolese run around in. Children dressed up in the ragbags of Baptist charity or else nothing at all. Color coordination is not a strong point..

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- The narrator uses “teen speak”
- Informal language, sprinkle with sayings like “charmed, I’m sure”
 - Self-absorbed, disdainful tone

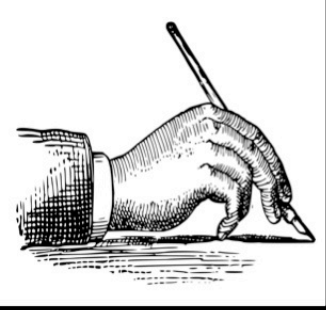


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- There is a strong voice that helps the reader get a good picture of the personality and values of the character—she is materialistic and self-absorbed.