

# Tips for Descriptive Writing About Stories

(Book Reports, Novel Studies, Literature Circles)



## 1) Setting:

- Write about **where** the story occurs. If the story happens in many places, describe the most important settings.
- Remember to include a description of the time **when** the story is set (e.g. in the past, in the future, or in modern day).
- Your writing could also include a discussion of the **tone** of the story (creepy, futuristic, totalitarian, etc.) if the setting is a large part of the plot.

## 2) Characters:

- Describe their **physical features** (general age, gender, size, hair and eye colour).
- Describe their **personality** as you would any person that you know (kind, helpful, quiet, etc.).
- Think about and include a description of **how other people view** or treat this character (e.g. heroic, sneaky, untrustworthy, difficult to get along with, a problem solver, etc.).
- Finally, include anything about the character that is **important to know** (their job, their family relationships, their special abilities, etc.)

## 3) Conflict:

- Write about the **key problems** in the story. Conflicts are not easily resolved and may take the whole story (or beyond) to solve. Do they involve people, the environment, social problems, or are they self-inflicted?
  - **person vs. person**
  - **person vs. the environment**
  - **person vs. the government**
  - **person vs. themselves**
- Describe how the conflict creates problems for the main characters



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#### 4) Plot:

- Describe **the main parts of the story** so that someone who is not familiar with it will learn a little about all of the main elements and action of the story. You should be able to write a plot in **one descriptive paragraph**. Too much or too little information for a plot summary is not appropriate.

#### 5) Themes:

- Once you've finished the story, think about:
  - **Why** did the author write the story?
  - What ideas is the author trying to **teach you about life**?
  - What did the characters **learn about themselves** during the story?  
How does this apply to you?



#### **Remember:**

- Write a draft. Take notes.
- Don't be afraid to erase, cross out, or delete parts of your work.
- Writing is a process and it may take many tries and edits to where you are happy with it.
- Ask for others to read your work to help you edit or make suggestions.

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